

## Beneteau 37

A sailor's sailboat, this user-friendly cruiser should soon be a fixture at your local marina

The latest sailboat from the world's most prolific builder is a near perfect example of why Beneteau is the world's most prolific builder. It understands the market. It knows what we want in a boat and it delivers it to us time after time. This new model, the Beneteau 37, is stylish and clean on deck, the interior is comfortable and thoughtfully laid out, it performs very well but is also easy to sail and to maintain, and it's affordable. Manufactured in South Carolina, there's little doubt that Beneteau has launched another best-seller. I'll make a bet with you, before the end of this sailing season there will be at least one new Beneteau 37 in your marina.

I took a brand-spanking-new 37 out for a *SAILING* Magazine Boat Test after the Miami Boat Show. The midmorning breezes were fickle but that didn't stop us from shutting down the engine as soon as we cleared the

dock and working our way south on the ICW under sail. The boat is extremely nimble and, I confess, we were showing off a bit by quick-tacking across the 200-yard channel. Overtaking the powerboats putting along in the No Wake zone was rather nice. Once we had a bit of breathing room, we eased the sheets and sped along at 6-plus knots. The apparent wind was 8 knots.

### The details

The 37 combines the established talents of naval architects from Groupe Finot with elegant interior styling from Milan-based Nauta Design. The result is a thoroughly modern look that marries form and function in a very user-friendly package. A careful inspection of the line drawings reveals that there is not much sheer from the nearly plumb bow to rakish reversed transom. However, the natural flow of the angular coachroof into the foredeck gives an impression of sheer and grace. Below the waterline the 37 features a narrow-chord fin keel, externally fastened with stainless steel bolts and backing plates and coated with anti-corrosion epoxy. The rudder blade is free standing with a beefy stainless steel stock. The propeller exits

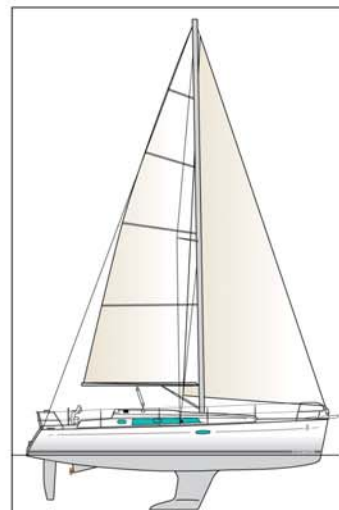
the hull through a molded skeg, eliminating the need for an external strut. There's not much forefoot, part of the reason for the 37's impressive performance, and also why you feel the pitch of the sea.

Beneteau has a proven construction philosophy that might be summed up like this: Build rock solid fiberglass hulls with balsa-cored decks; use interior molded pieces to streamline production; use scale purchasing power to offer savings that other builders can't match; and finally, finish boats out to a high standard. Despite building more boats than any other company, Beneteau gets the details right. The new 37 has superb fiberglass sculpting throughout. The intricate diamond pattern nonskid that offers excellent traction but is easy on the feet is one of many examples.

I am happy to report that the new 37 is almost a masthead rig; it's a 9/10 fractional arrangement. I know the trend is toward fractional rigs with small, self-tending headsails and large roachy mains with swept-back spreaders. And while there are certainly advantages to this rig, there are more disadvantages. I may be stirring the pot here, but extreme fractional rigs are really only efficient sailing upwind. Off the wind the main lays on the spreaders and the small headsail is borderline useless. So set a cruising spinnaker, right? Be honest now, who wants to set a chute every time they sail off the wind? Spinnakers are wonderful tools, but they are a load to handle. This is a long-winded way of saying that the new Beneteau 37 is efficient on all points of sail right out of the box, or right off the dock.

### On deck

The 37 is also very easy to handle. In-mast roller furling is standard. Let's talk about furling mains. Furling booms



Beneteau 37

LOA 37'8"; LWL 34'1"; Beam 12'10"  
Draft 4'7" standard, 6'3" deep;  
Ballast 4,253 lbs. standard,  
3,902 lbs. deep keel;  
Displacement 15,013 lbs.;  
Sail Area 621 sq. ft.

Beneteau USA  
1313 West Hwy, 76  
Marion, SC 29571  
(843) 629-5300  
[www.beneteauusa.com](http://www.beneteauusa.com)



The microwave is located above the chart table, which shares the end of the settee.

are becoming more popular and they make sense, it is better to lower sail than to move it forward when reefing. However, in-mast systems are well proven and very simple to operate. The loose-footed main also allows for a variety of trim options, especially off the wind. One key advantage of in-mast furling is that it makes reefing possible when reaching—you don't have to bring the boat slamming into the wind to shorten up. The main is controlled by a midboom traveler arrangement. The track could stand to be a bit longer. A 105-percent furling genoa is also standard. The shrouds are inboard to allow tight sheeting angles. Deck hardware is first rate. All running rigging except the topping lift is led aft to the cockpit through jammers.

The cockpit is quite wide and very comfortable. The 37 doesn't have much taper to the

The Beneteau 37 manages to eke out 5 knots in the light air on Miami's Biscayne Bay.



