

Yachting World



FEBRUARY 2019

THE NEXT BIG THING

THIS 46-FOOTER PLANS TO BLOW YOU AWAY

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SUSIE GOODALL – SOUTHERN OCEAN RESCUE



Nicholas Claris

Lagoon 46

Lagoon says greater comfort is a key goal of its new model, the 46. The French yard has charged former Renault designer Patrick le Quément with the task of meeting owners' expectations about comfort in a market where the 'cruising experience is becoming a lifestyle'.

The design team at VPLP has made fundamental changes to the successful formula of the old 450. Chief among these is moving the mast of the 46 further aft on the coachroof. As a result, the jib becomes a self-tacker and the larger forward triangle offers a greater choice of downwind sails. The boom has been shortened and the main has a higher aspect, reducing pitching.

The flybridge helm has been centred and sits directly behind the mast, which means the footwell protrudes slightly into the cockpit below – something that has been disguised by turning it into a deep frame for the sliding aft windows of the saloon. There's a sliding stool in the cockpit, and a hydraulic bathing platform.

Italian designer Nauta has made efficient use of the interior space in all three (or four) cabins, plus a stylish saloon. At 16.6 tonnes displacement, this is no lightweight but it will get you to your destination in comfort.

Price: from €433,000.

Cata-lagoon.com

SNEAK PEEK

XCS (Excess)

In the highly competitive 40ft-plus category, the Groupe Beneteau team behind Lagoon and CNB luxury monohulls is carving out a new cat brand called XCS. It is pitched at younger, sportier sailors with the tagline 'be immoderate'. That translates, in part, to a bigger sailplan than 'standard' cruising cats, and with a higher aspect ratio – that is, tall and thin. This positions the mast further aft and allows a self-tacking jib.

The boats will also feature twin aft helm stations, in contrast to many production cats. "It is the ideal position to keep an eye on the sea and sails, whether windward or leeward and, above all, it provides the most sensations at the helm," explains project director Bruno Belmont. He also says that having a low boom close



to the bimini will increase the mainsail's performance. There will be plexiglass in the hardtop for a better view of the sails or a retractable bimini.

Snippets of video posted online hint at a longeron between the bows offering a tack point for reaching and downwind sails. And the hull has heavily bevelled topsides with a striking chine just above the waterline, as well as generous curved hull lights.

Three interior layouts will be available, with pared down furniture to

The XCS: the sporty side of the mainstream

save about a tonne. It all adds up to a boat that should be faster than the standard cruising cat, though short of the 'super fast' technical offerings from the likes of HH and Gunboat.

"We want to be on the sporty side of the main cruising cat brands," says Belmont. There will be five sizes from around 36ft to 50ft, and the first two models will be launched at Cannes in September. Prices will be close to similarly sized Lagoons.

Excess-catamarans.com

TESTED:

THE NEXT BIG THING?

BENETEAU'S NEW STEPPED HULL DESIGN WORKS SO WELL THIS 46.1 COULD BECOME ITS MOST POPULAR MODEL EVER

After upgrading the status of the ominous black clouds ahead from threatening-looking to really quite alarming, we turned to head back downwind... and hoisted even more sail. Boom! As gusts in the high 20s started barrelling through, this yacht really put on a show. Reaching and surfing, we were all whooping with delight, like kids with a

powerful toy, especially when we clocked over 14 knots' boat speed. Now this was what you'd call a test sail!

We were on board Beneteau's brand new Oceanis 46.1, a design tasked with updating the company's most popular model, sailing off Port Ginesta, Barcelona, under full main and Code 0. The designer, Pascal Conq, was with us and we had all now become

intent on seeing just what this 'fat-nosed' new shape was capable of.

It was one of those days when it could have all gone wrong. The fact that it didn't and that we were actually treated to an exhilarating, unforgettable sail – the type where you step ashore and can't wipe the grin off your face – simply confirmed that the 46.1 is a quite brilliant new model from the world's largest boatbuilder.

That it looks set to become the biggest-selling cruising monohull is perhaps due to other factors, however. ➤

FACTS

Tested by **TOBY HODGES**

- **Where we tested:** Newport, RI, and Port Ginesta, Barcelona
- **Winds:** 6-12 knots and 15-29 knots
- **Models:** Standard in-mast furling and shallow keel plus a First Line performance version.





Real life test conditions were somewhat different to the brochure shots...



