

JEANNEAU LEADER 46

Sleek, steadfast and cleverly designed, this appealing sports cruiser range has a handsome new flagship

Words **Jack Haines** Pictures **Jeanneau**

The Jeanneau Leader range has come on a long way over the last few years and blossomed from a group of handsome, compact weekenders to a line-up of fully fledged sports cruisers. The 46, though, marks the ceiling for the range as, by the yard's own admittance, any larger, and Leaders would start to elbow into Prestige territory.

So this is as big as it's going to get for the Leaders, but is it the best? As impressive as the innovative 36 was, the 40 left us a little cold in places, missing out on some of the fine detailing that customers expect on a boat of 40ft. The pressure to impress is even higher in the 45ft market, given the competition the 46 faces from rivals such as Princess and Fairline,

not to mention Bavaria and its Bénéteau Group stablemate the Gran Turismo 46.

Something major the Leader has going for it is versatility because you can have it with either IPS or sterndrives, with or without cockpit doors and with two or three cabins. We had the opportunity to try both sterndrive and IPS versions during the sea trial but our focus will be on the IPS version as it had cockpit doors fitted, which is likely to be a popular configuration. Why? Because given our unreliable weather, it's handy to be able to shut the elements out completely and do away with fiddly cockpit canopies altogether. It also means you can use the main deck at night so there's no need for a lower dinette, leaving space for three cabins. This also assumes that IPS600 will be more popular than the D6 370 sterndrives, which is probably true thanks to the 435hp per side and higher

performance and superior joystick manoeuvrability of the pod drive version.

If you do opt for the Open version (confusing as it still has a roof, just no doors aft) then it's likely that you'll need the lower dinette in case the weather is too bad to sit on deck, leaving space for two cabins only. Without a doubt, if you are lucky enough to do your boating somewhere with super reliable weather, then the Open version has the best cockpit for enjoying the sun. The fixed sunpad aft is a really good size and it extends away from the shelter of the roof.

IT'S ALL IN THE DETAIL

The Open is also the better looking of the two boats, with a sleeker profile and no upright glass at the stern to interrupt the flowing lines. But this is unlikely to be enough to sway customers away from the practicality





A CLOSER LOOK WITH JACK HAINES

OPEN WIDE

With the door to starboard open and this top-hinged window up, the cockpit opens up nicely to the seating/lounging area aft. The window is opened electronically, which is neat, but slower than a manual option and more likely to go wrong at some point.



NAVIGATOR'S BENCH

There's a lot going on in this area with a mix of upright seating and an aft-facing chaise longue. With the aid of an infill cushion, the entire section can also be transformed into a sunpad that is sheltered from the breeze by the windscreen but still gets plenty of sun when the roof is opened.



TRANSOM BBQ

This idea is not unique to Jeanneau but it's nice to have the option of fitting a BBQ and sink under the seat section of the transom. Not everyone sees the point of it but I find this a handy place to cook, well clear of the boat and in a place where the person at the grill can chat to those enjoying the sunshine.



ENGINEER ROOM

The engineer room is accessed via a hatch to port of the tender garage. The tender garage does impinge on the space in the engineer room, meaning it's quite difficult to get over the top of the engines or to inspect the stern glands. That said there is enough room in front of the engines to work and even stow some storage crates for spares.



The GRP roof makes for a smaller aperture than canvas but a more solid feeling if closed

The level of finish here is superb – the dash is coated in anti-glare material and there's an attractive chunky leather steering wheel



The stools tuck away into a void beneath the dinette to keep the floor clear

on with doors. The other thing to decide is whether to go for seats and tables in the aft cockpit or fixed sunpad. Most of the press like the latter but we'd be tempted to go the former. With opposing benches to either side of the helm station, it's a nice arrangement, and it still converts to a sunpad when required. The cockpit door pushed aside and the table of glass folded up to the roof with an electric motor, the inside and outside link together beautifully. Another option – that isn't unique to the Leader 46, is to have a BBQ beneath the transom to supplement the grill in the cockpit.

