

If you don't want the twin wheels, she's available with a tiller

Dehler 34



The original Dehler 34 marked a turning point in the history of Dehler yachts. Can the new 34 do the same? Graham Snook tests her to find out

In the mid-1980s, two interesting things happened at Dehler Yachts. It went from making cruisers and racers to focusing on performance cruisers, and it began thinking about brand and marketing the Dehler name. Before then, its boats had names like Optima, Duetta and Sprinta, but the Dehler 34 marked a new direction for the German builder.

Thirty years on, Dehler, now owned by Hanse Yachts, has launched its new 34. Will she be as revolutionary? In a word, no. But is she better than the original? Most definitely.

Performance

It was a crisp December morning but, for the most part, a Force 2-3 was all that the wind could muster. When the breeze did pipe up to a Force 4, the sound of the water flowing out from under the flat transom grew louder, the helm came alive and she was a lot more responsive. More importantly, she registered some

decent speeds – almost 7 knots in 10.2 knots of apparent wind. It happened so infrequently that I was unable to enjoy her on all points of sail, but if she'd had a gennaker, even in a Force 3 we could have had a lot of fun.

At the helm

As this boat hadn't yet been delivered, the footblocks were still to be fitted at the twin

wheels – it's up to the owner to decide where they would prefer to have them. Even without them, grip around the helm was good, not that we had cause to test my angle of vanishing stability. With the backstays running forward from the aft quarters, unless you're sitting on the flat, raised coaming outboard, there is a risk of bashing into them, especially if you're standing to windward as she heels, or get up quickly at night, for instance.

Apart from that, the helm position is good. The mainsheet winches and traveller controls are all within reach of the helms, and there are instrument pods forward of the wheels, which, on the boat I sailed, will take a 7-inch chartplotter, while other instruments can be fitted either on the coaming in front of the helm or in the pod above the companionway hatch. You can have a tiller, which is mounted forward of the mainsheet track, but unless they race or mainly daysail, I reckon most owners will opt for the twin wheels on a Jefa steering system.

Design & construction

She blends in seamlessly with the rest of the Judel/Vrolijk-designed Dehler range; from a distance it's difficult to tell which model you're looking at. This is no bad thing when the styling is sharp and clean. That long, sharp window line on

Dehler 34 – Performance on test

Point of sail	Apparent wind angle	Apparent wind speed	Speed through the water
Close-hauled	30°-32°	8.4-11 knots	4.1-5.4 knots
Fetch	60°	8.0-11 knots	5.4-6.8 knots
Beam reach	90°	6.0-6.7 knots	4.8-5.3 knots
Broad reach	120°	3.7-5.0 knots	3.5-4.3 knots
Run	180°	4.4-4.6 knots	3.3-3.5 knots

NEW BOAT TEST

There's a clear view forward from the helm and the pushpit makes a comfortable back rest



The cockpit is wide and the coamings are low, but they're comfortable to sit on



the coachroof is deceptive, though – the actual windows aren't nearly as big as the exterior glazing suggests.

The hull is hand-laid glassfibre with an end-grain balsa core, but solid GRP around the through-hull fittings. Below the cabin sole is a carbon fibre-reinforced tray moulding which takes the loads from the keel-stepped mast and L-shaped keel (1.95 or 1.5m draught). A racier model is available with lightweight cabin furniture, a taller carbon mast and a deeper T-keel.

Unlike most new cruisers, which have to allow space for twin aft cabins, Dehler has opted for fine aft sections with less buoyancy to improve her handling and performance.

Deck layout

The cockpit is wide and low. If you sit on the comfortably bevelled coaming, there's a recess on the edge of the cockpit seats to dig your heels into as she heels over.

There's the option of a fixed cockpit table. Without one, it's easy to move around and work winches and lines, but there's nothing for crew sitting in the cockpit to brace their feet against. With the table you gain security, but lose that freedom of movement.

The low coamings (just 27cm/10in high) don't give much back support, and it's a long reach down to brace yourself when you're standing in the cockpit.

While the cockpit has excellent stowage for larger items in the hull-depth lazarette beneath the starboard helm and the cavernous port locker, there are no rope bins or cubbyholes for smaller items.

Moving forward on deck, the handrails stop short of the mast, where the mainsheet comes down from the gooseneck to the deck. This happens at the point where the inner shrouds constrict

the space over the deck. My usual action when going forward is to hop on the coachroof to avoid swinging on the inner shrouds, but with the mainsheet there I had to be wary not to trip over it.

Sailplan

She carries 700 sq ft of sail (65m²) on her Seldén mast, which has two sets of swept-back spreaders and the excellent MDS batten car arrangement to reduce friction. Her fully-battened mainsail is trimmed via a double-ended German mainsheet system, led back to a Lewmar 40ST Race winch just forward of each wheel. She has a 105% jib and there's an option for a carbon bowsprit, but the overhanging bow roller already has a mounting point for a gennaker.

