

Jeanneau Prestige 38S

What makes this hardtop cruiser stand out from the competition? A clever aft cockpit design **REPORT BY JUSTIN OLESINSKI**

It sometimes appears as though Jeanneau and Bénéteau are playing a friendly game of one-upmanship. Bénéteau jumped forward with the Monte Carlo range so Jeanneau hit back with two new Prestige hardtop models. First there was the big and impressive 42S that we looked at last year and now Jeanneau has upped the ante with the even more exciting 38S. Sporting a cunning new

take on aft cockpit design, as well as a keen price, we headed south to find out more.

Design & build

Taking many styling cues from the larger Prestige 42S, the all-new 38S looks and feels familiar. Not that it is boring or obvious, it's just that for all intents and purposes the 38 is simply a 42 minus one shower compartment.

Tester says...



Following on from the very big 42S we tested a year ago, this new 38 again offers plenty of cruising comfort but it's the cunning aft cockpit seating design that might just make this the sportscruiser to beat in 2009.

OK, you get a twin mid cabin berth instead of a permanent double and a smaller garage but it feels remarkably big and, dare we say it, better than its big sister.

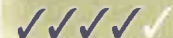
When we first saw the 38S at the 2008 London Boat Show we were most impressed with the aft cockpit seating cum sunpad layout that still allowed for a tender garage. Usually it's one or the other, but now you can have both.

When it comes to build quality this French manufacturer's reputation has been scrutinised in the past, with high end production and competitive pricing leading to suggestions of corners being cut. However, I'm pleased to say that apart from the rather bland hardtop and a lack of stern cleats the 38S is economically but not cheaply fitted out. With names such as Bezenzoni dropped into the standard specification it is clear that Jeanneau is concentrating more on quality than quantity, or at least it is level-pegging the competition in terms of build.

In my opinion the best way to really test the build quality of a boat is to give it a damn good thrashing on the water and during our test run the lack of rattles, crashing and banging noises suggests construction is sound.

Design & build

Clever aft cockpit and quality fittings stand out



Exterior

The hardtop's hereditary slicked-back hairline above the huge bug-like side windows and the trademark mid cabin portlight make the 38S a smooth addition to the Prestige S range.

The cockpit consists of two decent sized U-shaped sofas to port with a bar unit behind the helm to starboard. The helm itself, with room for an E120 chartplotter, is simple yet effective with a double seat easily wide enough to seat two comfortably. The hardtop does the job of keeping rain or sun out but its rather plain appearance suggests it hasn't been finished to the same level as the rest of the boat. Even if the designers (or more likely the accountants) think skylights are too much of an extravagance, a touch more finesse would really boost the boat's appeal. However, the yard has thought about safety and to prevent accidental closing of the hardtop you'll need to press two buttons simultaneously in order for it to open or close. The fairly narrow cockpit companionway leads on to the excellent

BOAT REPORT

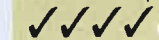
JEANNEAU PRESTIGE 38S

aft seating area, which is suitable for a family of five. We are told this seating area will be made available on the 42S and both boats also have the option of a glass partition closing off the wheelhouse area from the cockpit.

Access from the bathing platform to the asymmetrical side decks is easy but a couple of extra rails on the aft corners of the hardtop would make it slightly easier to climb back down. Fender storage is in the bow locker or the tender garage.

