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HANSE 508

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# FIRST TEST HANSE 508

*Hanse's new 508 brings its contender in this critical size range right up to date. We head out on the water to see if it cuts the mustard*

Words & pictures David Harding

## SPECIFICATIONS

MAKE/MODEL  
Hanse 508

PRICE FROM  
£332,750 inc VAT

DESIGNER  
judel/vrolijk & Co

BUILDER  
Hanse Yachts

**L**ooking at today's production cruising yachts, it can be hard to imagine where their design might be going next. For decades, the trend has been for each new generation to be beamier, higher in the freeboard and with more volume than the one before, and there's only so far you can go down that path. At the same time, rigs have become easier to manage and manoeuvrability under power is better than ever before. On top of that, advances in electronics have made possible things that would barely have been imagined by designers and sailors alike only a few years ago.







#### PERFORMANCE FIGURES

POINT OF SAIL	AWA*	AWS**	SPEED
Close hauled	30°	21-23 kts	7.3-7.5 kts
Fetch	60°	16-18 kts	8.5-8.7 kts
Beam reach	90°	15-18 kts	7.9-8.1 kts
Broad reach	120°	11-12 kts	7.0-7.2 kts
Run	190°	6-8 kts	5.8-6.3 kts

\*APPARENT WIND ANGLE \*\*APPARENT WIND SPEED

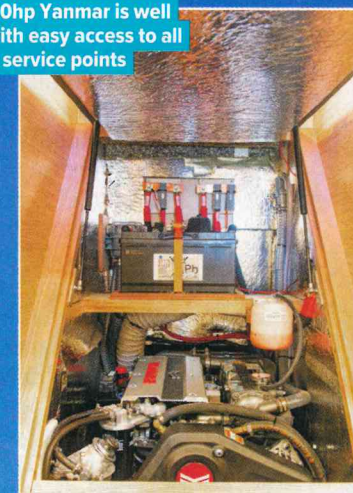


Lockers for rope tails are beneath the helm seats on either side



Most owners will choose the electrically operated bathing platform with built-in bathing ladder

The engine compartment for the 80hp Yanmar is well laid out with easy access to all the service points



#### LOGBOOK

TESTED BY  
David Harding

CONDITIONS  
F4-5, Sea - Mod

WHEN  
Solent  
November 2019

ABOVE: A helmsman's eye view. Teak on the decks and the cockpit sole is on the options list

These trends are all very much in evidence with the latest generation of Hanses. Take the new 508, for example. Her predecessor, the 505, was introduced in 2011. By 2018 she had become the oldest model in the range: it was time for a replacement, and the 508 was the result. Almost inevitably, the new arrival is higher and more voluminous. Bigger windows and hull ports make for an interior that's lighter and brighter as well as roomier, so creature comforts have been looked after. Significantly, however, performance has not been ignored. In fact it was a priority for Hanse and for the designers, Jüdel/vrolijk & co. When you have such a high-volume hull, you need a sizeable rig to drive it and that calls for decent draught and a good

amount of low-down ballast.

The 508 has all of this, making her — on paper at least — a more powerful boat than her predecessor. Her statistics also point to more performance potential than some of her competitors. In theory, Hanse has done it all with the 508, creating a 50-footer that's up to the minute yet without looking so trendy that it will be dismissed as last year's model in 12 months' time.

#### MAINTAINING A PERSPECTIVE

A boat has to be looked at in the context of what it's designed to achieve. Of course a 50-footer like this is capable of extended passage-making and well suited to events such as the ARC, but that's unlikely to be what most owners will buy her for. Like her competitors, she will probably be sailed relatively short distances and used for what you might call a 'Mediterranean lifestyle', whether it's in the Med or elsewhere. As well as swallowing the miles reasonably swiftly, the Hanse is all about enjoying time at anchor or in port, where the light, open and airy accommodation, expanses of wide flat deck and generous lounging space come into their own. Features like sun-bathing areas, wet-bars in the stern and hinge-down bathing platforms are fundamental to living the Med-style dream.

Whatever the dyed-in-the-wool offshore cruising sailor might make of her, the Hanse is a good example of how advances in design and technology have created boats that are faster, more responsive, more fun to sail and more capable than their high-volume equivalents of a few generations ago. I would





often come ashore from a test in the 1990s or early 2000s thinking how pleased I was to be back on terra firma (and, once or twice, how lucky I was to have made it). Sailing some of these boats was more of an ordeal than a pleasure and I would have hesitated to take them out of sight of land.