Bowsprit is a new addition for the 46.1 over its predecessor

Replacing a bestseller

To backtrack, the Oceanis 45 I tested in 2011, which went on to win a European Yacht of the Year award, is Beneteau's most popular model to date. With more than 800 sold, it is arguably the most successful production cruiser of modern times. It's no surprise then that Beneteau wanted to keep the key strengths and selling points of the 45, nor that it chose to repeat the winning design combination of Finot Conq for hull lines and Nauta Yachts for the styling and interior.

Conq explained that the design team wanted to retain the primary features of sailing performance, spacious cockpit and interior volume. This, he said, has all been placed within a new and more powerful hull shape, with a stepped or full-chined hull, with greater righting moment and the addition of twin rudders for added control.

The new 46.1 also has plenty of

options, including a 'First Line' upgrade, which further increases performance by adding a taller mast and deeper keel.

A win-win shape

In 2017 Beneteau launched the Berret Racoupeau-designed 51.1, the first of its new seventh-generation Oceanis range to use this stepped hull, together with a much fuller bow shape. The resultant forward internal volume and particularly sharp Nauta styling helped it sell like hot cakes (more than 200 we are told).

The 46.1 shares a similar look and the only main difference with its layout is that there is no option for a crew cabin in the forepeak. However, the chine on the 46.1 runs all the way along the hull above the boot top, unlike the forward chine on the 51.1, which tapers out below the central hull portlight.

"We go in the fat nose direction," Conq

The 46.1 manages to combine enormous living volume and deck lounging space with sprightly performance on the water

explains. "We found an area where there are no losses, just better performance and space. Take out the volume from under the waterline and put it at the sides – that's the key!"

Conq found there was no need to widen the waterline like the 51.1, which seems to make for a telling difference on the water. The 46.1's hull is less dumpy, with less wetted surface area, reveals Conq. This was very evident when I did my first sail trial of the 46.1 in Newport, Rhode Island, when the two boats squared up to each other. The 46.1 simply sailed through the 51.1 and is clearly a more slippery design.

We had glorious conditions, in early September, sailing on the sunny, historic racing waters, in a building thermal breeze of 6-12 knots. That particular 46.1 had a typical US spec, including a shallow 1.75m keel, the standard in-mast furling main, plus an optional large genoa instead of the self-tacking jib. Close-hauled, we clocked 6-6.3 knots in 7.8-8.3 knots true wind. The new bowsprit is a useful addition over the old 45, as it encourages the easy deployment of a

flying sail. Our speed rose to 8.5 knots with the Code 0 unfurled.

The only minor negative of our Newport trial was a rudder alignment issue, which made that boat want to turn to port. However, as I was to find out during my next outing, there is power in reserve on this new hull shape and no shortage of enjoyment on the helm.

Sailing the GTI model

The boat we tested from Port Ginesta in October was a performance 'First Line' version, with a deeper, lead bulb keel, a taller mast and a genoa, which provides 28% more sail area. Beneteau says this is an option many clients coming from its First range choose.

It was during this test for the European Yacht of the Year competition that we were able to see how the 46.1 handles in wind and waves.

Punching out into a 2m swell and 15 knots true wind, both of which increased with the threatening approach of the dark clouds, the 46.1 showed a comfortable and consistent turn of



1 Large hull windows, together with a stepped hull which keeps the wetted area narrow while increasing accommodation space, are key features of the new Oceanis.

2 A large sprayhood recesses into the coachroof. Beneteau also provides the option of a cockpit/main-sheet arch, as used on the boat's predecessor, the Oceanis 45.

3 The optional barbecue grill is a neat design. It swings out from the aft bench on gas struts and allows you to stand on the swim platform to cook.

4 A generous swim platform increases the already ample lounging space. When lowered, this reveals a full-width step.

5 Optional telescopic davits make sense because the quarter lockers are relatively compact for stowing an inflatable tender.



Full beam bathing platform creates an extension to the cockpit

'AN UNFORGETTABLE SAIL - THE TYPE WHERE YOU CAN'T WIPE THE GRIN OFF YOUR FACE'



Guido Carlini/foceao.com



Bertel Kalthof

speed, heading upwind at 7.5 plus knots. Perched to windward, we enjoyed a relatively comfortable motion.

"The camber allows for a less full bow than the Jeanneau," Pascal Conq remarked, referring to Jeanneau's latest SO440 and SO490, which have very full forward ends and full chines. He added that this helps to keep the 46.1 from slamming upwind.

We were heeling a fair bit yet there remained a very light, but guiding amount of weather helm. A bar joining the twin rudders and textile linkage to the wheels helps provide direct helm feedback.

After a good spell sailing to weather, we then experienced the exhilarating downwind ride I described earlier. In 20 knots true with Force 6-7 gusts, we were soon easily maintaining double figures.