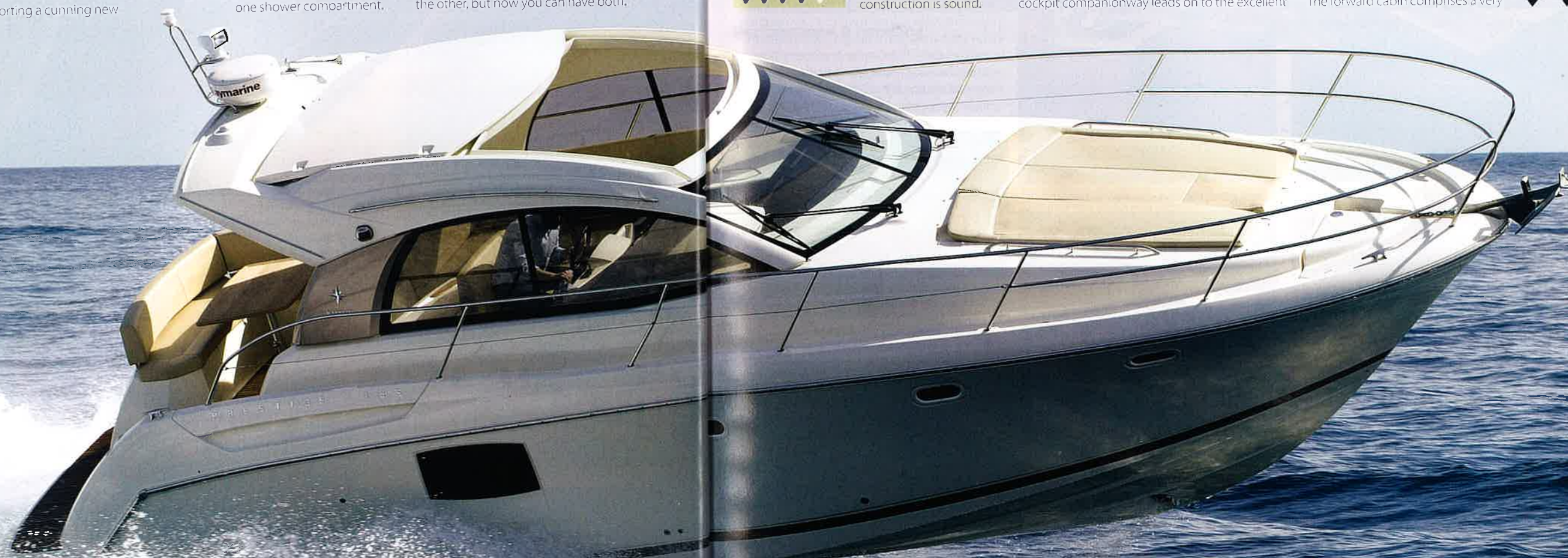
Exterior

Multifunctional cockpit makes up for dull hardtop



Accommodation

It's surprising what you can fit into a 38ft boat these days. Although narrower than the 42S by some 11 inches you don't really notice it here. The forward cabin comprises a very



FACT FILE

Jeanneau Prestige 38S

LOA: 38ft 8in (11.92m)

PRICE: from £215,857

TOP SPEED: 33 knots



This generous four-seater sofa in the saloon has high backs for added support and comfort

respectable 4ft 11in wide double berth, better still, to starboard you'll find a superb walk-in wardrobe. Not only is there a hanging locker but to port there are numerous shelves. Top marks.

The 6ft 8in tall shower stall is impressive as is the integral ceramic sink, which looks better and is far more practical than the 'bowl on a worktop' type.

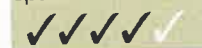
In the saloon there's a four-seater sofa to starboard with high backs offering plenty of support. Limited space for the galley is helped by a fold-over lid above the hob, which provides that extra little bit of workable area when it's not in use. The fridge is monstrous at 144lt and positioned further aft its contents are less likely to be thrown about in rougher seas. The bulkheads and galley are visually divided horizontally by a mix of cherry wood below and sandy textured fabric above, giving a feeling of comfortable space and luxury at the same time.

The mid cabin has plenty of headroom with a reasonably-sized locker but what really makes this cabin is the twin berth design that slides forward to make a double without any need for extra cushions, which is great if you cruise with friends or family. There is plenty of room to sit up and read here too, especially with the adjustable snake-like reading lights. Perhaps the most notable aspect of this design is that beneath

almost every seat or berth there is storage space you can actually use. In addition, large service hatches underneath the saloon floor make checks for repairs to the bilges or holding tank easy.

Accommodation

Well laid-out, natural interior spaces



Engine options & access

It seems that what you gain in layout you lose in engine choice. With so many features packed into 38ft, it comes as a mild disappointment that only one engine choice is available. The 320hp Cummins QSD 6 cylinder diesels offered, running on Bravo III sterndrives, do look man enough for the job though, and should lay down a smoother style of power compared to a 4 cylinder. If they also help keep the price keen, so much the better. Access to the engine compartment is via either a small day inspection hatch in the main companionway or via the main hatch in the tender garage. The main hatch was slow to rise but apparently the electronic rams are going to be upgraded with more powerful ones.

Inside the bay the finish is poor in areas, especially the messy wiring, which hangs and

snags in places. One thing that was really good to see was the serious amount of soundproofing. A factor that explains why the boat is noticeably quieter than the 42S we tested a year ago.

Engine options & access

One option won't suit all. Poorly held wire looms



Helming when seated gives good all-round visibility but like the 42S and the Monte Carlo range the 38S suffers from a slippery footplate



Performance & handling

Although the twin Cummins QSD 4.2L 320hp engines will take you up to nearly 34 knots they are not as eager to get you there as the Volvo D series. You feel the lack of reaction all the way through the rev range and the whole experience

left us feeling as though we had been for a cruise rather than a ride. That said, it was safe to helm and very relaxing. Handling is always responsive and the boat is pretty stable, sticking to a trim angle of about 6°. The hull seems as though it has a slightly finer entry at the bow compared to the Monte Carlo 37 but it flattens out quite fast in the mid sections, making a jarring ride should you get caught by a wave further up the hull. In rougher seas you really need to keep the bow trimmed down in order to maintain a comfortable passage. In a following sea the boat excels, even when coming down the backs of steep waves you will find the boat handles superbly, maintaining a straight course.