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hull shape, holding its beam well aft. The wheel is located well aft and at the helm you feel like you're sitting on the transom. I like this perspective. It gives you a full view of the sails and a direct connection to the rudder. When you give the leather-covered 36-inch wheel a small turn the boat responds immediately. There are three cockpit lockers, including a huge sail locker to starboard. The seats are covered in teak and the coamings ergonomically shaped to support the lower back. There are well-placed stainless grabrails on the pedestal, or as Beneteau calls it, the steering console. A pivoting helm seat offers access to the swim step astern. The ladder has teak pads, which make slipping less of a problem and a hot-and-cold deck shower is standard.

The external chain locker forward is deep and large enough to carry an honest amount of ground tackle. The stanchions support double lifelines and the pulpits on both ends of the boat are robust. Again, the details matter, the new 37 comes standard with heavy-duty amidship cleats that not only are essential for setting spring lines, but also for running a quick breast line when docking maneuvers go askew. The small sections of teak forming a coaming of sorts lend a touch elegance to the overall look of the boat.

#### Down below

The interior is surprisingly bright and airy. I say this because the sleek deck profile would not suggest this result below. However, every living space has a minimum of one natural light and air source. Also, bright white molded pieces help to keep things light. The layout is practical and the finish is lovely. The two-cabin one-head arrangement is an ideal use of space. I am happy to see that the designers resisted the urge to squeeze in another cabin and head.

Dropping below, the L-shaped galley is immediately to port. It includes all the usual features,



The 105-percent furling genoa comes standard, above. The steering console, left, holds the navigation equipment. The galley is to port at the foot of the companionway, far left, and the interior is bright and cheerful, top.

double sinks, gimbale stove and oven, and front-opening 12-volt refrigeration. What I like about it are the clever stowage lockers. There's a spot for cookery under the oven and a large dish rack with a built-in drain. The waste bin fits in neatly under the sink. The white laminate finish contrasts the Corian used on many new boats today, but I like the clean look.

Access to the aft cabin is through the galley. Billed as the guest cabin, it is roomy and includes a genuine double berth and hanging locker. The head

and nav station are opposite the galley to port. The head includes a stall shower and is more spacious than heads in older model Beneteaus. The chart table faces aft. Charts can be stored inside the desk and there is room for repeaters and radios in the aft panel. The electrical panel is above and outboard and easy to reach. Most 37s will include a microwave oven above the chart table.

The saloon includes a straight settee to starboard with storage below. This would be the best sea berth. To port a U-shaped settee

drapes around a handsome table. There are shelves outboard with stylish but not wildly effective stainless steel railings. There's also storage below as well. Small handrails run the length of the cabin. The portlights flood the saloon with light, and seem bigger below than from on deck. The hull ports also add light and sense of space. Opening portlights and a large overhead hatch afford terrific ventilation.

The owner's cabin is forward. I was surprised to find that there's plenty of headroom, 6 feet, 3 inches to be precise, and



In spite of fickle Miami winds, the Beneteau 37 tacked quickly in Biscayne Bay, above. The large cockpit easily seated the crowd, below.



that adds to the spacious feel of this comfortable cabin. The double berth is island style; great in port, not so great underway. There is a lot of stowage with a hanging and shelved locker to starboard and large lockers below the berth. Another big overhead hatch and bright and efficient halogen lights make this cabin user-friendly.

There's enough water tankage to avoid installing a watermaker right away. All together there's 98 gallons with tanks under the aft bunk, and the forward section of the forward bunk. The tanks are rotomolded. The batteries are in the aft cabin. The house battery has 110-amp hours and the engine start battery 70. An 80-amp hour alternator will have no problem keeping the batteries charged. An upgrade I'd opt for is another house battery.

A 29-horsepower Yanmar diesel is very fuel efficient and provides enough power to push the 37 along at more than 6 knots in protected waters. Truthfully, the boat sails so well, and is so easy to sail, the engine will primarily be used for getting in and out of the marina. The 52-gallon fuel tank will likely last all season. Access to the engine is from behind the

companionway steps and through side panels in the aft cabin. I am happy that Beneteau stays with the drive shaft transmission instead of the easier to install saildrive. Drive shaft gears have longer lives.

#### Under sail

Back on Biscayne Bay the wind remained fickle. Bringing the boat hard up on the wind it accelerated smartly. Pinching high, 35 degrees apparent, we kept the boat moving. The 37 is a sailor's boat, you can feel the rudder at all times and the boat talks to you. If you get a bit too high you know it immediately and a modest correction gets you back in the groove. I like a boat that you sail by the seat of your pants and by the wind on your face, not just by instruments. Bringing the boat through the wind we turned north. The wind went south. Alas, we paid out the boom and longed for a whisker pole as we headed home wing-and-wing. We managed to keep the boat moving at 5 knots plus.

The new Beneteau 37 is destined for success. Despite the weak dollar, the base price makes the boat a great value. Anybody out there want to take me up on my bet?