



# Hanse vs Bavaria

German reliability and boatbuilding quality at a sensible price are hard to beat if you're looking for a 34-36 footer, says Peter K Poland

**O**ver the last quarter of a century four builders have dominated the European market for volume-produced 34-36ft sailing cruisers: two French and two German.

The French duo, Beneteau and Jeanneau, was covered in last month's PBO, so here come the Germans – Bavaria and Hanse.

Unlike the more fashion conscious French, these two manufacturers have evolved their ranges at a more sedate and conservative pace.

While the French were fast to follow new stylistic trends such as hull chines, curvy coachroofs and mainsheet arches, Bavaria and Hanse have instead tended to evolve their easily recognised house styles.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR



**Peter K Poland** crossed the Atlantic in a 7.6m (25ft) Wind Elf in 1968 and later spent 30 years as co-owner of Hunter Boats. He is now a freelance journalist and PR consultant

True, they have – like the French – reduced overhangs and pushed towards plumb bows and sterns. And topsides have grown progressively higher. Both these trends greatly increase interior volume for a given overall length.

Bavaria and Hanse have also embraced greater beam and placed bulbs at the base of their keels to lower the centre of gravity (CG) and reduce overall weight.

But by and large today's Bavaria still looks like a Bavaria and a Hanse still looks like a Hanse – albeit modern ones.

As is the case with Mercedes or Volkswagen cars, conservative styling is often the German way, which many buyers find reassuring.

Bavaria and Hanse started production at different times. The first yacht rolled out of Bavaria's factory in 1978. Hanse, however, didn't get going until 1993. What's more its early models were not 'new' but built from 'second-hand' Scandinavian mould tools. This ruse reduced the time taken to get into production and cut costs – thereby leading to low prices.

Its first truly 'in house' model appeared in 1999, and Hanse has stuck loyally to the same designers ever since. By working

with the German Judel/Vroljik team from 1999, Hanse has been able to develop its range in a steady, consistent and Germanically logical way. And it shows.

## Design teams

Early Bavarias were designed by Axel Mohnhaupt. He drew pretty yachts with sweeping and elegant lines. Then in the early 1990s Bavaria moved to J&J – a Slovenian company that not only designed the yachts but also built the plugs, mould tools and even the pre-production boat.

This gave Bavaria a huge advantage over its rivals. It saved time and enabled the factory to put each new J&J model straight onto the production line.

J&J says its work for Bavaria began in 1992 and it was the exclusive supplier of concepts, design and engineering of all products – sail and power – until 2008. Sales rose close to 3,000% during this period and Bavaria became the world's most profitable boatbuilder.

Following on from J&J, Bavaria transferred its sailboat range to Bruce Farr's design office in 2008.

Farr first made his name on the racing

Enthusiastic sailing for a pair of Bavaria 36s



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on the 'classic'. If you can find a 340 in good condition, it's well worth considering.

### Broadening appeal

Mohnhaupt's 1991 **Bavaria 350** (35ft 3in) is a bigger boat than its 340 predecessor. It weighs 700kg more, beam is 4in wider, freeboard is taller and overhangs are shorter. Ballast ratio and DLR are both lower. And its rig is masthead with a large genoa. Times were changing.

It came in Owner and Charter versions and *Yachting Monthly* summarised it saying: 'the interior is a good compromise between seagoing and in-harbour comfort with a very good chart table and big saloon.'

'The sleeping cabins are on the small side but the stowage is excellent. But the third version of the model, the Sportline, was the sign of things to come. This had a simplified inventory, lower specification and a reduced price, although the basic boat was still a good-quality product. It launched the idea of Bavarias as a low-price option.'

The 1998 Bavaria 36 and 1999 Bavaria 34 were the first J&J designs in this size bracket and showed how the new generation differed from its predecessor.

Available with two- or three-cabin layouts to suit private owners and/or charter companies, these models sold in large numbers. They never set out to be racers, aiming fair and square at the family cruising market.

