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Beneteau Oceanis 46.1

The latest from the storied French builder combines comfort with practicality **By Adam Cort**

The Beneteau sailboat line has long represented a kind of courtliness, both in terms of the many models the company is offering at any given moment and over time. This does not, however, in any way diminish the quality of its individual boats. Just the opposite. Case in point: the Beneteau Oceanis 46.1, a performance-cruiser that not only makes lots of sense, but is a joy to sail.

DESIGN & CONSTRUCTION

The Oceanis 46.1 is vintage Beneteau in terms of basic construction. The hull is molded in polyester, while the deck is comprised of an injected fiberglass/foam core sandwich, with a molded-in anti-skid; the deck is stepped, double-spreader mast is aluminum; and both the shoal and standard-draft keels are cast iron. The “basics” of this boat, however, represent only the tip of the iceberg in terms of all this boat has to offer.

Like its predecessor, the Oceanis 51.1, the Beneteau Oceanis 46.1 boasts twin rudders, a prerequisite aboard a modern cruising boat that carries its beam well aft. Also like the 51.1, the Pasca, Conq.-designed 46.1 features a “stepped” hull, in which the canoe body flares dramatically to the chine immediately above the waterline, thereby allowing Beneteau to maximize interior volume while maintaining a narrow entry forward.

Also forward is a substantial, fixed spit for flying a Code 0 or asymmetric spinnaker, and keeping the hook away from the boat's plumb stem. Finally, a carbon-fiber first version of the hull is available, which includes an extra 10 to 15 percent more working sail area, Harken Performa winches and a deep-lead-bulb T-keel for better righting moment.

The overall look is both purposeful and very Euro. However, to my eye here's also something vaguely reminiscent of the old C&C line in the

boat's cabin/trunk profile forward—and that's a good thing. The standard rig includes an in-mast furling main, but a conventional main is also available. A track for a self-tacking jib is located just forward of the mast. Genoa tracks are also located close inboard alongside the cabin trunk.

ON DECK

The deck combines a nice mix of comfort and practicality. Aft, the boat's substantial helm provides room for a fantastic cockpit, complete with twin wheels and twin benches that are both plenty long and (equally important) well-proportioned for lounging.

Group Beneteau long ago elevated drop-down swim step design to a high art, and the multi-sized, articulated platform on the 46.1 is no exception. Not only does it include a considerable extra step, it also serves as a nice platform for tending a swing-out grill concealed in the starboard helm seat. A pair of lounging pads to either side of the companionway completes the deck's “comfort” package, so to speak.

As for the practical side of things, when retracted the swim step forms a nice backdrop for preventing errant children and tools from going overboard. There are also a pair of retractable cavits for lifting the dinghy out of the way on passage; and the up-furl main sheet arch, in addition to anchoring the dodger incorporates a pair of fantastic handholds to either side of the companionway as well as handholds outboard for moving around in the breezy conditions.

Similarly, the twin helm stations, not only to provide a clear vantage point forward end of the rig, but are within reach of all the necessary winches and supports for running sail. In fact, all the winches are located here, i.e., there are none forward of the companionway, thereby freeing up the necessary

For video of the Beneteau Oceanis 46.1, visit sailmagazine.com/videos

space for the aforementioned lounging areas. (Especially like the more minimal bimini style, Beneteau is going with these days, and the sizeable cockpit table includes sufficient storage space for a lifetime.) A pair of sturdy handrails toward the center of the cockpit table are a nice touch.

Forward, a molded-in roostail provides additional security, and while the uppers terminate outboard the lowers are secured just outboard of the cabin trunk providing a clear pathway to the bow. Once there, you'll find a wonderful below-decks sail locker just aft of the anchor locker, complete with ladder—exactly as it should be for rigging out those reaching sails.

ACCOMMODATIONS

Accommodations are another area in which Beneteau excels and has loads of experience, and the basic layout of the Oceanis 46.1, though a fairly conventional one, is very well executed.

The owner's stateroom is forward and voluminous enough (thanks in part to that stepped hull) for an island bed, separate head and shower compartments, and his and hers hanging lockers.

Saloon options include an L-shaped galley to port of the companionway or an in-line galley to port in place of a settee. The latter becomes necessary if you want to have a separate shower/head for each quarterberth. In fact, Beneteau offers the option of as many as five separate cabins and four heads, a though such extravagance will likely only appeal to charter companies. The L-shaped galley includes a top-opening and front-opening fridge, and a compartment at the base of the companionway gives you something to lean up against while cooking.

There is a choice of satin “light oak” or mahogany in the joinery work. Whatever material you choose, the combination of bull windows, ports and overhead hatches will ensure there is plenty of natural light belowdecks when the sun is up.

UNDER SAIL

The day of our test sail, we had a steady 13 knots of breeze on Norwegian set Bay, which made for effortless sailing, whether hard on the wind or

The accommodations are very well executed



Beneteau Oceanis 46.1

SPECIFICATIONS

LOA 46.1 (151.45 ft) | Beam 14.0 ft
 DEPTH 4.91 (deep), 5.15 ft (dred), 5.28 ft (at anchor)
 DISPLACEMENT 23,000 lb (lightship)
 BALLAST 3,000 lb (dred), 3,240 lb (at anchor)
 SA 1,500 sq ft (up), 1,400 sq ft (down)
 IJ 1/2500 (up), 1/2500 (down)
 ENGINE 50 hp Yanmar (50 hp optional)
 BANC 1000 (up), 1000 (down)

Made in France. Visit www.beneteau.com

DESIGNER: Pascal Conq (Hull), Naah Design (Interior)
 BUILDERS: Beneteau S.A. (France), Beneteau USA, Inc. (USA), Beneteau Australia, Inc. (Australia), Beneteau Canada, Inc. (Canada), Beneteau UK, Ltd. (UK), Beneteau Mexico, S.A. (Mexico)

reaching along under a Code 0.

It's easy to forget in this day and age that a 47-footer displacing over 23,000 lb (lightship in less) is a big boat. Yet you hardly ever really notice it aboard the Oceanis 46.1, thanks to the boat's well-thought-out hardware, which on our test boat included Harken 50 electric primaries, Harken 46 electric secondaries, Spinlock steppers, a Profurl genoa furler and a Tacnet continuous line furler for a light-air Code 0. (Nav Electronics were all B&G with an MFD at each helm.)

Also aboard our test boat, we carried a North Sails 3Di Norrac cruising headsail and a standard in-mast furling main. Despite the limitation of the latter, we managed an impressive 4.5 knots on a close reach, even as the true windspeed fell away to a bare 6.2 knots. Rearing away, we unfurled the Code 0 at the same time the wind picked up a bit and were soon going just over 8 knots with 11 knots of wind.

My experience has been that the boats in the Oceanis line are also more than up to the rigors of passagemaking, and it's fun to see how the boat does off-soundings. Then, again, vast majority of times most owners will be taking the boat out in conditions much like those we experienced during our test sail, and for that the boat was absolutely perfect.

UNDER POWER

Time was, backing up a sailboat could be an adventure, but not anymore, thanks to today's rudders, and especially when you haven't low-thruster disposal—as was the case threading our way in and out of the packed marina at Port Adams. Under power with the standard engine swinging an optional Flexfold folding prop, we did 3.0 knots maneuvering into a slight headwind at 1,000 rpm. Thrusting up to 2,300 rpm yielded a very acceptable 6.9 knots.

CONCLUSION

Beneteau has been in the business for a long time, and you pretty much know what to expect from one of the world's biggest hull builders. This, however, in no way diminishes the fact that the company continues to produce outstanding boats, including this very nice new performance-cruiser. **S**