On a 50-footer you're entitled to expect a fair measure of both space and pace, providing you accept that draught is a prerequisite to performance. That was one of the problems in the bad old days, when some designers and builders gave us high-volume hulls combined with stunted rigs, shallow keels and, because of the lack of draught, under-sized rudders. The results were sometimes alarming.

With the Hanse, the standard keel gives a draught of 7ft 10in (2.40m). Encouragingly, the rudder is only marginally shallower — it has the tip chopped off if you choose the 6ft 6in/1.98m shallow fin — and it grips well under sail. Unlike builders who had a dalliance with twin rudders and have now reverted to singles, Hanse never went down that route, just as it

has never ventured too far down the 'fat hull, shallow draught' route either. If a beamy boat with a wide stern has a deep enough rudder, one blade should be fine and it will make marina manoeuvres a lot easier.

We had a good day to test the rudder's grip and to see how the Hanse performed when I took her for a spin in a breeze that was nudging 20 knots in the Solent. Wind and tide together gave us relatively flat water with just enough of a chop at times to produce a thud as we hit a wave.

Our test boat had the popular option of in-mast reefing. The Selden mast section will accommodate a sail with full vertical battens, and that's what you get if you upgrade to the Elvstrom laminates. The battened mainsail is appreciably bigger than the Dacron alternative with no battens and a hollow leech, but still smaller than the slab-reefing mainsail that comes as standard. This might have been one reason why we could comfortably carry full sail with well over 20 knots across the deck. Boats with self-tacking headsails sometimes lack power in lighter

airs, especially upwind in a seaway and if they have in-mast reefing as well, but ease of handling inevitably make these popular choices. Besides, with the Hanse's slippery hull and nearly 50ft (15m) of waterline length once she's moving, you're still likely to cover the ground at a respectable lick.

#### POWER OFF THE WIND

One very useful option on the Hanse is a reaching headsail, set on its own outer forestay that's taken to the stainless steel anchor roller-cum-mini bowsprit. It's a permanent stay with a furling system, so the sail is ready for use as soon as you crack off a few degrees. In the breeze we had, we put it to work as soon as the apparent wind reached 60°. It kept the boat nicely powered up to beyond 90°, finally losing drive at 130°. At 60° with the true wind down to 12 knots we cracked along at 8.5 knots, which was more than we had managed with the jib in 20 knots.

This configuration is a bit like a Solent rig on steroids, because your working headsail (the self-tacker in this case) is no smaller than it would be if you didn't have the reacher. With a Solent rig, by contrast, the inner headsail (jib, staysail or whatever you choose to call it) tends to be smaller in order to accommodate the sail on the outer forestay.

The only compromise in this instance was that the outer forestay rather than the inner forestay appeared to be taking the load of the rig, because there had been no opportunity for tuning since the boat was launched. This led to rather more luff sag in the self-tacker than would have been ideal.

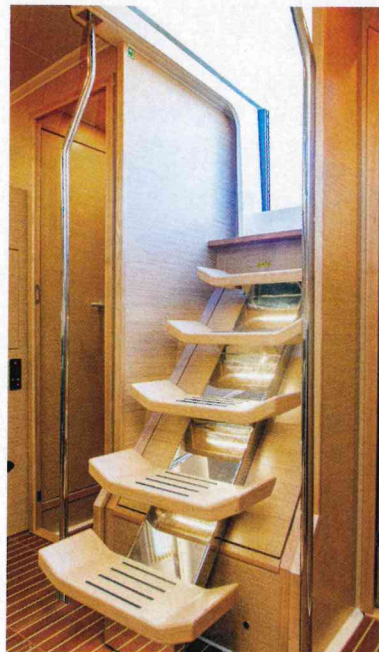
Despite this, plus the standard-issue two-bladed



ABOVE: Decks are wide, clear and open with flush hatches and a sunbathing area forward of the mast. More non-slip would be useful

fixed prop, the in-mast reefing and the need for a little more halyard tension on the headsail, we made up to 7.5 knots on the wind and tacked comfortably through 80°. The polar diagram suggests the boat is capable of more height and more speed. In flat water, with a folding prop, tuned rig and optimised sail plan, I'm sure she would be.

