



PHOTOS ELLEN DEWAR

# EURO STAR

With her awards sash prominently draped across her gunwales, **JEFF STRANG** invites Jeanneau Prestige's latest lady out for a dance on the bay...

One expects Jeanneau's Prestige 500 flybridge to be sitting low in the water; such is the weight of expectation placed on its shining hull by the promoters. Still they do have reason to boast.

Barely out her wrapping from the launch at the Dusseldorf Boat Show in January, and new for 2012, the Prestige 500 flybridge has put more awards in the Jeanneau trophy cabinet than Black Caviar could

have. These accolades include Best Interior Design at the World Yachts Trophies Awards in Cannes, Best Motor Yacht at the Nautical Design Awards in Milan, and most importantly the European Motor Yacht of the Year in the category of yachts up to 55 feet in length last January at Dusseldorf itself.

Well that's Europe conquered; now it's time for Australia. Wasn't Napoléon from France?

All jokes aside those are the kind of accolades that deserve to get attention and I was very keen to see for myself just what had impressed those Northern Hemisphere judges so much. Dockside she strikes a very different pose to that we would expect to see from the better yards up north on the Gold Coast.

Tall and refined, her flybridge is topped with a well-tailored open bimini rather than a hardtop. The effect is a chic one and defines her as being an animal of the catwalk rather than racetrack. Before we even left the dock it was clear the Prestige 500 flybridge has plenty of Parisian attitude, after all, there is no excuse for not looking good.

## PRIDE OF OWNERSHIP

I was delighted to discover the boat's new owner, Chris, would be joining us for the afternoon's cruise and photoshoot. If the enthusiasm in his greeting was anything to go by, he was as delighted by the prospect of showing off his new pride and





**[HIGHS]**

- › Vast expanses of outdoor living spaces
- › Completely private master cabin
- › Highly versatile accommodation options
- › Lean fuel performance
- › PlayStation-like manoeuvrability

**[LOWS]**

- › Slightly narrow access to the rear cockpit through the galley
- › Light on fuel capacity
- › Smallish children's cabin



The main helm (top left) is comprehensive. It is virtually repeated on the expansive flybridge (left). Lifestyle enthusiasts will love the twin sun loungers (below left) on the bow and the barbecue module (below right).



believes multilevel vessels, with several staircases, create unnecessary tripping hazards for excited youngsters. The boat also presents an interesting take on the master cabin access and configuration that could not be ignored, and along with their long established relationship with Matthew, the Jeanneau Prestige 500 flybridge was starting to feel like a really good fit.

When it came time to discuss finances, Chris and Rhonda were in for a pleasant surprise. It seems the strength of the Australian dollar combined with the Europe-based manufacturer's desire to sell boats, made it particularly easy to strike a deal to please all the parties. Four months later a glistening new Jeanneau Prestige 500 flybridge arrived in Sydney ready for its final commissioning and a happy handover.

**WHAT LEXUS IS TO TOYOTA**

I think *Trade-a-Boat* writer, John Zammit, hit the nail on the head when he reviewed this boat's sister ship the Prestige 500 S late last year. He said: "The Prestige range is Jeanneau's answer to those buyers looking for a higher level of luxury, refinement and specification in terms of fit and finish, sort of what the Lexus is to Toyota."

You certainly get that feeling when you stroll through the vessel. Jeanneau does not claim to be a fine tailor of bespoke craft. The company builds production boats and is very good at it. As well as its wide range

joy as I was about reviewing it. While the rest of the team were working through the details I took the opportunity to have a chat with Chris in private.

As an owner of two previous vessels, a Sea Ray Sedan Bridge and a Sunseeker Predator 56, Chris and his wife Rhonda had a very good understanding of what they desired in a new boat. Always intending to buy "new" they were looking pretty seriously at Australia's two premier local stables when a catch-up with Matthew Willet of MW Marine, the

local Jeanneau powerboat dealer, at the Sydney Boat Show allowed them the perfect opportunity to look over the 500 flybridge's sister ship, the 500 S.

As impressed as they were with the demo boat's overall presentation it was two or three specific features that really got them genuinely interested.

High on the list of priorities was the vessel's suitability for weekend cruising with the grandchildren. Prestige's single-level approach to the living area and outdoor spaces appealed. Chris quite justifiably



New owner Chris and his wife love the single-level approach to the saloon, galley (below right) and cockpit (above) living spaces.

of yachts there are several models of powerboat including the Cap Camarat range of open runabouts, Merry Fisher budget family day cruisers, and the company's Leader and NC range of semi-luxury sportscruisers. Sitting right at the top and distinctly separate in terms of marketing and presentation is the Prestige range.