I'm never sure about chaise longues here but it does provide another place to perch when the boat is stationary, and the small bench allows another person to sit facing forward underway. The helm station is one of the 46's highlights and it's one of the areas where Jeanneau has obviously upped the level of finish. The dash is coated in anti-glare material and you hold on to an attractive, chunky leather steering wheel. For the navigator, a hefty stainless steel rail falls to hand while for the helmsman, the ergonomics fit perfectly, thanks to the throttles extending out on a plinth. The only shortfall of the layout is the lack of a cup-holder and the awkward position of the trim tab switches directly behind the throttles. Whereas the hull design for the Leader 36 and 40 was by Michael Peters, Jeanneau has chosen to work with Jacek Jakopin of J&J Design on the underwater architecture for the 46 and it was thoroughly put through the wringer in howling conditions off Cannes.

Starting with the IPS version, this is the one to go for if you fancy a bit more top-end speed. It's only available with 435hp IPS600 drives, giving it a 65hp per side advantage over the standard 370hp sterndrive version we had on test. It is possible to upgrade these to 400hp per side but without a chance to try this variant, we can't comment on how it would perform. Thankfully the IPS600 drives are a good match for the 46, delivering a top speed of 34 knots and punchy enough acceleration to drag you off the line or out of deep troughs. The fuel figures make for interesting reading, too, indicating that the IPS version is actually more frugal at 26 knots then it is at 16-19 knots. Similarly, the consumption curve flattens off completely at 30 knots, delivering 0.9mpg all the way up to the 34-knot top speed. If it's handling you're after though, go for the sterndrives. Even though they were down on power, the 370 sterndrives ran rings around the IPS in terms of agility and fun behind the wheel.

Both boats tackled the nasty head sea with gusto and barrelled along at 22 knots into a 30-knot breeze on the nose. The hull feels well engineered and confident, landing softly when you brace for a slam and staying remarkably dry. **WORK IN PROGRESS** This prototype version did have a few niggles that Jeanneau promised to iron out for the production run. The seals around the roof mechanism should be getting beefed up to stop rattling and halt the water that managed to work its way in during the splashier moments of our sea trial. Similarly, the cockpit door design is still being finalised as the ones in place on test felt a bit flimsy and made a few too many noises themselves – a shame when the hull is so refined in the rough. Below decks, no matter whether you opt for a dinette or the third cabin, there are two excellent double cabins at either end. The VIP in the bow has scissor-action berths to flick

between two singles or a double and a healthy amount of storage, though it isn't ensuite. The master cabin, which stretches across the Leader's full 13ft 5in (4.1m) beam, is a clever bit of design. The toilet, sink and shower are located behind smoked glass doors on the port side. These double doors open inwards to reveal the sink and some cabinet storage while at the same time providing privacy for the separate toilet and shower cubicles. It's a novel layout that means one person can shower while the other still has access to the sink and loo, plus the ceiling moulding means there is 6ft 4in (1.95m) of headroom at the end of the bed and around the side of the berth where the bathroom is. This does, however, drop to just over 4ft 5in (1.37m) over the bed and on the starboard side. You expect products from Jeanneau to offer good value for money and certainly when you compare it to the British competition, it does indeed look a great deal. The starting price is



bathroom in VIP cabin with toilet and shower



Standing headroom on the port side



Plenty of space in the guest bathroom



Split berths in the VIP add versatility

The talented hull relishes rough conditions and the handling will make you smile

just £385,536 inc VAT, compared to £545,000 for a Fairline Targa 48 GT and £550,000 for the Princess V48 with the same IPS600 motors. But add on the various goodies to get to a decent on-water spec and £155,000 later, you have a boat that is ready to do business. That said, the as-tested price still undercuts the – albeit well-equipped-as-standard – Brit boats. But why does Jeanneau not include must-haves like additional stern cleats, an anchor and electric windlass as standard? On the 36 is one thing; on a boat this big, it's just petty.

VERDICT

More care has been taken over detailing and perceived quality, that's for sure, though I would say that the Bénéteau GT46 feels just

a fraction more special when you step below decks. And the Brits, as well as being a cut above in price, are still a cut above in quality.