The wake separates at around 11 knots, which happened regularly with a bit of encouragement from the short wave pattern.

These waves were coming across us slightly rather than directly following, but as the apparent wind moved forward with our speed we were able to soak down enough to enjoy some memorable short surfs, clocking between 12-14.5 knots. We weren't actively trimming either – the main was pinned against the spreaders and the Code 0 sheet was left in the self-tailer jaws – but, boy, was it a fun ride.

Although it was an impressive display of power and speed, what really struck me was how comfortable the boat felt. The twin rudders never even hinted that they might lose grip and hand us a scary, expensive or potentially embarrassing broach. This is a reassuring asset on a family cruiser.

Warm weather deck

The 46.1 has a modern, Med-style, extra spacious cockpit set-up, extended at each end by a full-beam bathing platform and sunbeds on the flat coachroof. The

Top: note the low, full chine.

Above: brushed light oak finish gives a bright, airy feel to the Nautia-designed interior

helm area is similar to that of the 51.1, designed for one person to be able to sail the boat and control the winches from aft. "Clients really like winches aft and out of the cockpit," Beneteau product manager Clément Bercault explained, reasoning that it leaves a huge cockpit area clear for the family.

The layout allows you to sail the 46.1 short-handed, but only if you are tidy and organised with running rigging. Thankfully, there is a useful locker for rope tails, with a mesh material base to allow draining. There is only just enough room to fit a winch handle between the primary and main winch each side, which may encourage people to opt for the powered winch upgrade.

The helmsman can share the raised panel on which the winches are mounted to keep a dry seat. However, it is too wide in the aft quarters to be able to wedge in there comfortably and still be able to reach the wheel.



Bertel Kalthof

I like the large cockpit table, which provides a sturdy foot brace when heeled and sitting on the cockpit bench. It has an integral fridge and, best of all, room enough to house an easily-accessible liferaft beneath.

There are no bench lockers, the space instead used for headroom below. So deck stowage is all in the ends, in a deep sail locker and quarter lockers. The latter will not suit larger items as they contain unprotected steering gear and electronics. The finish in these aft lockers looks poor, featuring bare plywood and liberal amounts of glue.

Where centimetres count

The layout below decks is understandably similar to the successful 45.

"We looked at where we could gain space everywhere with the new hull shape," said Bercault as we descended the 45° companionway to escape the torrential rain. ➤

Above: bright, beamy saloon has a chaise longue style seat to port with an adjoining desk cum navstation at its forward end. Right: galley area; chainplate tie rods left exposed to allow in light from the hull windows



Guido Barbapalata



Bertel Kalthof



Large forward cabin has a proper island double bed

Guido Barbagelata

So although the 46.1 is only 10cm longer than the 45 and has the same beam, its maximum beam is carried further forward and higher up, to increase the internal volume.

"The chine gives us 0.5m more beam," Bercault explained. That beam gained above the waterline allows for the saloon berths to be pushed out 15cm each side compared with its predecessor, which buys valuable room. However, it's up forward where you really notice the difference. The full bow sections allowed Beneteau to take the forward cabin of the 48 and drop it into this 46.1, which tells you something about the volume.

This owner's cabin is astonishing for the yacht's length, including an island double berth on which you can



Guido Barbagelata

comfortably sleep with your head forward. The use of separate shower and heads compartments works very well, further emphasising the sense of space in the cabin. It also makes for a

The aft guest cabins are relatively spacious doubles

straightforward conversion into two ensuite cabins for the charter version.

The extra space is also felt in the saloon and galley. I like the addition of an inboard worktop section in the galley, for example, which gives more serving space and a bracing position for when working at heel.

Within the multiple layout options, including three to five cabins with two to four heads, there is also the choice of a longitudinal galley with navstation to starboard.

I like the light Nautia styling, which brings smart elements learned from the Oceanis Yachts 62, such as the bookcases built into the central bulkhead, the fabric linings and the indirect lighting. The brushed light oak veneer means no shortage of beige, but, together, with the huge hull portlights, this works well to keep the interior light and bright.

Quite why Beneteau goes to these styling lengths but won't stretch to fitting rubber gaskets on the sole boards I fail to comprehend, however. Can you imagine walking around a prospective new house with each footstep being announced by a loud creaking? It feels like some sort of pantomime horror scene.

Stowage and tankage is moderate and in keeping with a yacht designed for coastal sailing and family holidays. By this I mean that the 46.1 is an ideal yacht for cruising or chartering in the Med for a couple of weeks, rather than a design to suit long distance sailing or lengthy spells aboard.



Large hull portlights above the chine let the sun shine in

Guido Barbagelata