**PRIVACY FOR THE QUEEN**

In an interesting take on the usual accommodation layout of a powerboat, where all the cabins and bathrooms are accessed via a corridor for'ard, Prestige has switched things around to afford the master and his queen an elevated level of privacy.

A private stairwell aft, opposite the galley, leads to a charming and secluded enclave. The full-beam suite (by virtue of the pod-drive installation) features an expansive island berth, a writing desk and an area at the foot of the bed designed to ensure taller sailors have an opportunity to enjoy full headroom. For me it was the expansive views that captivated my attention. The effect is slightly surreal and leaves you feeling totally immersed in the environment. Perhaps it is the way the water-reflected light illuminates the cabin or maybe it's the great

acoustics. Whatever the cause the result is delightfully calming.

This island of peace is serviced by an equally enjoyable en suite. A beautifully lit and generously mirrored vanity and hand basin leads to a minimalist but spacious shower — a nice balance of functional simplicity and European chic.

**ACCOMODATION WITH OPTIONS**

The remaining two cabins reside forward, as is more traditional. In what seems to be a growing trend led by the Europeans both the VIP guest cabin and the children's cabin feature split single berths that can be pushed together to form a double. The versatility of use these permit should not be underestimated as it allows the hosts more freedom to entertain guests on weekend cruises

who may be friends, but are not necessarily "friendly".

On the slightly negative the secondary children's cabin is on the cramped side and grandma may be hard pushed to keep the younger's accompanying mountain of accessories at bay, but that will not detract from the adventure they are enjoying. Naturally a separate bathroom that double-duties as a dayhead services all the forward accommodation spaces. To Matthew Willet's credit he pointed out that the dual doors, allowing hallway and en suite access for the VIP cabin, bang into each other and commented about making a change on future boats.

**WATERFRONT PAD**

If you can see yourself in a modish apartment with uninterrupted sea views then the single-level living



... THE PRESTIGE 500 FLYBRIDGE HAS PUT MORE AWARDS IN THE JEANNEAU TROPHY CABINET THAN BLACK CAVIAR COULD HAVE



**Facts & figures**  
**JEANNEAU PRESTIGE 500 FLYBRIDGE**

**PRICE AS TESTED**  
**\$1,045,000**  
 (subject to exchange rate)

**SEA TRIALS**  
 Twin 435hp Volvo Penta IPS600

RPM	SPEED	FUEL BURN	RANGE
700	4.2kts	3.8lt/h	1437nm
1000	6.4kts	4.2lt/h	1981nm
1500	9kts	19.6lt/h	597nm
2000	11.2kts	43lt/h	339nm
2400	14.5kts	64.8lt/h	291nm
2600	17.1kts	82lt/h	271nm
2800	19.5kts	94lt/h	270nm
3000	21.7kts	107lt/h	264nm
3200	24.4kts	124lt/h	256nm
3400	26.6kts	140lt/h	247nm
3500	27.8kts	152lt/h	238nm
3626	29.5kts	169lt/h	227nm

\* Sea-trial data supplied by Jeanneau. Fuel burn is for both engines combined.

**GENERAL**  
**MATERIAL:** GRP  
**LOA:** 15.2m  
**HULL LENGTH:** 14.92m  
**WEIGHT:** 14,100kg (dry)  
**BEAM:** 4.5m  
**DRAFT:** 1.05m

**CAPACITIES**  
**FUEL:** 1300lt  
**WATER:** 636lt  
**CABINS:** 3  
**PEOPLE (NIGHT):** 6

**ENGINE**  
**MAKE/MODEL:** 2 x Volvo Penta IPS600  
**TYPE:** Six-cylinder turbo-diesel  
**RATED HP:** 435 (each)  
**DISPLACEMENT:** 5.5lt (each)

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**LAYOUT**



breeze wafting through I couldn't see any reason to leave — except to refresh my beverage.

**FULL CONTROL**

Regular readers of these pages will be well aware of the benefits IPS pod drives deliver on the helm. In short you have effortless acceleration, industry leading fuel consumption, and PlayStation-like multidirectional control, literally, in the palm of your hand. Chris has gone all-in with the helm station options on *Sublime* adding in a bowthruster and the very best Simrad navigation system with NSE 12 units on the bridge and in the saloon station. Just to make sure he has all bases covered there is an extra joystick and thruster control in the cockpit to make a total of three stations. If ever there was a boat that could be parked on a dime this is it.

