

The beachable boat

Caroline Strainig checks out the latest release from Jeanneau — the beachable Sun Odyssey 33i.

"Yes, you can beach it! There is a protective shoe attached to the bottom of each of the rudders. The boat sits on the keel wings and the twin rudders. I'll send you a photo to prove it!"

So said Gary Dunshea of Mooloolaba Yacht Brokers, also the Queensland agent for the French-built range of Jeanneau yachts.

Gary's assurance that the boat in question was the drop-keel, beachable version was why a couple of weeks later I found myself on a plane bound from Sydney to Brisbane and a rendezvous with Gary and the owner of the first such Sun Odyssey 33i to be imported into Australia, Keith Merkley.

While we carried a story in *CH* many years ago about the European-built Feeling range that offers a beachable version, the Feeling actually imported was a fixed keel, so Keith's 33i was the first large production boat of its type to find its way to our shores, to my knowledge anyway.

"I've just got to see this," I muttered to myself. "If it has reasonable stability,

I cannot understand why someone hasn't done it before. There are so many shallow cruising grounds like Moreton Bay where this boat is based . . ."

Heading down the jetty at the Wynnum-Manly Yacht Club just north of Brisbane, the Jeanneau was easy to spot, with her high freeboard, plumb bow and squarish stern giving her the lines most designers are going for today to pack in the space and headroom modern buyers demand.

Introductions over, distributor Gary and owner Keith set about showing me over the 33i. Their pride was obvious, and it was easy to see why: the Jeanneaus are always good-looking boats with that extra touch of French class and the 33i is no exception.

Keith previously owned RL24 and RL28 trailer-sailers, so the drop-keel concept was something he was familiar with and the feature that immediately attracted him to the 33i. "I just haven't seen it as an option before in a production boat like this," he said. "The drop-keel version is 0.85m with centreboard up and 2.2m

with it down. It has a shallow-draught winged keel that is fixed, and the centreboard only adds extra stability and pointing ability, so in many conditions you can sail without any centreboard down at all."

The 33i comes in two other keel configurations: standard (1.9m) and shallow draught (1.47m). The 33i's predecessor, the Sun Odyssey 32, also came in a centreboard version, but the keel and rudders were not designed to be beached.

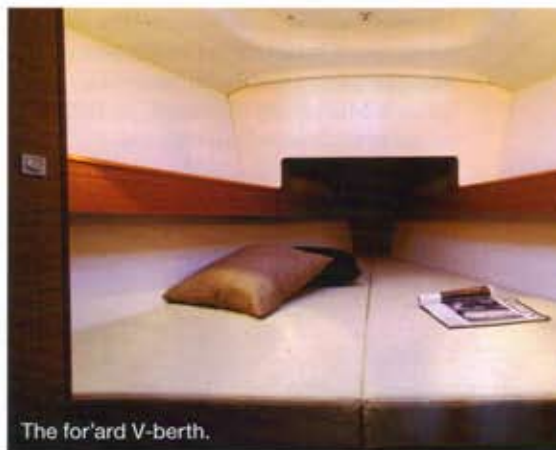
On deck

So, what do you get for the base price of around \$150,000?

The cockpit is large, as one would expect of a boat designed with sunny climes in mind, and would comfortably seat at least six. The layout is good, and it is easy to move around, although seating-wise I thought back support overall lower than on some other production boats I have sailed. A wheel comes as standard with the 33i — unlike its predecessor — the SO32, where a



The saloon is light and airy.



The for'ard V-berth.



The aft master cabin. One overhead hatch is standard and the two cockpit hatches here are optional extras.

wheel was an optional extra. Pride of place centre cockpit goes to a pedestal with wheel, compass and engine controls. A folding table abutting the pedestal is an optional extra.

