

FIND ME A...

£50K singlehanded cruiser

TO SAIL AROUND
THE UK

Graham Snook, a
boat tester of 20
years, scours the
market to help you
find your next yacht



Many British sailors dream of one day sailing around Great Britain, the island they call home. For some, including Phil, 71, it's the trip of a lifetime. It's on his bucket list, and he feels 2018 may be the last year such a trip will be possible.

Sailing around Great Britain is a wonderful way to spend a summer. From the idyllic sun-bathed Isles of Scilly and the rugged mountains of Wester Ross, to the bustling industrial fishing harbours and remote anchorages, wonderful pubs to tie up next to and amazing restaurants just a dinghy ride away. The wildlife is breathtaking too: puffins skim haphazardly across the water and basking shark, minke whales and dolphins look at you through glass-like

waves. Then there's the tides and weather; it's a challenge, a great sense of achievement and a reminder of how beautiful and diverse the island is. Not forgetting the people, from the harbourmasters that undercharge you, the cruisers you meet en route, and those you bump into at events, working together to show you how wonderful strangers can be.

Starlight 35



Bénéteau Oceanis 323

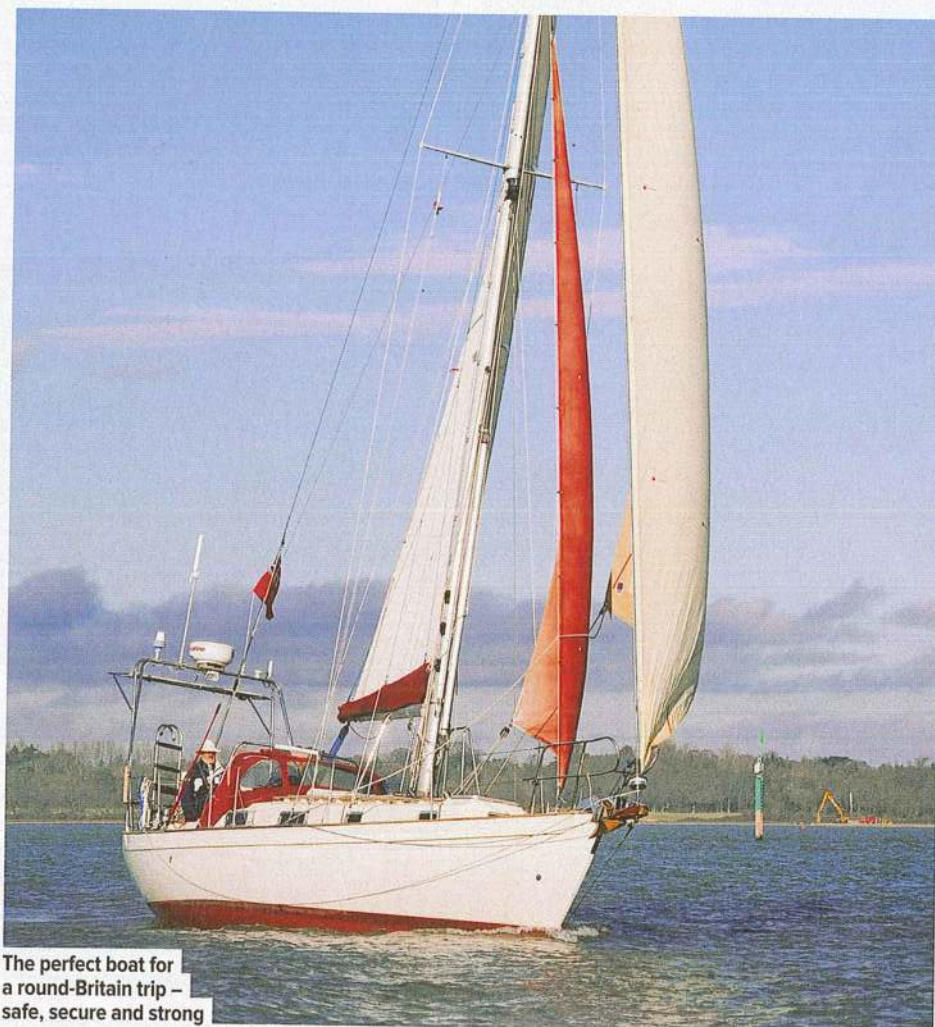


Hanse 315



It's these sorts of experiences that Phil is looking for, and his budget of £50,000 for a suitable boat should see him in good stead. There's also £5-10,000 in the budget for upgrades, as well as the money for the trip.

