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Easy Riding with new Sun Odyssey 440



Marketers of modern production yachts frequently extoll their ease of handling, but Jason Snashall of Orakei Marine inadvertently demonstrated the point when he handled the new Jeanneau Sun Odyssey 440 single-handed throughout a harbour photoshoot.

The weather certainly did not make it easy, with the spring equinox pumping at 15-20 knots. Yet, with the help of the drop-down bow-thruster he negotiated a tricky cross-wind exit of a tight marina berth, set the boat

jogging upwind under autopilot to unfurl the jib and hoist the fully-battened mainsail with an electric winch before taking up his position at the twin helm stations for a brisk sail on the harbour. Occasional sail adjustments were easily achieved, while a tack or gybe only required a spin of the wheel and the self-tacking jib looked after itself.

The twin rudders provided plenty of feel and response and the yacht never appeared ruffled by quite grunty gusts sweeping down

the harbour, the full length chine and wide bodied hull providing plenty of stability.

Under power and in slow-speed manoeuvres, the twin rudders take some getting used to because there is no direct flow over the blades from the propeller. However, the powerful bowthruster aids the process. Under sail, with the wide stern typical of modern design, the twin rudders provide the assurance of always retaining bite regardless of heel angle. Volume is carried forward to mitigate against the

tendency for wide-transom yachts to assume a bow-down attitude when heeled

In the brisk conditions of the day, the boat criss-crossed the harbour at pace – once again displaying its ease of handling as it quickly ran out of space and required another tack or gybe.

The cockpit arrangement shows a great deal of attention to detail, with small features adding considerable amenity and comfort. The corner helm seats, for example, provide great viewing forward along the side decks, while the split backstays – which allow unimpeded passage from the broad fold-down stern platform into the cockpit – terminate well inboard, relieving the helmsman of an awkward stay jamming into his back.

The bimini, on the other hand, spreads across the full beam of the yacht, so the helmsman remains shaded even sitting right out at the corner. A feature that has attracted a lot of attention with some models in this generation of the Jeanneau Sun Odyssey range is that the cockpit coamings can fold flat, providing generous sunbeds at anchor. This particular model did not have this arrangement, but it can be retrofitted, or specified as an optional extra.

Right: the permanent bowsprit stows the anchor and allows for a code zero or gennaker; note the low boom gooseneck position.

Passage along the side decks is made easy by the fact that the lower shrouds of the double spreader mast attach well inboard, while the capshrouds attach to the gunwale. Also, there is no need to clamber over high coamings to reach the side decks. Instead, from the helm position, the side decks slope up to the foredeck in a continuous ramp, making the transition from the cockpit much safer.

Another detail easing the sail management is that the boom angles down to a much lower than usual gooseneck, which makes stowing the mainsail into the fixed boom cover much easier and brings the head of the mainsail down to a convenient level for attaching the halyard.

The helm stations are widely separated, so that, with the cockpit table leaves folded down, there is very easy passage from the boarding platform through to the companionway.

Under way, the boarding platform folds up to complete the transom, and close off the stowage space under the cockpit floor for liferaft and equipment.





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Top: the owners' cabin features an aft facing island queen bed and ensuite head and shower. Middle: the interior is spacious and bright with integrated galley and dining area. Bottom: the cockpit has fold-down coamings (optional extra), which provide great sun lounging at anchor. The corner helm seats provide good visibility forward and the split backstays enable the helmsman to lean back against the rounded guardrails.

Down below, the interior layout also displays some fresh thinking, with the well-equipped U-shape galley placed amidships on the port side, opposite a mirror image arrangement of the saloon lounging and dining area to starboard.

Immediately to port and starboard of the companionway are a navigation centre / office area and guest head and shower. Two generous guest cabins fill the space aft of the companionway, while the owners' suite is forward.

This features a large, aft-facing bed on the centreline, with plenty of storage areas and ensuite head and shower. Twin opening doors provide privacy, but when left open create an enormous sense of space through the interior – encouraging you to make the bed and keep it tidy.

The ambience is modern and very bright with large hull and cabintop side windows and overhead hatches offering light and views. Fabric choices and joinery options can be specified by the owners.

Several interior arrangements are offered, as in two cabins - one head; two cabins - two heads; three cabins - two heads; and four cabins - two heads. Similarly, different rig and keel options allow for a more performance or cruising orientation depending on the owners' preferences. Similarly, provision is made in the deck layout to allow for a code zero or gennaker to fly from the permanent bowsprit and boost downwind sail area.

The combination of innovative features and attention to detail Philippe Briande and the design team have brought to this project has impressed commentators with the Sun Odyssey 440 garnering several awards on its debut last year. These include: 2018 "Sail Best Boat"; 2018 "European Yacht of the Year - Family Cruiser"; 2018 "Most innovative" - Cruising World; 2018 "Best sailing yacht up to 65ft" - Asia Boating Award.

Ivor Wilkins



PRINCIPAL SPECIFICATIONS	
Overall length	13m
Hull length	12.64 m
Waterline length	12m
Beam	4.29m
Displacement	8.561 kg
Standard keel draft	2.3m
Shoal keel draft	1.6m
Engine power	Yanmar 45 HP
Fuel capacity	200 litres
Water capacity	330 litres
Standard sail area	90.3m ²
Performance sail area	98.37m ²
Designers	Philippe Briand Piaton Yacht Design Jeanneau Design
NZ Agents	Orakei Marine