### Owners' experiences

Rod Conway told me he has owned his 2000 **Bavaria 34** for 11 years and has had no issues or problems. 'I regularly sail the west of Scotland and the Firth of Clyde. She points well and sails well in heavy weather – a very balanced boat,' he said.

'The accommodation is generous. There are aft and forward double cabins and the saloon is large, as is the chart table. The boat is set up for single- or short-handed sailing and has in-mast mainsail reefing.'

Rod told me he has upgraded the boat, fitting Dek-King deck covering, a new sprayhood and

bimini, re-covering the saloon settees 'finding the original floral pattern quite boring!' and buying new Saturn sails.

Jill Moffatt and Charles Quayle have been equally pleased with their 2001 two-cabin Bavaria 34, telling me: 'When we were looking to buy, we set up a spreadsheet with a list of our preferred configuration and requirements and viewed a wide range of yachts within our budget.'

'We chose a Bavaria 34 as we wanted a yacht capable of taking us across the Channel and over to the Channel Islands, as well as one that we could sail double-handed in the years to come.'

'We wanted the largest boat we could



Alex Mohnhaupt-designed Bavaria 350

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circuit and was selected to design the latest First models for Beneteau. So Bavaria's decision to work with him – albeit on pure cruisers – was not as weird as it seemed. The 2014/15 European Yacht of the Year Award in the Family Cruiser category went to a Farr-designed Bavaria, proving the point.

Bavaria has also recently appointed Maurizio Cossutti to design its new Bavaria C57 flagship.

### What to look for

Those looking for a Bavaria in the 34-36ft size bracket should go right back to 1986, when the Axel Mohnhaupt-designed **Bavaria 340** was introduced.

Many of the early Bavarias were quite expensive and had rich, hand-built mahogany interiors that differ greatly from later volume-produced models. These early yachts were often separated into different ranges such as 'E' (Exclusive, with a better fit out and a lead keel), 'S' (Sport) and 'H' (Holiday, a lower price and aimed at the charter market).

The Bavaria 340 (LOA 35ft 3in) is an undeniably pretty yacht. Elegant bow and stern overhangs and a sleek, low roof give

it a Scandinavian look. Although the yacht's ends are relatively fine, there's still space for either one or two aft double cabins and a forward cabin.

A beam of 11ft 4in gives space for a comfortable saloon featuring a U-shaped settee to port and fully equipped linear galley to starboard. And the forward facing chart table, situated aft to port, is the real deal – not a token shelf.

The boat is medium displacement with a ballast ratio of 38.4%, DLR of 209 and SA/Disp ratio of 17.74.

Unusually for its time, the 340 has a pretty and easy-to-handle fractional rig. All in all, compared to modern high-freeboard and blunt-ended cruisers, its look borders

handle with just two people. We sail throughout the year so we wanted a good-sized wet locker, hence the purchase of the two-cabin version.'

The 34's accommodation fits the bill perfectly for their requirements.

'We've found the finish on the boat to be excellent and the arrangement of the accommodation and ample storage extremely practical,' they said.

'The wood is an attractive warm colour, so not too dark. The chart table is a good half-Admiralty size and the instrument panel is on a hinged door so it's easy to check connections or add new ones.

'The L-shaped galley is snug but that makes it secure when cooking under way and everything is to hand. We had air heating fitted after we bought the boat and were pleased that the holes for the ducting were pre-cut, making it simple and quick to install.

'We belong to the Little Ship Club and take part in a monthly winter series of 'Fast Cruises' – gentlemanly club racing, with a range of yachts – from October to March. We take two to four crew so needed decent width and length berths in the saloon and the option of a second cabin.

'We've even managed to win a race... OK, we were quicker at lowering our anchor than some others, so we went backwards more slowly!'

They sum up their Bavaria 34's performance, saying *Kioni* is a relatively light boat (though heavier than the equivalent size of Beneteau or Jeanneau) and sails well in light to medium conditions.

