



PHOTOS ELLEN DEWAR

NOUVEAU **RICHE**

JOHN ZAMMIT finds innovation and relative affordability in Jeanneau's NEW Prestige 500 S sportsyacht





There's never been a better time to buy a boat and the choices just keep on coming. The strength of the AUD has seen new models arriving from overseas at prices that were unheard of a couple of years ago. But when a new concept craft arrives from a respected European manufacturer, we really sit up and take notice.

So it is with the Prestige 500 S, one of the latest offerings from respected French manufacturer Jeanneau. Known here mostly as a builder of sailing yachts, Jeanneau has been making powerboats since 1961 and the Prestige range for the last 20 years. Today, there are more than 2500 Prestiges from 35 to 60 feet on the water and around the world.

The Prestige range is Jeanneau's answer to those buyers looking for a higher level of luxury and refinement and specification in terms of fit and finish, sort of what Lexus is to Toyota. Launched more than 20 years ago, the range is based on a few simple concepts: good performance and sea-keeping qualities; all of the living spaces situated on one level; 360-degree panoramic views out of all the living areas; and each boat with an independent owner's suite.

The Prestige 500 S features three cabins and two heads. She is powered by twin 435hp Volvo Penta D6 engines coupled to IPS 600 pod drives. But what's unique about the boat is that instead of locating the main stateroom among all of



To keep things cool in the cockpit, just activate the optional electric retractable awning (top), meanwhile the skipper has great vision from the helm (above), and there's a pop-up TV (opposite inset) in the adjoining bulkhead. Opposite, top down: Sunroof brings the outside in; Saloon table folds over neatly to make a coffee table; Galley is aft and down a step to cockpit level.

the other accommodation, they've provided completely separate access via an aft staircase. The full-beam owner's suite is most unusual on a boat this size.

Add to that a dinghy garage, a huge electric sunroof, an aft galley, and the result is a practical, roomy and comfy boat that's put together well. She will be easily handled by a couple and, at under \$1m, represents top value.

EURO CHIC

The 500 S is a well-proportioned

boat, very European in styling — a series of large hull windows give the first hint that the interior is just a little different. Stepping onboard via the aft swimplatform, you range up a couple of steps to the cockpit. It's not overly big, but nicely set-up and very social. A large U-shaped lounge along the transom faces a high-low table, which drops to convert the setting to a comfortable sunlounge.

A four-panel sliding door separates the cockpit from the indoors. Fully retracted, the cockpit, galley and saloon become one large, combined

indoor/outdoor living area. Full-length side windows and a huge one-piece windscreen provide a sense of light and space. It's here that you start to get an appreciation of the concept of 360-degree panoramic views. An almost full-beam retractable sunroof, which we opened on a bright sunny day, adds a further dimension.

The aft galley to port is relatively compact and features an island bench with cupboards underneath and a full domestic-size fridge-freezer opposite. Adjacent is an L-shaped counter incorporating a three-burner ceramic cooktop, an icebin recessed into the bench and beside that, the sink. The icebin is a good idea for chilling drinks quickly, but I'm not sure about the location, taking up valuable space in what is an already limited amount of bench top.

Covers are provided so that anything not in use converts to bench space — if you were preparing a meal here using the cook top and sink, you wouldn't have too much room left otherwise. There's storage under-bench as well as a microwave and overhead cupboards incorporate an extractor fan. I liked the way the side window continues between the bench top and the overhead cupboards so even the galley is a room with a view.

Forward of the galley, there's comfortable seating around a fold-up table and a lounge opposite to starboard and forward the helm. The layout is open-plan. The flooring and cabinetry throughout is Alpi, a man-made, reconstituted timber with plenty of advantages. It's hard wearing, moisture resistant and eco-friendly, with a consistent grain. But to my eye it looks a tad synthetic. Having said that, the high-gloss cherry finish with contrasting light leather seating and darker leather fascia is quite elegant.

The starboard helm is comfortable, with good vision forward and to the sides, but it's a bit hard to judge where the stern ends from here — so I'd be inclined to add the optional cockpit controls. There's a dual helm seat, inbuilt footrest, adjustable sports wheel and a nice, wide dash. Consequently, there's plenty of room to accommodate the factory-fitted electronics pack including two Raymarine E120W touchscreens, GPS-plotter, fishfinder, 48nm digital radar and autopilot, plus an array of Volvo Penta gauges and the latter's EVC (Electronic Vessel Control).