A Yachtmaster and ex-cruising instructor, Phil previously owned a Bavaria 32 for 10 years, cruising the south coast of England and north coast of France. Phil will have occasional crew, but for most of the trip he'll be sailing alone, so the boat must be easy to manage singlehanded. His plan after he has completed the trip is to sell her on reasonably soon, hopefully with minimal depreciation.



The perfect boat for
a round-Britain trip –
safe, secure and strong

Victoria 34

PRICE £45,000-£50,000 YEAR 1986-1999

The Victoria 34 ticks so many boxes for a round-Britain trip, and while the voyage is likely to be a series of day sails, the owner can sail safe in the knowledge that if they need to make a move to a safer harbour in punchy conditions, the Victoria 34 will look after them.

The Victoria 34 was designed by Chuck Paine just two years after he drew the Bowman 40 in 1983, and the smaller boat is clearly related with the long keel, skeg rudder, spoon bow, counter stern and pleasing sheer bearing more than a passing resemblance. On deck, the square-fronted, boxy coach roof and deep, solid teak-capped toerails are typical of Paine's many designs. The propeller is enclosed in the skeg, minimising the risk of picking up lines from the many pot markers around the coast.

Launched in 1986, the 34 was originally available with either wheel or tiller steering. The cockpit might not have the

space of modern yachts – less so if it has a wheel – but with only a small crew, it is deep and the high coamings offer protection from the elements and security when moving about. This boat is from an era before the bathing platform and fold-down transoms, so a removable ladder amidships or a fixed ladder on the transom will make boarding from the dinghy easier.

With a relatively slight draught of 1.47m (4ft 10in), anchoring close in to beaches or giving longer access time to rivers and sills will be a big advantage although the windward performance suffers. The long, flat-bottomed keel base will also enable the boat to dry out comfortably against harbour walls.

The standard yacht was rigged as a sloop with a keel-stepped mast, which may prove to be a bit of a handful, even with the mainsheet across the bridge deck and genoa winches to hand. Lucky then that it was also

SPECIFICATIONS

LOA 10.44m (34ft 3in)

LWL 8.64m (28ft 4in)

BEAM 3.23m (10ft 7in)

DRAUGHT 1.47m (4ft 10in)

DISPLACEMENT

5,769kg (12,719lb)

DESIGNER Chuck Paine

BUILDER Victoria Yachts

OWNERS' ASSOCIATION

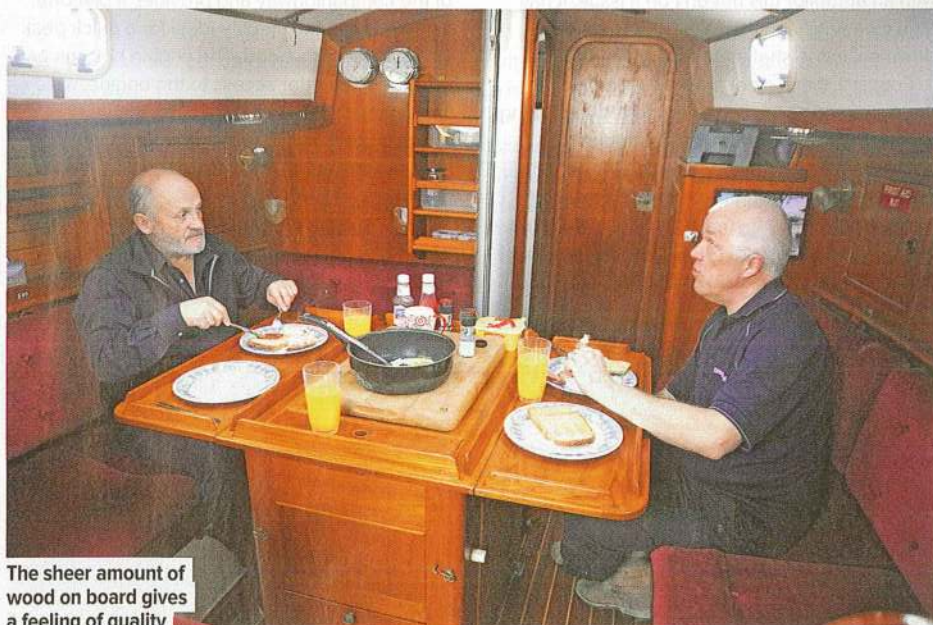
www.victoriashadow.co.uk

The square-fronted boxy coach roof is typical of a Chuck Paine design



available in a cutter configuration which gives more choice for setting the right amount of sail. It would be possible to have a smaller inner staysail (which could be adapted to be self-tacking) and a yankee staysail forward, making two easily managed sails. Or, one could opt for an overlapping genoa staysail for light wind use and larger inner staysail for breezier conditions.