She can handle heavy weather but needs to be reefed early – they prefer lazy jacks and slab reefing to in-mast – and can struggle in a heavy swell.

'She doesn't point very high and isn't keen on sailing directly downwind, but as long as you offset a little she can pick up her skirts and get up a decent speed.'

The Bavaria 34 has served them well, cruising to Holland, North Brittany, the Channel Islands and down to the West Country.

Like many Bavaria owners, Jill and Charles are delighted with their purchase. 'We've been extremely pleased with *Kioni* and would definitely recommend buying a Bavaria yacht – especially the older models, where the saloon berths are over 6ft long.'

### Ideal layout

Clive Reece is equally pleased with his 2001 Bavaria 34 bought in 2011. He was looking at a Jeanneau 34 to replace his Moody 30, but when looking at her he was put off by the fact that all winches were on the coachroof. H also wasn't keen on the interior layout.



Spirited sailing for the Bavaria 36 *Bojangles* in Poole Bay

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'Next to the Jeanneau on the hard was a Bavaria 34 which seemed to have a better layout,' Clive said.

'We looked at several before finding *Wish* in Brixham. She was in excellent condition and had a layout that suited us as we mainly sail two-handed; genny winches near the helm, in-mast furling main, a 29hp engine and decent fuel and water capacity. We had a cabin heater fitted before we took delivery.

'She's excellent in all conditions and is very manoeuvrable under power. The interior is the three-cabin version finished in beautiful polished wood – unlike many new boats today. The third cabin makes a great

storage area, referred to as "the shed", as we rarely have more than four on board.'

The bigger **Bavaria 36** is equally popular, many owners buying ex-charter boats. A well-maintained example can be good value.

Malcolm Tindley told me he bought his Bavaria 36 in 2008. It had been on charter in Greece for the previous five years and he'd chartered the boat for three weeks on two occasions.

'Knowing the boat, I purchased without survey but had it hauled out for an hour's inspection and a one-hour test run on engine – both satisfactory.

'The two-cabin version suited us perfectly: a great forecabin, a larger aft cabin, larger heads, and a huge cockpit locker for storing everything over the winter. The saloon has two simple parallel berths and a nice layout in the galley.

'The fridge struggled in hot weather so I fitted two layers of loft insulation – a silver bubble wrap type – inside the fridge compartment with significant improvement.

'The Saildrive is a bonus when stern docking – it's as easy as reversing a car.

'The boat sails great in all conditions, but needs 10 knots of wind to get going. I regularly sail single-handed as it has well placed winches and roller furling on both jib and main. The downside is the mainsheet jammer and winch are on the cabin roof, so I bring the mainsheet back to the helm with turns on the winch.

'We've done nothing special in cruising the boat. My wife likes the southern Ionian and is happy to circle around a number of lovely locations, so long as the sun is shining and the sea is blue. The Lofrans windlass works well, but a failing on

Bavarias is the piles up and forward when

'We've had to do the regular things work n instruction m

### Trading

David Pearce Beneteau 31 bought in 2001 resides in Po

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'I paid €70, translated to days! It has purchased it alone and it's the effort of h gets harder would have summary I th and reliable occasional s good value.'

Viv Rose a changing his two-cabin B 'She had b in very good layout below

'The forec cabin comid storage spa cockpit lock – which you



LEFT Rod Conway's Bavaria 34 with new Dek-King fitted

Rod Conway



Bavaria 34 under sail

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Bavarias is the anchor locker. The chain piles up and needs someone to tease it forward when lifting.

'We've had no problems with the boat. I do the regular maintenance myself – things work much better after reading instruction manuals!'

### Trading up

David Pearce told me he replaced his Beneteau 311 with a 1999 Bavaria 36 bought in 2007 in France – where it still resides in Port de Bormes.

He added: 'I had it surveyed and it seemed sound enough. Looking at more recent Bavaria models, many used for holiday hire, mine seems to be more solid and with better quality fittings.'