The engine controls and joystick fall easily to hand and, interestingly,





VIP guest cabin in the bow (top) has a double island berth that parts to form two singles (above middle). A separate entrance leads to the luxurious full-beam owner's stateroom (above), the en suite (top right) with separate shower and electric head. The second guest cabin (middle right) has side-by-side single berths that can slide together forming a double.

this boat is also fitted with a bowthruster. Now many will tell you that you don't need a bowthruster with joystick docking, and that's true, but let me assure you it does make life easier when you want to give the nose a bit of a nudge without affecting the stern.

CABIN CAPERS

Going forward and down four steps, the roomy accommodation has good head-height and a light and airy feel courtesy of large hull windows in all cabins. The VIP guest cabin in the bow features a large island bed that splits to form two separate berths and, with inbuilt benches either side and ample storage and hanging space, there's room aplenty to stow all your gear for those trips away. There's even a pop-up vanity unit.

A second guest cabin to port features side-by-side berths that slide together to form a large double and here, too, are good storage and hanging spaces. Across the companionway to starboard is a contemporary bathroom with a separate door providing en suite access to the VIP cabin. While not overly large, the bathroom is quite refined with a stylish, mirrored vanity, electric Tecma head and a clever fold-back shower screen that allows this wet area to become a

THE PRESTIGE RANGE IS JEANNEAU'S ANSWER TO THOSE BUYERS LOOKING FOR A HIGHER LEVEL OF LUXURY AND REFINEMENT AND SPECIFICATION IN TERMS OF FIT AND FINISH, SORT OF WHAT LEXUS IS TO TOYOTA



[HIGHS]

- › Stylish looks
- › Performance and handling
- › Fit and finish
- › Very social layout
- › Owner's suite
- › Large hull windows
- › Top value

[LOWS]

- › No fuel tank sight gauges
- › Fuel capacity
- › Swimplatform set a bit too high
- › Limited galley bench space



THE FULL-BEAM OWNER'S SUITE, A HIGHLIGHT OF THIS BOAT, IS... ROOMY, LIGHT-FILLED AND COMES WITH OCEAN VIEWS



Twin Volvo Penta IPS 600s (top) dominate the engineroom, where Beneteau has made use of all available space. Tender garage features foldout rollers and a winch for effortless launch and retrieval.

PERFORMANCE & HANDLING

I thought these engines were a good match to the hull, there's ample power to get you up on the plane quickly and effortlessly, she's soft riding and runs quite flat. I found that I hardly needed to use the trim tabs and I'd imagine you'd probably only use them if you were fully loaded to keep the boat on an even keel in cross winds, for example.

The sea was fairly calm on the day of our test and I found her a joy to drive — light and responsive off the wheel and very quiet underway. I found her so easy to drive, in fact, that I had to constantly remind myself that this was a 50ft boat.

My only criticism of her handling is she didn't come around at speed as tightly as I would expect from a pod-driven boat, but I suspect that says more about the settings rather than either the hull or the pods. ⚡

useable part of the bathroom when not in use.

Overhead hatches and opening portholes within the hull windows provide plenty of natural ventilation, with independent air-conditioning controls in each cabin.

The full-beam owner's suite, a highlight, is accessed via a separate staircase situated aft in the saloon. It's roomy, light-filled and comes with ocean views — large hull windows either side provide a sensational outlook over the water. The designers at Jeanneau have done a good job creating an open feel to a cabin that incorporates a large island bed, lots of storage and hanging space, an inbuilt vanity and a comfortable lounge/reading area. In fact, it's a luxurious retreat, with a unique outlook and, as such, is a pleasant place to kick back and relax.

The en suite has separate shower, electric head and mirrored vanity — another sizeable hull window adds light and sense of space.

BALANCING ACT

Engine access is through two hatches in the cockpit. There's a ladder and Jeanneau has made use of every nook and cranny. The engines are set farther forward than you would normally expect, with a one-metre jackshaft back to the pods.

There is reasonable access around both engines, although getting to the top of them, such as to add oil, is not that straightforward. The floor of the garage is directly above and you need to remove the tender to expose hatches in the garage sole to reach the top of the engines. Everything, though, else is easy to get to. Batteries are housed in boxes outboard of each engine, there's an 11kVa Onan generator and an 1800W inverter drives all the entertainment

systems and the galley power points.

Fuel tanks (both 650lt each and with a balance pipe) are forward of the engines and although there's no visual fuel-level indicator, there is a gauge at the helm. But I thought that fuel capacity was a bit light on.