Living aboard

The interior is generally good, with the same high-quality joinery and fittings as the Dehler 38, 42 and 46. She's got the lovely wood-rich roll-top lockers, the large table (straight from the 42) with its four-bottle drawer inside. She also has the same bicolour reading lights, touch-panel lighting switch and LED striplights set in panels in the headlining, outboard of the



The mainsheet may be a trip hazard for crew standing on the cabin top

Key cruising features

The fold-down transom encloses the aft end of the cockpit but cannot be opened from water level

There is excellent deck stowage for larger items in the cavernous cockpit locker and large lazarette beneath the starboard helm



She has fine aft sections to improve speed and handling characteristics

The sloped cockpit coaming is comfortable to sit on when she heels, although the mainsheet transverses it on both sides

Only the two aft sections of the coachroof glazing are windows, but they do open to allow ventilation

The German mainsheet system crosses the top of the coachroof, which makes walking past the shrouds a little more tricky

roll-top lockers. One nice feature is a hole cut below these lights outboard, so when the cabin lights are on, they illuminate the inside of the lockers.

The two long, straight saloon seats will make good sea-berths if lee cloths are fitted. Under the starboard berth is mostly stowage, accessed from the top. The house batteries are under the aft end of seat and the battery charger is behind the aft seatback, so this is not the berth you want when she's plugged into shore power.

To port, the under-bunk stowage consists of two drawers, which I really like; it saves uprooting yourself or your guests to get at things stowed underneath.

Unfortunately the 34 has some of the bugbears I found on the 42 six months ago, like the lower shelf in the heads digging into your back when sitting on the toilet (which no doubt will be fixed in time), and sharp-edged extruded aluminium locker handles, some of which could hurt unwary crew as the boat lurches about in a rough sea. These are minor issues, though, which wouldn't be hard for an owner to put right.

Going down the companionway, if she's hard over on starboard tack, it would be easy to end up in the heads unless you've

shut the 'uni-door', which isolates either the toilet or the whole heads/shower compartment from the rest of the boat.

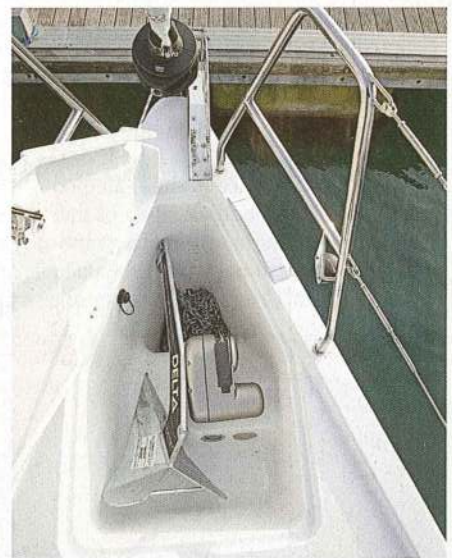
To be frank, I felt the uni-door made using the toilet a faff. You have to walk forward into the compartment, turn around, close the door and walk aft to get into the heads. If the door had hinges forward, I could have walked straight in and closed the door behind me. A second Perspex door in the shower compartment could keep the water in and let in more light; and if anyone needs a sink while

the heads is occupied, there are two of them in the galley, just one step away.

The shower/heads compartment is a good size, and the invisible magnet that holds the toilet cover up is a nice touch. I couldn't find an obvious place to keep a loo roll, though.

The water tank is under the 2.09m (6ft 10in) long V-berth in the forepeak, which robs stowage space from the forecabin to give it to the saloon. There is a hanging locker to port, shelved lockers to starboard and a deep-fiddled shelf running along the hull on each side. With a dark-tinted flush hatch overhead and a light under a panel

Many cruisers offer a bit more living space, but they won't be as swift or as enjoyable to sail



Unlike some anchor lockers (see p80), this one allows plenty of 'fall' for the chain

forward, it's no the brightest of cabins, but given its primary purpose is for sleeping, that's no bad thing.

The aft cabin berth is a really good size, and it goes over the centreline as you can see from the tube for the rudder stock at the foot of the berth. Even so, with 1.75m (5ft 9in) at its widest and 1.96m (6ft 5in) of length, there's plenty of room for two.

If two people are to sleep in here under way, you'll need to swap the



The saloon is well laid out with good stowage and sea-berths on either side

double mattress for two singles and fit a leecloth between them.

Galley

Unless you prepare food on one of the two sink covers, there isn't a great deal of usable work surface in the L-shaped galley. There is a handy area aft of the stove for ingredients waiting to go into pans, but nowhere to stand with space in front of you. The fridge has openings

in the top and at knee level. The bin is inboard, under the sink.