Headsail sheets come back to two pairs of two-speed Harken ST35.2 winches on the coaming. The traveller is on the cabin top, and the main halyard, reefing lines (two) and headsail furler come back to a two-speed ST20.1ST Harken winch and a clutch of jammers on the port side just aft of the traveller. The exception to the led-aft rule is the headsail halyard, which is adjusted at the mast. However, the headsail is on a Profurl furler, so really shouldn't be too much of an issue unless you plan a myriad of headsail changes. If it ever did become a pain, you could squeeze in another turning block and jammer on the cabin top to port next to the other lines there. Putting in a second winch and set of jammers on the starboard side of the cabin top is not an option because the hatch to the aft cabin is situated there.

A lift-up section of coaming gives access to a small transom with stainless-steel swimming ladder. Gas bottle stowage is adjacent (one 3.8kg bottle). A recessed cavity in the cabin sole under the lift-up section of coaming is designed to take a liferaft. Access to the emergency steering is just aft of the pedestal.

A voluminous port lazarette has room for a myriad of odds and ends and the obligatory rubber ducky. There is a dedicated slot for the washboards, but most owners would probably add some extra shelving here to enable them to make the most of the space.

Heading for'ard, there are plenty of grabrails, the non-slip surface is excellent and the side decks are wide, although you do need to thread your way past a stay.

The anchor locker is a good size with a single bow roller with cheeks. Anchor and windlass are extras and on the test boat Keith had added a Maxwell 1000W windlass and a 35lb Manson Supreme.

As standard you get a partially battened main and a 115-percent genoa.



Plain sailing . . . the 33i close-hauled.



The smaller 30i (pictured) also comes in a beachable version.

The sails are Dacron by Technique Voile, the aluminum mast by Selden and deck gear by Harken and Spinlock. All 33is come with lazyjacks, a boombag and a rope boom vang. The vang is right over the saloon hatch, so while



The performance version has an in-cockpit traveller, four square metres extra of mainsail area and a folding rather than fixed prop.

practical: new boat



FAR LEFT: The galley has a round sink, top-opening fridge-freezer and a two-burner stove with oven.

LEFT: Close-up of that nifty chart table. The seat back at left folds down and the chart table slides across so you can rearrange the seating.

you can still open that hatch to about 70 degrees, you cannot flip it right back (presuming the hatch was designed for that). The test boat also had an optional dodger.

Keith is well over 1.85m tall and with safety in mind he had a sailmaker trim the mainsail aft by about 15cm to improve boom clearance in the cockpit.

One feature I noticed straight away is that the mast has two pairs of swept-back spreaders, unlike many boats this size, which have one. Indeed, the 33's predecessor, the Sun Odyssey 32, had only one set of spreaders, which were also less swept back. Gary said designer Marc Lombard has the chainplates positioned outboard at the gunwales, which makes the first spreader quite long, so a second set is required.

Keith had decided to buy a base boat and add all electronics himself, but two packages of options are available from Jeanneau, grouping together some of the extra gear than most people would want for cruising and racing. Keith had budgeted \$10,000 and in addition to the anchor and windlass had bought a small chartplotter and a log and wind indicator, all of which he located on the cockpit pedestal. Still on his wish-list before he did any coastal cruising were an autopilot and a bimini.

Below

Heading below down the companionway, I liked what I saw. Headroom is good at 1.85m, and the combination of a hardwood called Alpi — especially grown for Jeanneau and sister company Beneteau — and cream upholstery is easy on the eye and in that modern simple but elegant style that the French manufacturers seem to have down pat.

Aft you have what most would use as the master cabin, with a large athwartships berth with one hatch and a hanging locker and a shelf. You can option up here to add a further two opening ports into the cockpit for additional ventilation. The 140L fuel tank lives under the berth, as do the batteries. As standard you get a 70AH house and a 70AH cranking battery, both lead acid. Keith had added another 130AH house battery.

The 21hp Yanmar shaftdrive engine is adjacent under the companionway steps, which lift up. Access is also possible from the sides and rear.

Midships to port you have a combined head and shower with a Jabsco toilet with electric macerator and an 80L rotomoulded holding tank and one opening hatch.

Midships to starboard is an L-shaped galley with a round sink, several

storage compartments, two-burner Eno stove and oven and 100L top-opening Vitrifrigo fridge-freezer.

