

performance cruiser

Already sailed: first impressions of Beneteau's First 36

It is one of the most exciting premieres of the 2022 model year. We have already been able to extensively test construction number 1 of the First 36

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Beneteau/A. Šutej

Fast without being demanding. The impressive potential of the First 36 is easy to access

In series yacht construction, it rarely takes more than two years between the rough concept and the world premiere, sometimes just one. With the First 36, Beneteau took longer, much longer.

Four years have passed since the industry leader announced its plans in a small circle for the first time. Back then, in 2018, shortly after it became known that the French had joined the Slovenian sports boat builder Seascope, there was still talk of 35 feet. The model should build a bridge between the small speedsters and the luxurious top model, the First Yacht 53 presented a year later.

In a background discussion with YACHT, Seascope CEO Andraz Mihelin indicated that the first in the middle would offer almost the same performance as a Pogo 36 for the price of a Dehler 34. Projected base price: less than 150,000 euros. Planned debut: late 2019, early 2020.

Two years later she is finally at Jetty B in Marina Izola. It's mid-February, and the water and air are still bitterly cold. Ten days after the first launch and tests by the shipyard team, we are allowed on board for two days. It is the time of the harsh winter storms over Germany. The Adriatic, on the other hand, initially has little wind and is listless. This gives us time to inspect the boat at leisure.

As can be seen from the computer illustrations, it is a restrained design with modern lines, i.e. with a fairly full bow section and a wide, flat stern, but with restrained elegance.

No brute superstructures with multiple angled side windows, as they have been propagated by Pogo and JPK for some time, no cockpit superstructure on the companionway, as shown in the current Class 40 and the Bente 39 among the performance cruisers. The First 36 does not even have tiller steering, unlike all

previous Seascape constructions, but instead has two steering columns in the extremely spacious and highly functional cockpit.

Even below deck, the new one surprises, not only with the spaciousness in the saloon, but also with the light, reduced, but nicely arranged cosiness of an extension that leaves nothing to be desired.

Only the somewhat tightly dimensioned wet room requires a certain ability to compromise, especially since there would have been more than enough space below deck to give her more floor space. A fold-up washbasin, which is pleasantly large, creates the necessary freedom of movement. The last time you saw something like that was in the seventies or eighties.

Inner shells and wall coverings with textile covering give the First 36 a certain noblesse. And even if not all gaps were in the millimeter range on the first boat, it still seems sufficiently established for a performance cruiser trimmed for lightweight construction. Instead of floorboards with a sober, cold laminate surface, for example, there are coverings made of high-quality Alpi-Teak that have been impregnated several times. The galley line is lined with white Corian, which stretches behind the saloon upholstery to the main bulkhead, creating a subtle visual highlight.

The boat remains far removed from the veneer worlds of more conventional yachts in the segment; you can see the First 36's efforts to reduce weight. For example, many bolts and nuts on deck fittings deliberately remain visible. But if you come from a First 27, for example, where the fuselage laminate is only lightly sanded and minimally filled, you will experience a completely different level of quality.

The shipyard managed to stay close to the calculated construction weight. Because the pedestals of the extension are part of the load-bearing structure, the bulkheads are made of foam sandwich and the hull and deck are made from meticulously pre-cut Corecell core elements, the First 36 only weighs 4.8 tons. For comparison: the Dehler 38 weighs 7.5 tons, the JPK 39 5.6 tons – both are about the same size in terms of volume. Only the Pogo 36 is significantly lighter at 3.9 tons.

And how does she sail now? "Amazing" is probably the best!

When we look for wind on the first day and actually find a kind of private squall of 4 to 6 knots in front of Piran, which is hardly noticeable on the water, there is suddenly a soft gurgling and gurgling at the stern. The log jumps to 3, then almost 4, finally to 4.8 knots. It all happens almost automatically, and it feels almost spherical to pull off practically nowhere with this big, wide boat, only under mains and Code Zero. You can leave the incredibly responsive oars to themselves. The First 36 makes its own bubble trail through the Adriatic Sea.

And not much different, only much faster, is the progress on the second day of testing. A light Bora sends 8 to 12 knots of wind across the Gulf of Trieste. Again, not a serious test for an 11-foot yacht, but an opportunity to try out the entire wardrobe, all the courses. Upwind, the First 36 logs an average of 6.3 knots at tack angles of less than 90 degrees, peaking at up to 7 knots to windward.

Outward sheets under gennaker she starts to hum slightly at 8 knots, a sign that she is already overcoming her hull speed. From around 8.5 knots, the wake turbulence breaks away at the stern and the boat begins to glide. 9.5 knots is the end. It is as true

to track as the day before and extremely stiff. Their stability reserves are sufficient to carry up to 5 Beaufort full gear.

Our French jury colleague from Europe's yacht of the year, Loïc Madeline from Voiles & Voiliers, had perfect test conditions ten days after us, with winds of 20 knots and gusts of up to 25 knots and a wave of over a meter. He was impressed by the ease with which the First 36 surfed the seas. With a single reefed main and small fractional gennaker, he permanently sailed beyond the 12 knot mark, at the top he reached more than 15 knots through the water several times.

Read the detailed test of the First 36 with all data and measured values exclusively in YACHT 9/2022, from April 20 at the kiosk, from April 15 at the subscribers. A detailed video, then from the Baltic Sea, will be broadcast by YACHT tv at the end of April. For this we ordered 5 to 6 Beaufort; we don't go to sea below that. And in May, Beneteau's performance cruiser has to face all the competition in a big YACHT comparison. So: stay tuned!

https://www.yacht.de/yachten_jollen/neue_boote/schon-gesegelt-erste-eindruecke-von-beneteaus-first-36