

Euro Family Cruiser

A good all-around 30-foot boat needs accommodations that will allow a couple with a child or two to cruise for a week, solid sailing qualities to make cruising and club racing fun, and strong construction for safety and resale value. Attention to detail is a plus. The Dehler 29 is a family cruiser with all these features and sharp looks as well. There's some Euro styling that will make American buyers stop for a moment, but if you use that moment to think, you'll see good reasons for the design. We, the descendants of the "take charge" frontier folk, like the implied importance of a steering wheel on anything bigger than a dinghy, but this boat's tiller is simpler, stronger, and easier to move out of the way at anchor, and you can't beat the sensitive feedback it gives. We tend toward straight inboard engine installations, but the Dehler's sail drive is quiet and efficient.

My first impression was "This boat is well finished." The grippy and attractive non-skid is applied separately. The companionway doors drop down precisely, without requiring removal and stowage. The steps have a gentle slope for safety. The wood and molded fiberglass overhead in the saloon, combined with bins for stowage, make it an attractive space. The U-shaped dinette will easily accommodate six, and there's a big drop-leaf table. There's full space under the starboard settee for stowage, and the batteries under the port settee do not take all the room there. The bilge is shallow, but access to the keelbolts is easy.

Nothing remarkable is in the galley but it's functional and complete, with a two-burner Origo stovetop, round sink, and sliding cabinet stowage. The fridge is well sealed and reasonable in size, with a unique plastic liner.

Hidden spaces are well thought out, wires and hoses are bundled and tie-wrapped, and all hardware is high quality; however, on the through-hull hoses was single



The Dehler 29 is an all-around performer

clamped, not double. The easily removed electrical panel is a study in compulsive neatness, and circuits go to bus bars in proper fashion. The wires are not numbered so owners will need schematic diagrams of the system.

The nav station is big enough for a chartbook but not full-size charts, and there's stowage space under the tabletop. Space for electronics is a bit limited, but after all, this is a 29-footer. The head has wood trim and a sizable adjacent hanging locker offers access to through-hull fittings and the fuel filter. A small port on the starboard side gives tight access to the engine compartment including, the alternator, and removable steps provide access to the front of the two-cylinder Volvo diesel. Sound insulation is exceptional.

In an absolute sense, the aft cabin is small, but it's big for a boat this size, with a limited area of full headroom, a large double berth, a locker, and engine-access port (it's possible to reach the other side of the engine and exhaust line). The forward V-berth is for kids. Both cabins have vinyl liners and handy pockets where you can stuff the extra T-shirt.

The lazyjacks incorporate a clever mesh bag that keeps the mainsail drained and stowed neatly on the boom, and setting sail on the 7/8 rig (we had a 105 percent jib) was a snap. In less than 5 knots of wind,

the deep-draft version of the 29 accelerated to 3 knots and began to generate its own breeze as it sliced through the omnipresent powerboat wake in Annapolis. The high sail area-displacement ratio paid off in these conditions, and the hull is efficient, with a long waterline and a narrow, deep fin that sports a big streamlined bulb. The boat tacked and gybed easily, with pleasant feedback through the tiller. Under power the Dehler behaved nicely, with a sharp turning circle and predictable backing.

A couple of maintenance items are lurking. The sail drive's lower end will need careful protection against corrosion, and a lead keel would have been better than cast iron. Otherwise, this should be an easy boat to live with, and it's near-perfect blend of family cruiser and daysailer.