Outboard are two roll-top lockers, which don't quite open high enough and leave an aluminium strip at head height as you lean forward to get things out of them.

There is a shelf for cups and glasses in the aft locker, where there's also a recessed area for bottles. The forward of the two lockers has a decent fiddle, but no shelf. Aft of the stove, under the galley

top is a handy cupboard and a nice long drawer, which would be good for cutlery and utensils, although it's not divided.

Chart table

The aft-facing, inboard-hinged chart table is a reasonable size and 7cm (3 in) deep. The bicolour light on a stalk takes a corner of the table top out of action but even so, there's room for an A2-sized chart. If you do want a few inches more width, the light could be mounted on a vertical surface, leaving the table clear.

The switch panel is outboard, in one of the roll-top lockers. Your pilot books would be kept in these lockers, behind the navigator's back, or in the drawers under the port-side saloon seats. It would be tempting to leave the roll-top lockers open at sea, but if the boat were to lurch off a wave at the wrong moment I can envisage some nasty scars to the navigator's head, especially if they are more than 6ft tall.

Maintenance

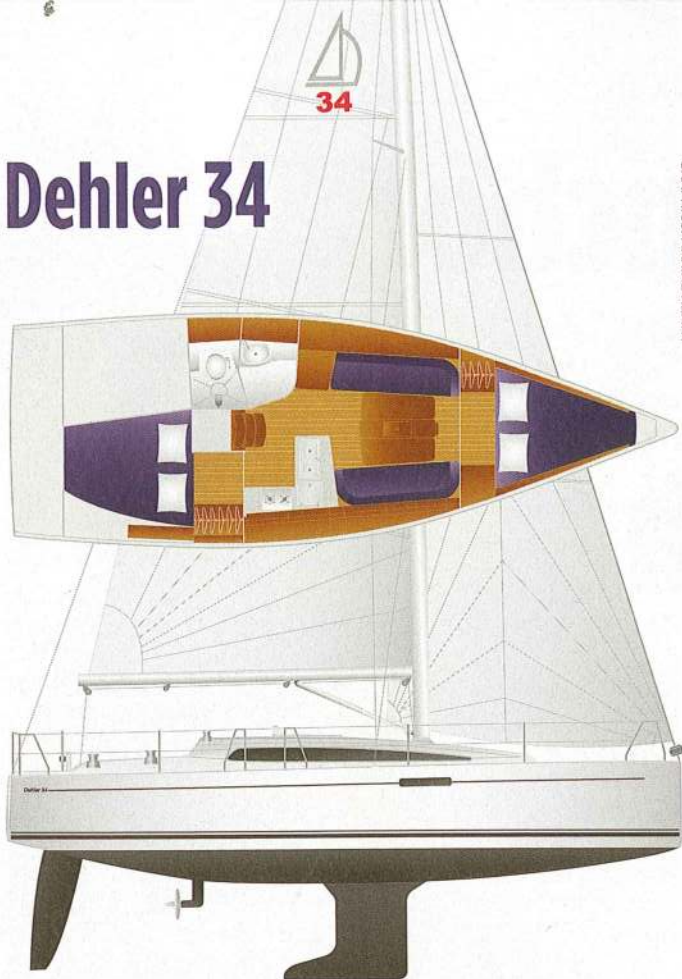
The fuses are behind a panel under the chart table. Access to the engine is via the companionway steps and inspection hatches on both sides. The raw water strainer is tucked away at the back, and access to the engine's impeller is restricted by a screwed-in panel – I'd prefer a simple slot in the panel, like a washboard. All other service points are easy to tend.