Cruising along in the early 20s the boat feels happy and relaxed, although it must be noted that the fuel economy across the rev

Small cockpit wet bar



Foredeck is laid out with work and play in mind



Electronic rams in the hatch are due to be upgraded



What you gain in layout you lose in engine choice



The cockpit design is the 38's winning feature as it boasts two decent sized U-shaped sofas



The 38 has a well proportioned cockpit and a tender garage



Skylight for the saloon but not for the sunroof above



A small galley but workspace is maximised



Twin mid cabin berths slide together to make a double



Plenty of locker space in the midships cabin



Integral sink is more practical



Forward cabin boasts a 4ft 11in wide double and a walk-in wardrobe

BOAT REPORT

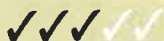
JEANNEAU PRESTIGE 38S

range is way below that of its closest competitors.

It feels best to helm the 38S when seated, as you get pretty good all-round visibility. Stand up on the slippery footplate and you'll find you head precariously close to the hardtop drain, which looks as though it will give you a nasty headache if you take a wave sideways on. Like the Jeanneau 42S and the Monte Carlo range this slippery footplate issue needs to be addressed sooner rather than later.

Performance & handling

Comfortable ride
let down by
low MPG



Fitted with sterndrives, it's disappointing to note that a bow thruster is extra but rumour has it that future models may incorporate joystick control similar to Volvo's Axis system.

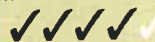
Specification & value

Jeanneau's philosophy of 'you only pay for what you want' could be likened to that of a budget airline, where the initial price seems incredibly good value until you start adding on essential extras that really should be standard. But are things changing? The 38's base price is significantly higher than Bénéteau's MC37 but, thankfully, so is the standard specification. More comparable to a Princess V42, the standard kit only requires a few extras to bring it up to a decent cruising standard.

The mooring pack and mains water supply connector should be included as standard though, while £13,367 for a 5.5kW generator is a real wallet scarer. As the test boat was production

Specification & value

A well spec'd and priced boat with masses of extras

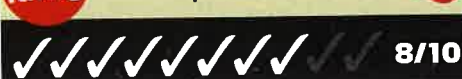


hull number one it had virtually every possible extra fitted. This does make the 'as tested' price seem high but take away the Med luxuries and we get back to a UK price of around £230k.

MBM verdict

This is a versatile four-berth cruiser that is priced towards the top end of the sub-40ft market. And although the hardtop is a little bland, the 38S gives you lots of cruising options with a tender garage and a sunpad without compromising on space.

With a well appointed interior and a safe hull the Prestige 38S is a smaller sister the 42S can be proud of.



8/10

Jeanneau Prestige 38S technical data

specifications

BUILD	GRP
RCD	B
LENGTH OVERALL	38ft 8in (11.92m)
BEAM	12ft 9in (3.90m)
DRAUGHT	3ft 1in (0.9m)
DISPLACEMENT	7.5 tonnes
FUEL CAPACITY	202gal (920lt)
WATER CAPACITY	70gal (320lt)

key dimensions

HEADROOM IN SALOON	6ft 4in (1.9m)
HEADROOM IN FORWARD CABIN	6ft 0in (1.8m)
HEADROOM IN MID CABIN	5ft 11in (1.8m)
FORWARD BERTH	6ft 3in x 4ft 11in (1.9 x 1.5m)
MIDSHIPS DOUBLE BERTH	6ft 3in x 3ft 11in (1.9 x 1.2m)



performance

Engines	Twin Cummins QSD 4.2L 320hp diesels
Configuration	6 cyl, 4.2lt, 320hp @ 3800rpm
Conditions	Wind W, Force 2, Sea calm with swell
Load	fuel 75%, water 0%, crew 2

Rpm	knots	lph	gph	mpg	range	noise
3000	22.5	65	14.3	1.57	291	85
3300	27.2	86	18.9	1.44	290	86
3500	29.8	104	22.8	1.30	263	87
3600	29.9	113	24.8	1.20	243	88
3700	32.5	129	28.4	1.14	231	88
3900	33.8	144	31.7	1.06	210	88

Range figures quoted above are in miles based on standard fuel tanks and include a 20% margin. GPH & MPG refer to imperial gallons. These figures may vary due to weather conditions, engine temp, crew numbers, hull fouling, fuel quality and other issues. Noise readings in dB(A) and were taken at the helm with the covers off.

prices

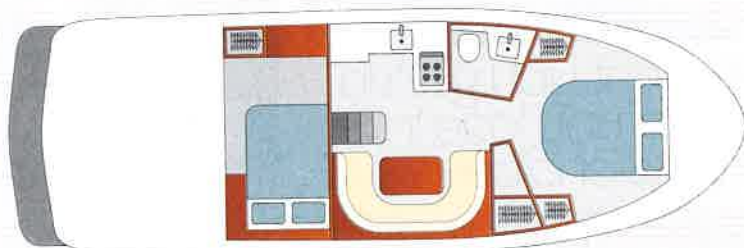
STANDARD BOAT with twin Cummins	inc VAT £215,857
BOW THRUSTER	£4091
TEAK COCKPIT	£2370
AIR CONDITIONING	£10,259
5.5kW GENERATOR	£13,367
NAVIGATION PACKAGE	£6033

BOAT AS TESTED (MED SPEC) £282,878

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