Under power, albeit in particularly benign conditions, the twin IPS600 pods (powered by 435hp Volvo Pentas) delivered that characteristically smooth pod-driven ride, and it's as quiet as you will experience on a production boat. The cruising speed of 25kts will eat up the miles in a hurry, without devouring your wallet in the process. As an untested observation of pod-driven boats in general they are not the nimblest in a turn at high speed but that is probably of no real consequence. As a weekender, rather than a long-range cruiser, the Prestige 500 is a little light on fuel for those with grand plans of adventure over the horizon.

**EN RÉSUMÉ**

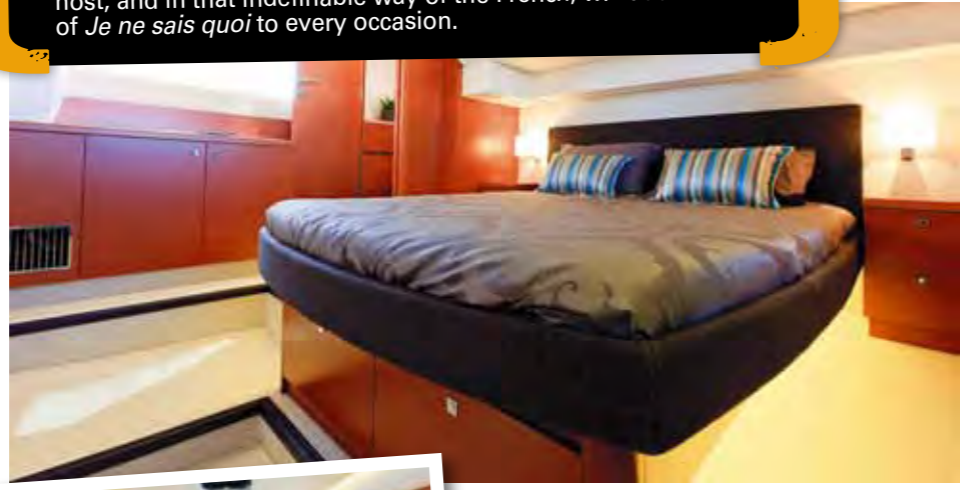
The Jeanneau Prestige 500 flybridge has many more features of note not covered in detail today, such as the vast storage locker aft that can be optioned in as an extra cabin and the hydraulic passerelle to facilitate more genteel disembarking procedures outside the restaurant.

It's a sun-lover's boat and an entertainer's boat. It's a boat to look for opportunities to use. It's a boat that will never embarrass the host, and in that indefinable way the French have, will add a touch of *Je ne sais quoi* to every occasion. 🍷

**[tradeboat SAYS...]**  
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space will certainly appeal. I am no fashion writer so I will struggle to convey exactly what it is about the furnishing of Prestige makes it so distinctly Parisian. All I can say for sure is that no one would mistake it for American. Other than the helm seat there is no leather to be seen (probably too "last week" for the French), instead immaculately tailored off-white fabric couches with contrasting dressings invite the guests to settle in and absorb the view with an aromatic espresso. With comfortable seating for seven (not including the helm) there is no excuse for anyone to feel left out in the cold.

I do think the galley is on the small side for a 50ft boat. Perhaps this is because the vessel is not intended as a long-range cruiser catering to hoards of hungry fishermen. But while it's a kitchen better suited to meals of more modest proportions it is tidily laid-out with adequate storage and easy access to the saloon or the cockpit. I'm not sure about the centrally-located island-style bar either. Without the glass top it could help increase the usable bench space, but it does impede the flow of traffic outdoors slightly. I think remove it all together and opt for fully opening rear doors if there is room.



The master cabin configuration (middle and right) has won plaudits throughout Europe while the split singles in the guest cabin (above) are becoming more popular.

**EN PLEIN AIR**

Occasional *Trade-a-Boat* writer, Tony Mackay, summed up the European position on the boating lifestyle laconically, when visiting the Cannes Boat Show last year. He said: "The best fish are on the menu. God forbid one should fight with one's dinner." So, while it's not a fishing boat, the Prestige has acres of outdoor living space. If sunning, swimming, alfresco dining and just generally soaking up the glorious Australian coastlands, in particular those incredible evenings, is your idea of heaven then this is the boat for you.

A comfortable cockpit is vastly augmented by several additional outdoor spaces including a sunbed on the bow complete with a pop-up sunshade, a good-sized swimplatform and a simply massive open flybridge. It's the flybridge that is most worthy of valuable column inches.

Obviously the flybridge is where this boat most significantly differs from her sister ship the 500 S. It features a helm station that is a virtual twin of the downstairs version, only with 360 degrees of unobstructed visibility. It also has a dining table and yet another sunbed. All of this lives under an open sunshade, so with the balmy evening