'I paid €70,000 which at the time translated to £56,000. Those were the days! It has been lightly used since I purchased it. I occasionally take it out alone and it's easy to handle, apart from the effort of hoisting the mainsail. This gets harder as I get older. In-mast furling would have been a better option for me. In summary I think the older B36 is a solid and reliable if unexciting boat, ideal for the occasional sailor such as myself. And good value.'

Viv Rose also moved to a bigger boat, changing his Halberg-Rassy 29 for a two-cabin Bavaria 36.

'She had been well looked after and was in very good condition all round. The layout below suits us perfectly,' he said.

'The forecabin is huge and the rear cabin comfortable. There's loads of storage space and a massive, deep cockpit locker on the starboard side – which you lose in the three-cabin

**RIGHT** White bulkheads and mahogany trim down below in Peter Rolfe's Hanse 341

**BELOW RIGHT** Peter prefers a genoa to the small self-tacking jib for light winds in the Med



Peter Rolfe

version. She is fast but rather tender (more so than the HR 29) and prone to rounding up when the wind gets above 22 knots under full main and 155% genoa, so we put the first reef in early.'

However Viv finds problems when sailing single-handed. He has just two cockpit winches – that he can't reach from the wheel – so aims to fit two more on the aft mounting points moulded into the coaming. He's also unable to reach the mainsheet from the wheel.

He concludes, though, that these are minor points: 'Overall we are delighted with the Bavaria 36. My wife loves it and will now stay on the boat for much longer periods than in the HR 29. I'm taking a friend's boat down to the Canaries and taking part in the ARC in November. It's an HR 342 but I'd rather do the trip in my own Bavaria – so that's got to be saying something. You get a lot of boat for your money. The fittings are robust and she is



Peter Rolfe

doing very well for a 14-year-old boat. I'm very pleased that we bought her.'

Bill Montague traded up from a Beneteau 31 to his 2003-built Bavaria 36.

'It has given many years of pleasure,' he says. 'It sails very well in light conditions but I have to start reefing in winds around 20mph. For the price, the accommodation is superb and the facilities aboard are excellent. The layout is well thought out.'

Running costs included rectifying leaks in the teak-laid deck, replacing the leaking exhaust manifold and changing the two-blade prop to a bronze folding one. ➤

If you want a modern Bavaria, the Farr-designed 36 came out in 2010 and its upgrade – the prettier, re-styled 37 – in 2013. With short overhangs, high topsides and a beam of 12ft 1in this boat fits in a lot of accommodation. And a bulb keel gives a low CG, DLR of 201.6 and ballast ratio of 29.71%. A generous SA/Disp ratio set on an easily handled fractional rig provides above average performance. This model offers a lot.

### The competition

German competitor Hanse's early yachts have a sleek, conservative and pleasing look that has evolved and continued down the years. Judel/Vrolijk's 1999 Hanse 371 (36ft 10in) set the scene, selling in large numbers.

A bulb keel, DLR of 173.45 and ballast ratio of 37.73% spell good stability and performance while the nicely styled accommodation provides comfort aplenty.

The equally successful **Hanse 341** (2003) shares similar looks and style. Once again, a bulb keel provides a reassuring DLR of 203.59 and ballast ratio of 35.34%. Down below she has the then standard Hanse décor of white bulkheads and mahogany coloured wood, which to my eyes is very attractive.

Hanse 341 owner Peter Rolfe told me he chose his Owners version in preference to Bavaria and other similar yachts mainly because of sailing qualities and storage.

'I wanted a boat my wife and I could live on for six months at a time. The 341 is very fast in light air although she needs reefing early in heavy weather. However, even then she still tracks well with little weather helm. I installed a third reef, which I thought prudent for Biscay as I sailed her from the UK to Greece.

'She's also very good for short-handed sailing. My wife, a non-sailor, accompanied me, so much of the time I effectively sailed single-handed. I use a genoa in the Med rather than the self-tacker. This is more convenient for downwind sailing.'