The L-shaped galley is good, but lacks worktop space

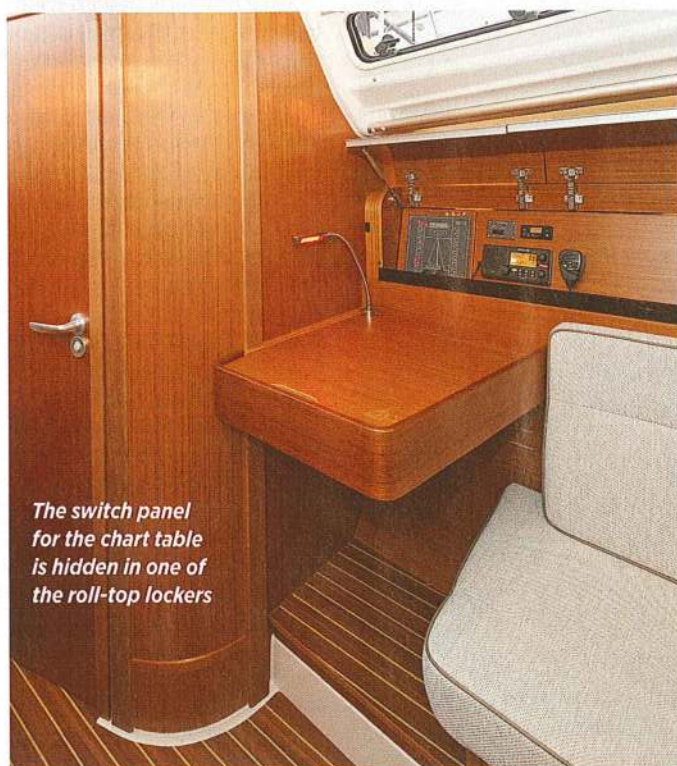
Dehler 34

GRAPHICS: MAXINE HEATH



FACTS AND FIGURES

- **Price** £165,818 inc VAT
- **LOA** 10.70m (35ft 1in)
- **LWL** 9.60m (31ft 6in)
- **Beam** 3.60m (11ft 10in)
- **Draught** 1.95m (6ft 5in) as tested, or 1.55m (5ft 1in), or 2.1m (6ft 9in)
- **Displacement** 5,950kg (13,117 lb)
- **Ballast** 2,100kg (4,630 lb)
- **Ballast ratio** 35.3%
- **Sail area** 65m² (700 sq ft)
- **SA/D ratio** 20.1
- **Diesel** 160 litres (35 gal)
- **Water** 230 litres (51 gal)
- **Engine** 30hp saildrive
- **RCD category** A
- **Designer** Judel/Vrolijk & Co./Dehler
- **Builder** Dehler Yachts
- **UK Agent** Inspiration Marine Group
- **Tel** 02380 457008
- **Website** www.dehler.co.uk



The switch panel for the chart table is hidden in one of the roll-top lockers

OUR VERDICT ON THE BOAT

What's she like to sail?

I got a pleasing glimpse at her potential speed when the apparent wind did increase into double digits. If we'd had a gennaker she would have been faster and I'd have been the proverbial cat who got the cream. The helm was a comfortable weight but the Jefa steering wasn't as light as on other boats with a similar setup – merely a comment, not a criticism.

Sitting outboard, it's easy to trim the mainsail from the helm, although when tacking and hardening up, it was easier to stand between the wheels and take the slack out of the mainsheet. Seated at the helm, the space is confined by the pushpit and backstay, but the pushpit does make a good backrest.

Even in a gentle breeze she was enjoyable to sail, but with a few more knots she'll transform into something a lot more fun and involving, eagerly responding to the wheel. There is plenty of room to work in the cockpit, and sitting on the sloped coaming is comfortable, although you do have to be aware of the mainsheet, which is led up the coaming to a winch by the wheel.

What's she like in port and at anchor?

Although the coamings around the cockpit are low, the curved area at the forward end is worth fighting for. The seats aren't that long, at 1.52m (5ft), so lounging here is more comfortable than lying with feet overhanging and resting against a wheel pedestal.

The windlass is set below deck level but there is room for the chain to fall without piling up. The pop-up cleats look good, but there isn't a fair lead from the bow roller to a cleat; the cheek of the roller and leg of the pulpit get in the way. These cleats could also do with rubrails on the hull nearby, to protect the glassfibre from chafe when mooring to low pontoon cleats.

Access to the shower and toilet compartment in the heads requires needless effort, requiring those in need to walk around the door like a kissing gate, rather than straight through the doorway. The galley is a little small, but the saloon and cabins are all a decent size. The aft cabin especially has a vast berth, even with the rudder post taking space from the inboard far corner.

Would she suit you and your crew?

She's designed for people who enjoy sailing, which might sound odd because, as readers of this fine publication we all enjoy sailing. But rather than just being out on the water, a Dehler owner will know about and feel the need to adjust sail shape. Whether they'll be doing that cruising from port to port, on short-handed passage races or racing around the cans or daysailing with family at the weekend, it matters not, the Dehler 34 rewards those who like to tweak.

Many cruisers offer more living space, but they won't be as swift or as enjoyable to sail. Dehler is known for fast cruisers with a comfortable motion under sail and it built that reputation on the first Dehler 34, thirty years ago. This 34 is true to the original in that she sails very well, has a good turn of speed, but is still comfortable enough to cruise with your friends or family without feeling like you're on a racing yacht. She's not extreme in any way; she's a good-looking, quick and enjoyable boat to sail. What more could you ask for?

Would she suit your style of sailing?

CREEK CRAWLING



COASTAL PORT-HOPPING



OFFSHORE PASSAGE-MAKING



TRADE WIND VOYAGING



HIGH-LATITUDE ADVENTURE