I'm equally sure that a mainsheet traveller would be a useful addition in a breeze to help balance the helm. It can be fitted, though you won't see it on the extras list. In any event, performance is unlikely to disappoint: the balance between speed, comfort and ease of handling is definitely favourable. Speed and comfort under power give little to complain about



Full-height pillar handholds either side of the companionway are a sensible feature



The stowage unit between the galley and the saloon is a practical option that also acts as a bracing point and a backrest for the bench seat. The linear galley provides plenty of worktop and stowage space



The master cabin in the bow has a full-size double island bed on the centreline with plenty of space around it and an ensuite heads. Flush fitting overhead storage units make the most of the space, which is well lit from inside and out



The space for the port aft heads and shower can also be used for a bunk cabin



**Hanse has created a 50-footer that's up to the minute without looking too trendy**



# With the Hanse's slippery hull you'll cover the ground at a respectable lick

either, a mere 2,000rpm producing 6.5 knots. You get around 8 knots at full chat (3,400rpm). A modest pull to starboard in ahead and kick to starboard in astern point to a left-handed prop. Manoeuvring is unlikely to present any major issues if you do as most owners will and choose bow and stern-thrusters.

## DECK AND COCKPIT

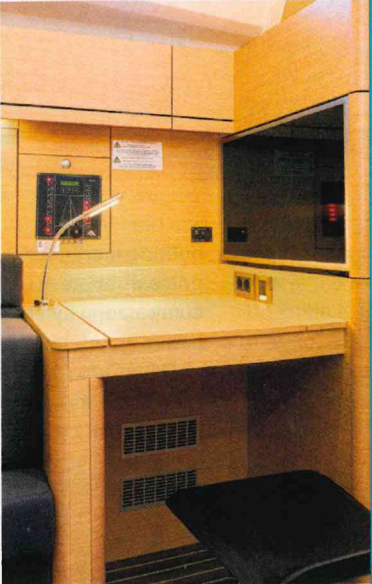
In terms of ergonomics in the cockpit, for coastal sailing at least, there's plenty to please. Twin wheels place the helmsman well outboard for good visibility forward and in a comfortable position, whether you choose to sit on the lid of the rope-tail locker or to stand. As you would now expect on a boat like the 508 designed with short-handed sailing in mind, everything you need for routine manoeuvres is led to the helm stations.

Most lines are controlled by a pair of Lewmar 55 primary winches (electric upgrades on our test boat). A pair of secondary winches further forward is among the add-ons and useful to have, though with a little discipline you can manage with the primaries



LEFT: The twin double cabins in the stern remain the same with any of the layout variations

RIGHT: In the modern style, the athwartships chart table with its hinge-up seat is relatively small



depending on your sail wardrobe.

While push-button primaries are on the options list, the reacher is electrically operated as standard: use the buttons on the console but make sure you ease enough sheet when furling in because it's not easy to see the sail from the helm.

Moving forward, by contrast, is easy. Twin cockpit tables (lowerable at the touch of another button for an extra £4,400 if you want more lounging space) leave a clear passage to the companionway. The tables provide useful bracing points but no stowage. Large items can live in the stern beneath the sole or in the large bow locker. As on the 548, you find a shallow tray with a hinge-up lid either side of the

hatch to accommodate oddments.

On a boat like this, you're not often expected to leave the cockpit when under way except for what you might call 'recreational' purposes. You can move around on a bouncing deck that's inclined at 20°, but you do need to look out for sizeable areas without any non-slip. The wide cockpit coamings can also make it tricky to see the deck as you move outboard.

In the modern style, the Hanse has shallow, flat-topped bulwarks formed by the hull-to-deck joint and through which the fastenings for the stanchions are tapped into aluminium plates.