The Leader 46 is solid, handsome, restrained and refreshingly unflashy. But where it really scores one over its rivals is its ability to mould itself to your exact boating needs, be that with an open or closed deck, two or three cabins or a choice of three engines and two drive options. It also has a talented hull that relishes rough conditions and can be depended on to get you home if you do get caught out, plus performance and – especially on the sterndrive version – handling that'll make you smile.

The Leader range has come a long way, and in the 46, it has a worthy flagship. **MBY**
Contact Jeanneau. Web: www.jeanneau.com

The ensuite master's doors open to reveal the sink but also conceal the toilet and shower stall



THE HELM VIEW

The helm looks good and feels really good, with liberal use of anti-glare material



The trim tab controls could do with being moved from their awkward position behind the throttle hub

Thanks to this extended plinth, the throttles fall easily to hand



As handsome as the Open version, utility of the aft doors is very useful



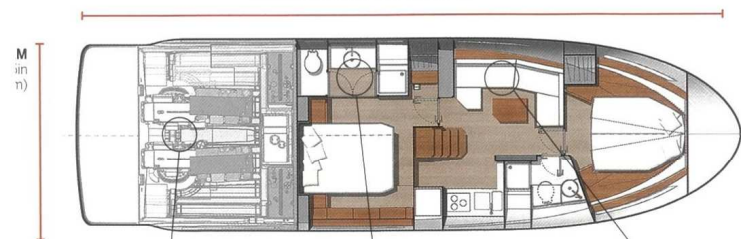
We prefer this alternative cockpit layout featuring a pair of convertible benches rather than a fixed sunpad



only £125. Its on a boat would not be ra

DATA

LENGTH OVERALL 46ft 10in (14.3m)



Access to the engines is much the same whether you opt for sterndrives or IPS

A clever double-door system opens up the sink to the cabin and closes off the separate toilet and shower cubicles

If you treasure sleeping space over dining space, the third cabin goes here, in place of the lower dinette

FUEL CAPACITY
198 imp gal (900 litres)
WATER CAPACITY
88 imp gal (400 litres)
DRAUGHT
3ft 7in (1.1m)
RCD CATEGORY
B for 12 people
DESIGNERS
Jeanneau and J&J Design
DISPLACEMENT
10.6 tonnes

PERFORMANCE

TEST ENGINES Volvo Penta IPS600, Twin 435hp @ 3,500rpm, 6-cylinder, 5.5-litre diesels

FIGURES	ECO	2400	2600	2800	3000	FAST	3200	3400	MAX	3500
Speed	6.5	16.0	19.4	23.7	26.7	30.1	32.4	34.0	34.0	34.0
LPH	6.7	77	97	107	121	150	162	169	172	172
GPH	1.47	16.9	21.3	23.5	26.6	33.0	35.6	37.2	37.2	37.2
MPG	4.41	0.94	0.91	1.01	1.00	0.91	0.91	0.91	0.91	0.91
Range	699	150	144	159	159	144	144	145	145	145

SOUND LEVELS dB(A)

Helm	62	71	74	75	75	77	81	83
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Speed in knots. GPH & MPG figures use imperial gallons. Range in nautical miles and allows for 20% reserve. Calculated figures based on readings from on-board fuel gauges; your figures may vary considerably. All prices include VAT, 50% fuel, 0% water, 5 crew, no stores, tender or liferaft on board, 15°C air temp, F4 + short chop for sea trials

THE COSTS & OPTIONS

Price from £335,328 (Twin 370hp)
Price as tested £490,901 inc VAT
Bow thruster £4,272
Raymarine electronics pack £3,048
Premiere trim pack £12,336
 (Teak, LED deck lights, wooden cockpit table, cockpit spotlight, fresh water electric toilets, trim tabs)
Cockpit doors £9,322
Stern mooring cross cleats £125
11kW generator £16,790
Hydraulic bathing platform £17,914
 = Options on test boat

RIVALS

Bénéteau GT46
Price from €357,900
 A direct rival for the Leader from within the same stable. Less versatile but more interesting.

Fairline Targa 48
Price from €546,240
 Available as a GT or an Open, the Targa 48 is IPS only and quite a bit pricier than the Leader.