Down below, the 34 has a little over 1.82m (6ft) headroom throughout, thanks to the raised coachroof. The interior layout might not be good for families, although the separate forward cabin and heads does make the prospect easier, but for a couple or lone sailor there is plenty of room. The compact galley sits at the bottom of the companionway to port and the flat floor gives way to the curve of the hull outboard while to starboard, there's the large chart table abaft of which lies a pilot berth – great as extra stowage for the equipment needed for a round-Britain trip or as a passage berth. The parallel saloon seating can be used for passage berths too. The boat has many good design details like



The sheer amount of wood on board gives a feeling of quality

a hanging locker in front of the chart table. Some yachts also have a grate of unvarnished teak here that drains into the bilge.

Despite the white GRP inner mould, which extends high enough to incorporate the seat

bases, and vee-berth forward, the Victoria 34 has a wonderful traditional quality about it. It was built in a time when solid wood on board was plentiful, and it really makes the boat feel like something that's a little bit special.

Starlight 35

PRICE £49,000-£80,000 YEAR 1991-1997

SPECIFICATIONS

LOA 11.0m (36ft 1in)

LWL 8.56m (28ft 1in)

BEAM 3.51m (11ft 6in)

DRAUGHT 1.80m (5ft 11in)

DISPLACEMENT

5,993kg (13,212lb)

DESIGNER

Stephen Jones

BUILDER Sadler /

Rival Bowman

OWNERS' ASSOCIATION

www.sadlerandstarlight.co.uk



Thanks to a long keel and deep skeg, the hull has good directional stability

The Starlight 35 works for a round-Britain cruise because it has a good turn of speed, is comfortable and well thought out – everything one has come to expect from designer Stephen Jones. The cockpit is well laid out, with the mainsheet just the other side of the wheel and the genoa winches a little further forward, but with an autopilot this needn't be an issue. It has high coamings and a bridge deck to hunker down on, in the shelter of the sprayhood.

Forward, it has a double bow roller and aft, the sugar-scoop transom incorporates a bathing platform with a swim ladder. The addition of a handle-cum-step on the transom would aid the lone sailor arriving or departing by dinghy – important for many rural Scottish anchorages.

The hull is easily driven, and thanks to a long keel and deep skeg, well mannered with good

directional stability. The long skeg is faired sweetly to halfway down the semi-balanced rudder to provide protection and support.

The engine is located quite far forward, and the shaft is fairly short so there's a fair distance between propeller and rudder. The engine is under a box that projects forward of the companionway and provides a platform halfway down the steps – ideal for a quick peak through the sprayhood. The engine box can be removed for better access to the engine, which is a great advantage for ongoing maintenance.

The boat was manufactured with a deep inner mould, which give a good finish in many areas, like

in the lockers behind the saloon seating, as well as framing the floorboards with a white surround.

The L-shaped galley has a rounded end and a circular sink making the most of the worktop shape. Outboard is a second sink, then a reasonably sized coolbox or fridge. The other side of the companionway is the large chart table. Like the rest of the boat, there are good fiddles here and enough room for instruments on the unit under the side deck – this started off as dark-grey GRP in earlier boats, but changed

to a more pleasing wood finish a few years later.

Forward is a decent-sized vee-berth while aft, there is a second cabin, for guests or extra stowage, and a heads compartment in GRP.

The 35 was available with three keel choices: standard with 1.80 (5ft 11in), a shallow-fin 1.52m (5ft) and most interestingly

the wing keel, with a wingspan so wide it would, if the sea bed was suitable, dry out on the wings. The wings are in an inverted-aerofoil shape, and pay off in medium-heavy winds, although in light winds they do increase drag a little. As the aim of the trip is to go round Britain, however, motoring in light winds wouldn't be out of the question

Most will have slab reefing so unless the boom has been upgraded to accept single or double-line reefing, a trip to the mast will be needed to reef. Consideration will need to be given to the easiest way to do this singlehanded.