And what about the accommodation? Peter said: 'It's excellent and well thought out and the finish generally good with only a few cosmetic problems with the interior varnish. The two aft lazarettes are cavernous and the walk-in port locker swallows a vast amount including dinghy, folding bikes and generator.'

### Go anywhere

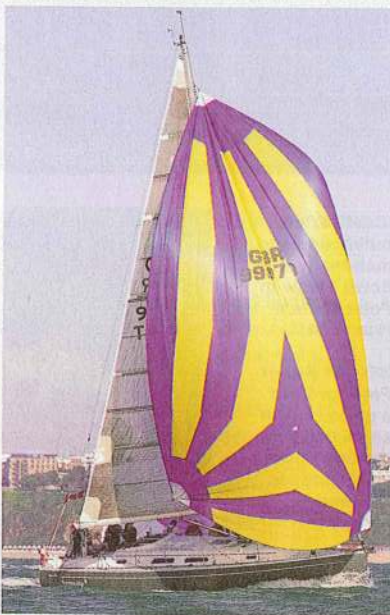
The 2006 **Hanse 370** (LOA 36ft 11in) – an elegant cruiser with a fractional rig and self-tacker – was another top seller. What's more it's a real 'go anywhere yacht'.

Australians Tony and Annie Jimmieson sailed their Hanse 370e ('e' stands for epoxy laminate version) around the world, including running the pirate gauntlet approaching the Red Sea, and Annie concluded her story saying: 'Our 370e has more than lived up to expectations and has coped with all that has been thrown at her.'

'In fact I would say that there were times



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Spinnaker power for this Hanse 370

that I knew the boat could do it even though I couldn't. She has come through 35,000 miles, looking really good.'

A year later Hanse introduced the 350 – another pretty cruiser with a self-tacker. This time, the deep-draught keel has sprouted a T-shaped torpedo while the shallower version sticks to a conventional bulb. Then in 2009 the upgraded 355 version appeared, offering two- or three-cabin versions. Like the 350, it has much to recommend it.

If you fancy something newer, have a look at the 2013 **Hanse 345**. Once again, bulb keel options offer stability with a 199.53 DLR and 32.78% ballast ratio. American magazine *Sail* summarised the 345 nicely: 'Hanse's new 345 is an excellent example of how to do it right... it looks quite sleek sitting in the water and successfully packs a lot of big-boat features into a fairly small package.'

David Musgrove of the Disabled Sailing Association told me the charity bought a

### The Hanse 345 introduced in 2013

345 after months of research.

'We already had a Hanse 350 and were really pleased with her. The 345 is slightly shorter and wider. The extra width gives more space in the cockpit and the coamings make it easier to board from the sides.'

'An added bonus was the swim platform and access to the stern of the boat. We've designed and built a bridge that uses this, enabling wheelchairs and the less mobile to board easily, wheelchairs going between the twin wheels.'

### Easy to handle

'She's an easy boat to handle and can carry up to eight people in the cockpit in reasonable comfort,' David said.

'Her really good sailing points are that she can be kept on an even keel in a strong wind by reefing the main and still maintains a top speed of about seven knots.'

David adds that handling under power astern is excellent, the cabin is light and airy, the berths are comfortable and the galley is well designed.

He recommends a larger engine than the standard 20hp that, while very economical, can struggle against a strong current.

'Our boats are worked very hard and although they cruise mainly locally they have been to the Channel Islands, France and join in the Eddystone Pursuit Challenge.'

He concludes: 'We're selling our nine-year-old Hanse 350 and replacing her with another Hanse. I've not yet found another vessel to beat Hanse for durability, easy sailing and great fun.'

Both these German builders therefore offer you plenty of options. Of course you should always get a survey before buying, just in case.

But they're well up with – or indeed ahead of – the game. Meanwhile Bavaria and Hanse press on with ever more and larger models. If you're looking for a 37- to 39-footer, the choice is even wider. More on those on another day.

