



The new Dehler 38 from Germany has a versatile cockpit and keen racing configuration. That makes her slick and sleek, with plenty of speed.

The marketing literature promotes the new Dehler 38 as a cruiser-racer, but reversing the term is far more accurate. This is a seriously-fast production boat – best suited to those passionate about white-knuckle racing, and the occasional bit of fast cruising.

Don't feel guilty if you're unfamiliar with the Dehler brand – pronounced day-ler – it's arrived in New Zealand only recently. However, the German marque has been around for decades and carries a highly-respected reputation for production-built speedsters.

But Dehler's fortunes suffered a serious setback following the 2008 Global Financial Crisis. It was saved from oblivion when Hanse, another German boatbuilder, bought it. Westhaven's Windcraft is New Zealand's Hanse dealer so it has been a natural fit to add Dehler yachts – including the newly launched Dehler 46 – to its range of boats on offer.

Dehlers are the Yang to Hanse's Yin. Hanse yachts are one of the world's easiest-to-sail production boats, designed for hassle-free cruising, though their small, self-tacking

Spirited SPEEDSTER

Words by **Lawrence Schäffler** Photos by **Will Calver**





The interior fitout includes some nice features, such as a wine locker, double sink galley and wide quarter berths.

headsail sacrifices performance, particularly downwind. Dehlers, by contrast, are all about speed – and you need an able, willing crew to exploit their full potential.

The Dehler 38 is the first of the range to be designed by Hanse's in-house team, Judel/Vrolijk, rather than by Dehler's designers. This is the third Dehler in New Zealand, following two 41s which have arrived in the last few months.

Launched at last year's Dusseldorf Boat Show, the Dehler 38 quickly nabbed a string of accolades. These include being voted Boat of the Year by Cruising World, Sailing World and Voile





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The bathroom, midships, is divided between a shower/vanity and head. LEFT: A generous for'ard berth with good storage capacity makes for comfortable living onboard.

magazines. She recently won the European Yacht of the Year and was elected Boat of the Year 2014 in France.

This was the first time in decades that the same boat nabbed both awards; the last double recipient was also a Dehler. So the Dehler 38 has begun life with a bang, and recently won the ORCi offshore and inshore nationals in Europe.

SPEED GENES

The narrow beam, plumb bow and lack of a cockpit table immediately hint at the Dehler 38's racing pedigree, but there are plenty of other clues. Consider that there are three options for trimming the main – a German mainsheet system in which the mainsheet exits the end of the boom and runs forward to the

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mast before running down the sidedecks, a vang and a full-width traveller across the cockpit sole.

Aerodynamically, the boat presents a sleek, slippery profile. The coachroof's rounded surfaces are all about low-drag and they're accentuated by the flush-fitting deck hatches, the sheets and lines that run under the coachroof, the drop-down cleats and the uncluttered decks.

And then there's the restraining strap in the galley to keep the chef pinned in place on starboard tack – an unusual sight on a production boat.

The wide, open cockpit is designed for action-packed racing. Without a table there is plenty of space for the trimmers to strut their stuff. There are six winches: a set of primaries and

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secondaries on the coaming and two smaller coachroof winches either side of the companionway for halyards, reefing lines, outhaul and vang.

I like the cockpit's flexible geometry – if you are shorthanded you can elect to run the jib and main sheets to the rear winches, within easy reach of the helmsman. It's also easy to tweak the traveller, just forward of the twin helms. There are no bags for tailing lines, so the sailors will need to be on top of their game to prevent snarl-ups in the heat of battle.

The absence of a cockpit table has a downside: there's no place to mount a chartplotter. This isn't crucial for round-



The Dehler 38 has twin helmstations, with electronics to hand, although there's no room to mount a chartplotter; rope controls can be moved to be close to the helm for short-handed sailing.

the buoys racing, but most owners would want one for offshore/overnight events. As an option they can fit a permanent table and chartplotter but it would impact on the crew's grinding room, or make do with a portable nav unit.