The 35 is equipped with great fiddles throughout



The mainsheet is the other side of the wheel and the genoa winches further forward



Bénéteau Oceanis 323

PRICE £44,000-£55,000 YEAR 2006-2008

While the Bénéteau Oceanis Clipper 323 might not be the first choice of many, it's a great boat for coastal cruising, which is essentially what the trip could be – choosing the right weather and enjoying time ashore as necessary. The hull was derived from the Oceanis Clipper 311, the hull from the original Figaro 1 class, so it has form. Although the cockpit is a little exposed with low coamings, these are comfortable to sit on when heeled. As it's a lighter displacement, the loads

required to sail it are lighter too, so it'll keep sailing while slower, heavier boats are resorting to engine power. With the tiller steering it's fun to sail, but I wasn't as impressed with the wheel version, although its wheel can rotate on the pedestal to aid access to the bathing platform. Genoa winches are to hand in

the cockpit and it has a removable transom seat to give great access to the open transom, itself ideal for loading bags of shopping on board.

The 323 has a large heads which, although the shower isn't separated, makes living on board for longer periods more civilised. The aft cabin is also a good size, thanks to beams of yachts progressing aft when the 311 was launched in 1998.

The galley is a simple L-shape with enough stowage, but a little more workspace would be nice.

The chart table is aft facing and doesn't have a great deal of space for instruments or charts.

I'd be tempted to replace the vee-berth cushions and infill in the forward cabin with a decent mattress, maybe even opting for a 311 (saving £15,000) and having more money for adding the equipment to make it more functional.

The bow locker has plenty of room for fitting a windlass. While the 323 was available with shoal draught 1.45m (4ft 9in) and a lifting keel version drawing a meagre 0.80m (2ft 7in), I'd opt for the 1.8m deep draught for extra performance.

SPECIFICATIONS

LOA 10.0m (32ft 10in)

LWL 8.89m (29ft 2in)

BEAM 3.26m (10ft 8in)

DRAUGHT 1.80m (5ft 11in)

DISPLACEMENT

4,230kg (9,325lb)

DESIGNER Group Finot

BUILDER Bénéteau

OWNERS' ASSOCIATION

www.boauk.org

The removable transom seat gives great access to the open transom



The fashion at the time was for darker wood

Hanse 315

PRICE £44,000-£50,000 YEAR 2005-2007

Not to be confused with the Hanse 315 launched in 2016, this one is at least 11 years old, but it still has many good points that make it a viable choice. One of great thing about Hanse yachts is their self-tacking jibs which, once trimmed for close-hauled work, need little more attention, especially when short-tacking through narrow channels or close to headlands to avoid the worst of the tide. The only down side is that the sheet is taken to the coachroof winch

rather than the two genoa winches set on top of the coaming.

The Hanse 315 was available with a wheel or a tiller, the latter making access to the self-tacking jib sheet that bit easier. It's a pretty comfortable little cruiser that can sail nimbly when needed. The mainsheet can run across the centre of the cockpit with the wheel configuration, or to a padeye in the cockpit sole like the tiller version.

One may be lucky enough to find a 315 with a removable bowsprit, which could be used for a furling asymmetric or code zero (if finances allow) for lighter weather or off-the-wind work. Otherwise, the engine will take the strain.

The transom on the wheeled version has a fold-down seat, while the tiller version has a simple slide-in panel. Both give good access to the short bathing platform.

Down below, the accommodation is standard – good if a bit simple – with parallel seating in the saloon for off-watch down time for the owner or their crew. There's a reasonably sized heads compartment with access to the decent cockpit locker to port. Forward of this is the small forward-facing chart table, which lacks adequate stowage for books and the like. Still, this is less of an issue when there's only one of you on board.

The L-shaped galley is a little on the small side but again, it's perfectly practical, with a single sink, a fridge and a two-burner stove with an oven – just enough for rustling up small meals.

The Hanse 315 was available as shoal 1.40m (4ft 7in) or deep-draught 1.75m (5ft 9in) fin keel, both L-shaped with a deep spade rudder.

SPECIFICATIONS

LOA 9.45m (31ft 1in)

LWL 8.30m (30ft 9in)

BEAM 3.20m (10ft 6in)

DRAUGHT 1.75m (5ft 9in)

DISPLACEMENT

4,300kg (9,480lb)

DESIGNER Judel / Vrolijk / Hanse Yacht Design

BUILDER Hanse Yachts

OWNERS' ASSOCIATION

www.myhanse.com



The 315 is comfortable and nimble when needed