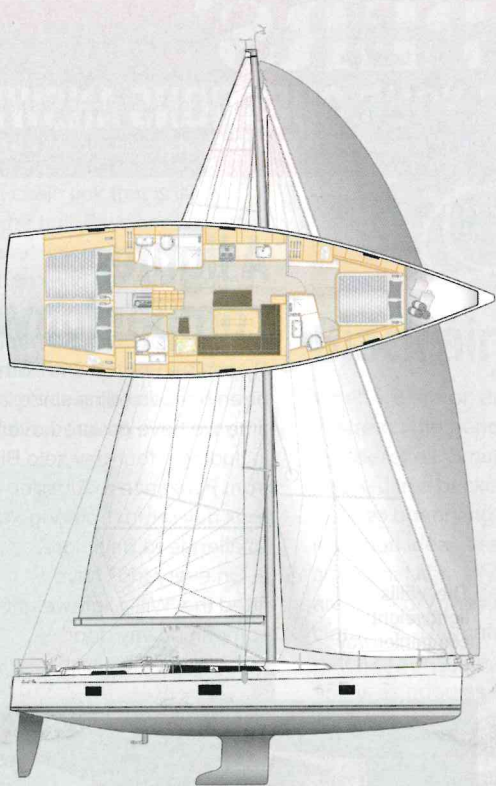
## ACCOMMODATION

With so much freeboard on boats of this size, it can be hard to know how best to use the height below decks. Placing the house batteries and the two fuel tanks beneath the raised sole in the saloon is a good start. Even so, headroom rarely drops below 7ft 6in (2.03m) throughout and the feeling of space is impressive by any standards. That's partly because the cabins at each end of the 508 are essentially the same as on the 548, which I sailed two years ago.

In between is the vast saloon, reached from the cockpit by companionway steps that are so easy to negotiate you can almost run up and down them. A linear galley is to port, and a useful extra on our test boat was the free-standing stowage unit between the galley and the saloon seating. It provides more work surface, gives you something to brace yourself against and acts as a backrest for the seat on the port side of the table.

With the joinery in light oak (mahogany and chestnut are the alternatives), combined with an abundance of hatches, large windows and the hullside ports, it's as light and bright an interior as you will find. In the Hanse tradition, most of the sole boards are screwed down. You're given a handy suction pad to lift small sections for access to critical parts of the bilge.

Layout-wise, constants are the two double aft cabins (the starboard one having its own heads and shower), the saloon and the galley. Elsewhere you can mix and match, choosing a skipper's cabin in place of the large bow locker, having two double forward cabins in place of the master cabin, and so on. Whatever takes your fancy, there's a lot of space to play with in the Hanse 508.



# HANSE 508

## THE TEST VERDICT

There can be little doubt that the Hanse 508 does exactly what her designers and builder had in mind. She's not a radical boat or even one that differs markedly from her competitors in design or concept, though that's not surprising when most builders of high-volume 'lifestyle cruisers' are pursuing a broadly similar path.

What you get with the 508 is a boat that's respectably fast, easy to handle, impressively roomy and lacking little in the way of luxury below decks.

Construction looks reassuring, too. Balsa-cored topsides give way to a solid laminate below the waterline. Vinylster resin is used in the skin coat and the keel is bolted through sizeable steel plates between longitudinal members in the hull's stiffening matrix.

Access to the vital systems seems generally good. Although Hanse has come a long way from its slightly rough-and-ready early days, it appears not to have forgotten the basics.

## WOULD SHE SUIT YOU AND YOUR CREW?

Boats of this size are becoming increasingly comfortable and easy to manage short handed. All the same, let's not forget that increasing complexity in the ever-greater number of systems that make it all possible is an inevitable consequence.

Especially if you go down the push-button route with everything – as many owners understandably will – handling will be a doddle most of the time as long as it all keeps working.

Technological advances with the Hanse now extend to the snappily-named 'My Hanse Safety Cloud' that monitors the boat's every move and sends the details to your phone.

If you want a luxury-laden boat that sails well and is available with all the electronic wizardry and modern conveniences you could wish for, the Hanse has much to offer. Alternatively, you can stick to a more basic spec and work a bit harder. It's good to have the choice.

## PROS

Light, bright and roomy accommodation  
Easy to handle under sail and power

Wide range of interior layouts and options

## CONS

Very high topsides for boarding

Wide, slippery cockpit coamings  
Mainsheet traveler would help balance

## FACTS AND FIGURES

PRICE AS TESTED  
£512,630

LOA  
15.55m (51ft 0in)

HULL LENGTH  
14.93m (49ft 0in)

LWL  
13.54m (44ft 5in)

BEAM  
4.75m (15ft 7in)

DRAUGHT  
2.40m (7ft 10in)

DISPLACEMENT  
14,700kg (32,408lb)

BALLAST  
4,050kg (8,939lb)

BALLAST RATIO  
27.6%

DISPLACEMENT/LENGTH 165

SAIL AREA  
118.0m<sup>2</sup> (1,270sq ft)

SA/D RATIO 20.3

DIESEL  
280 litres (62 gal)

WATER  
630 litres (139 gal)

ENGINE  
Yanmar 80hp

TRANSMISSION  
Saildrive

RCD CATEGORY A

DESIGNER  
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