A business-oriented cockpit wouldn't be much good without an appropriate sail plan. The standard 38 is equipped with a keel-stepped mast. Reasonably tall and tapered at 17.82m above the water line, it carries a 79.3m² sail plan, comprising a 43.7m² fully-battened mainsail and a 105%, 35.6m² tri-radial jib. The pulley system on the split back stay adjusts mast bend.

The rig is counterbalanced by a two-metre fin keel with a 2.2 tonne bulb – about a third of the boat's overall seven tonnes. Construction is lightweight balsa sandwich. A taller, carbon mast, deeper keel and lighter bulb are available as competition options, though I'm not sure you'd need them.

It all adds up to an exceptionally frisky, spirited racer – and one you'll need to control with a firm hand. She's super-responsive and fast. We close-reached at around 9.5 knots in 17 knots of breeze apparent and, with everything sheeted in tight, climbed upwind at a steady eight knots.

Even with limited time for experimenting we managed to point at 30 – 31 degrees. Pushing it to the high twenties took the edge off the sails' drive, as you'd expect.

The trick with the Dehler 38, though, is to have a dedicated crewman on the mainsail. She rounds up quickly in the gusts and, for casual sailing, de-powering the mainsail is the easiest option.



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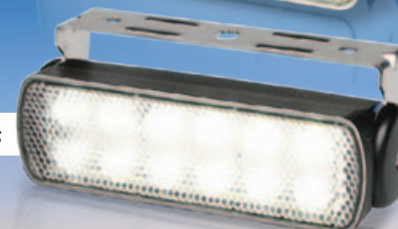
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Dehler 38

- **loa** 11.3m
- **lwl** 10.4m
- **beam** 3.75m
- **keel** 2m, standard
 - 2.2m competition option
 - 1.6m shallow option
- **weight** 7 tonnes standard
- **ballast** 2.2t standard
 - 2.5t shallow
 - 1.9t competition option
- **mast** 17.82m standard
 - 18.55 competition
- **Sail area** 79.3m² standard
- **I** 15.11m, **J** 4.36m, **P** 14.5m, **E** 5.2m
- **Engine** 30hp Volvo Penta
- **water tank** 300 litres
- **fuel tank** 160 litres



This is certainly the strategy you'd adopt for cruising, even if it sacrifices a little speed.

INTERIOR

After absorbing the performance theme on deck you'd expect a fairly Spartan interior, but the Dehler 38 is surprisingly stylish, roomy and comfortable, and the abundance of timber creates a warm, cosy atmosphere.

Two layouts are available: two or three-cabin. This, the three-cabin version, has a V-berth double in the forepeak and two identical cabins aft, under the cockpit. All share a single bathroom, midships to port. It's divided between a separate vanity section and the head/shower further forward. In the two-cabin version you gain a big sail locker in place of the port aft cabin.

The galley is immediately opposite. Given the Dehler's racing pedigree, it's a compact area but perfectly serviceable with plenty of storage and good, practical features. The fridge, for example, has access through the top and front, and I like the splash guard on the front of the bench – a nice touch.

For me the most attractive part of the Dehler 38's interior is the saloon – in particular the novel, curved lockers on either side which are at head height when seated. They give the saloon a much softer, receptive feel. An L-shaped settee extends the full length of the starboard side, with a shorter settee to port side.

The centreline table has drop-down leaves and contains a smart, vertical drawer for a few bottles of wine. The nav station to port has a dedicated seat, but it's modestly-sized and wouldn't be a serious option for traditional chartwork. I like the light control panel on the galley island, allowing you to select several presets and dim the attractive recessed LED lighting.

At around \$430,000 the Dehler 38 is approximately \$40,000 more than the Hanse 385 at around \$386,000. Deciding between them will demand plenty of soul-searching among prospective buyers: easy cruiser or serious competitor for Friday afternoon club racing?

Yes, of course there's a bit of crossover in both – but if you find your fingers twitching uncontrollably when other boats pass you, you might lean to the Dehler 38. 