For'ard again is the saloon area, which has a large hatch, a nifty small sliding nav table with electrics panel (VHF added by Keith), two straight settees and a drop-leaf table. There is stowage under the settees and behind their backs and three good-sized lockers over them on each side, although the hot-water system does take up some of the space under one settee.

Completing the picture is the for'ard cabin with bifold doors, a smallish V-berth, hanging locker with a compartment for shoes under, shelf and one opening hatch. The 160L water tank is under the berth; for extended coastal cruising you'd want to add extra tankage somewhere else.



The main halyard, furling line and two reefing lines come back to a winch and a clutch of jammers on the port side of the cabin top.

The test boat still had the halogen lights that were standard at the time of ordering, but Keith had changed some to LEDs himself and Gary told me Jeanneau would be moving to LEDs in future boats. Those popular pleated curtain kits with integrated insect screens are available as optional extras for the hatches.

Under sail

Brisbane turned on a brilliant day for us on the day of the sail test, made all the more special because it came after days of strong rain and flooding.

Speeds recorded in my notebook were 4.5 knots to windward in 14 knots apparent at 36 degrees, 5.1-5.2 knots in 16 knots apparent at 38 degrees and in 18 knots apparent 5.6 at 38 degrees. We tried sailing with and without the drop keel and while there was probably more leeway, there felt little difference in the stiffness of boat. Most of the weight is in the fixed wing keel, with the dropping centreboard itself weighing only about 38kg.

For those who want to go a bit faster, the performance version has an the extra four square metres of mainsail, plus an in-cockpit traveller and three-bladed folding instead of fixed prop.

Steering felt direct, foot bracing good, and telltale visibility good sitting down to leeward or right up to windward.

Under motor the 21hp Yanmar achieved 7.2 knots at 3800 rpm and

4.9-5 knots at 2500 rpm without excessive noise.

One issue Keith finds with twin rudders manoeuvring in and out of the marina is that you do need to have some boatspeed because prop wash is deflected by the twin rudders, so you have little steerage at very slow speeds.

Construction

The "i" in the 33i's name stands for a vacuum-infused deck, which means Jeanneau has embraced the latest vacuum construction techniques, which are slightly more expensive, but do result in a lighter and stronger boat. However, vacuum infusion is harder to do for a hull, and this is still hand-laid the traditional way, and in this instance the 33i's hull is solid glass right to the gunwales.

Manufacturer's warranties are five years on hull and deck and fittings are as per the individual manufacturer's.

Summary

Okay, this is a light-displacement, drop-keel boat and I wouldn't recommend such a boat for serious offshore cruising. But it has a respectable angle of vanishing stability of 117 degrees with the centreboard down and for inshore sailing and coastal hops in sensible conditions it should be totally adequate. Thousands of Australians are out there in drop-keel trailerable boats enjoying the benefits of a shallow

draught — why should they have all the fun? A larger boat might not be trailerable, but it can still have a shallow draught with the centreboard up that lets you get in close and twin keels and rudders designed to take the hard. Let's hope the design catches on.

WHAT I LIKED

- ✓ Cruising options opened up by being drop-keel and beachable.
- ✓ A good-looking boat that gives you that visceral "This is an attractive boat" feeling.
- ✓ Good price with the high Aussie dollar.

WHAT I DISLIKED

- ✗ Hatch on cabin top preventing you adding a second winch for halyards.
- ✗ Some running rigging could have been larger (ropes on thinnish side) but this is easily fixed.



Close up showing the twin rudders and their "shoes".

SPECIFICATIONS

LOA	9.96m
Hull length	9.74m
LWL	9.16
Beam	3.34m
Displacement	4645kg
Standard keel draught 1	.9m
Shoal keel (optional extra) draught	1.47
Lifting keel (optional extra) draught	0.85-2.20m.
Fuel capacity	140L
Water capacity	160L
Standard sail area	51.5sqm
Performance sail area	55.3sqm
CE Category	A6/B8

Designer Marc Lombard

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The test boat had a Manson Supreme anchor and a 1000W Muir windlass.



Side decks are wide, although you do have to thread your way past a stay.