The Jeanneau Prestige 500 S uses around 102lt/h cruising at 20kts, so, leaving a bit in reserve, she has a comfortable cruising range of around 220nm. Water capacity is 636lt and in two 318lt tanks located well forward beneath the companionway, with a water gauge in the saloon.

Back in the cockpit are controls for the tender garage, which lifts to reveal a 3.1m dinghy and outboard, foldout rollers and a winch making for effortless launch and retrieval.

Moving along the sidedecks is safe and easy courtesy of raised bulwarks, high siderails and a handrail running atop the cabin's side windows. Fuel fillers (one for each tank) are located under a lift-up lid, so any spillage during bunkering can be contained.

When you reach the foredeck a nice, large sunpad with adjustable backrest beckons. There's also an optional awning that fits to the sunpad, allowing you to relax in the warmth with adequate protection overhead from too much of a good thing. (ED: The protected foredeck sunpad is a concept I have been championing for years. Very exciting to see its final execution at production-boat level.)

A large anchor on the bow is connected to a Lewmar winch housed in a well, so that anything coming up with the chain doesn't finish up on deck, and there's a remote anchor control and a seawater washdown. Large cleats are in all the right places and substantial fairleads with rollers are strategically placed.

Facts & figures

JEANNEAU PRESTIGE 500 S

BEHIND THE WHEEL

The Volvo Pentas are high revving engines that max out at 3500rpm, where we got the Jeanneau Prestige 500 S to 29kts. Normal cruise would be in the order of 2800rpm for around 20kts and a fuel-burn just above 100lt/h — very economical for a boat this size.

PRICE AS TESTED

\$992,000

SEA TRIALS

Twin 435hp Volvo Penta IPS 600

RPM	SPEED	TOTAL FUEL BURN
2000	12kts	44lt/h
2200	13kts	58lt/h
2400	15kts	67lt/h
2600	17kts	84lt/h
2800	20kts	102lt/h
3000	22kts	118lt/h
3200	25kts	129lt/h
3400	27kts	165lt/h
3500	29 kts	167lt/h

* Official sea-trial data supplied by Jeanneau.

OPTIONS FITTED

Electronics pack, bowthruster, foredeck sunpad with bimini, covers for rear cockpit sofa, saloon LCD TV and DVD, TVs in forward and aft cabins, Bose audio system with MP3, 11kVa generator, portside aft mooring windlass, upgraded anchoring kit, electric retractable cockpit sun awning, seawater deckwash, launch rollers and electric tender winch, tender and outboard, deck floodlight, 52,000 BTU reverse cycle air-conditioning, electric trim tabs, Foxtel, and bedspread décor set

PRICED FROM

\$851,286

GENERAL

MATERIAL: GRP
TYPE: Planing monohull
LENGTH OVERALL: 15.2m
HULL LENGTH: 14.92m
BEAM: 4.5m
WEIGHT: 13,500kg
DRAFT: 1.02m



CAPACITIES

PEOPLE (NIGHT): 6
FUEL: 1300lt
WATER: 636lt
HOLDING TANK: 120lt

ENGINE

MAKE/MODEL: 2 x Volvo Penta D6-435D IPS 600
TYPE: Turbo-diesel
RATED HP: 435 (each)
DISPLACEMENT: 5.5lt (each)
WEIGHT: 594kg (each)

SUPPLIED BY

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tradeboat SAYS...

I guess it depends on your style of boating but anyone looking for a smart sportsyacht, a nice entertainer, with good performance, and a fair bit of wow factor, should have a serious look at the Prestige 500 S. She represents a lot of bang for your buck and while she's still a production boat rather than a bespoke offering, the styling, attention to detail and fit and finish are very smart. Interestingly, Jeanneau in Australia has dealers in each state who buy direct from the factory in France, thereby cutting out the middle man and additional distributor costs. These savings are passed onto the customer. Of course, the Jeanneau Prestige 500 S doesn't pretend to be a passagemaker or a long-range cruiser. She doesn't come loaded with extra freezers, long-range fuel tanks, etc. However, she's an impressive luxury getaway, with fantastic accommodation, and a price that won't break the bank. Finally, the 500 S comes loaded with so much good gear it's hard to relate it all here but, one thing I can almost guarantee, if this were your boat your friends would be impressed.

If the sun is getting a bit hot, this foredeck sunbed (below left) has the answer with the foldout bimini option. Aiding sidedeck travel (below) are raised bulwarks, tall siderails and cabin-side handrails.

