



Expect the Unexpected

Beneteau's Gran Turismo 49 is more than meets the eye.

The name Beneteau is synonymous with sailboats, but the French builder's powerboat division has become a competitive force to be reckoned with, not only in terms of price but also build and ride quality. The term "economy of scale"—and all it entails in terms of craftsmanship—springs to mind when one considers Beneteau Group's massive output. Its latest and largest sport cruiser, however, defiantly flies in the face of conventional wisdom about what to expect from a production builder.

The boat originated as the Monte Carlo 47 but was given a flybridge option and rechristened the Gran Turismo 49, although the vessel reviewed here is the hardtop version. It's equipped with twin Volvo Penta D6 IPS 600 (435-horsepower) drives with joystick controls both at the helm and in the cockpit as standard. The joystick controls in the cockpit proved invaluable as I boarded the boat at Pier 66 in Fort Lauderdale with Alex Wilkes of Denison Yacht Sales. Thanks to the IPS drives' pinpoint maneuverability, Wilkes was able to hover within inches of

the dock, with nary a line or fender in sight as I climbed aboard. This model featured an all-white hull, but the GT 49 is also available in wine-red and white, or grey-blue and white. The aforementioned flybridge version of the yacht will set you back an additional \$27,000, approximately.

Despite the presence of a garage that can house a tender up to nine feet, four inches—quite large for this size boat—the cockpit and aft deck are spacious and inviting. "The hydraulic swim platform and a tender garage are features you don't typically see on a boat under 60 feet," says Wilkes. "You can also stow a jet ski on the swim platform, which can support 720 pounds."

On the port side of the cockpit there's an electric two-burner grill, sink and refrigerator. The optional electric table can be lowered to the same level as the six-person settee, with a large cushion placed on top to create a sunpad perfect for soaking up the sunshine. Another

By ALAN GIBSON



sunpad on the foredeck is easily accessed via steps on either side of the cockpit.

The main-deck saloon is certain to be a popular gathering spot for cruisers as it is open, sunny and filled with panoramic views thanks to the massive windows, three-leaf sliding glass door, and six and a half feet of headroom. A four-seat, U-shaped settee is to port with an electric high-low table to use as dinette, cocktail table or coffee table. A bar and entertainment area to starboard features an electric icemaker, 36-inch TV, DVD player, and optional Bose sound system. Storage space abounds in the bar unit and beneath the settee. Overhead, a hatch brings in even more natural light, but the sun's rays can be muted with blinds if needed. Above the helm station a nearly beam-spanning sunroof pulls back at the touch of a button and opens up the wheelhouse with light into the boat's lower deck, where the galley sits to port. It's a marked contrast to the aft-galley trend, but for many boat buyers it makes a lot of sense. "It brings in so much natural



light through the windows and down into the galley, plus you have a galley similar to what you might see on a 65- or 70-footer. With the open sunroof it really brightens up that area down there like an atrium. It's better for living aboard and extended cruising," says Wilkes.

The GT is available in a two- or three- stateroom layout, but the three-stateroom version is the most popular, as it offers a guest cabin to starboard across from the galley with twin berths. The two-stateroom version replaces this cabin with a large, L-shaped settee with seating for four. Moka carpet is found throughout the upper and lower saloon areas, and it's removable for easy cleaning. Underneath is an attractive, brown-oak laminate sole. Alpi walnut woodwork and Mondo Moka upholstery accentuate the interior areas. Regardless of the layout chosen, the guest/day head remains in the same position, as does the forward VIP guest cabin.

The full-beam master stateroom is aft, and sports the look and feel of accommodations you would find on a



SPECIFICATIONS

LOA: 51' 7"

Beam: 14'

Draft: 2' 9" - 3' 7"

Weight: 33,038 lbs.

Fuel/Water: 344/170 U.S. gals.

Power: 2x Volvo Penta D6 IPS 600 @435-hp ea.

Cruise/Top Speed: 23/29 knots

MSRP: \$881,047

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Clockwise from above: Sporty lines and smooth styling make the Beneteau GT 49 a real headturner whether at dock or at sea; guest/dayhead fixtures exude simple elegance; the full-beam master invites relaxation; clean and contemporary styling along with panoramic windows brighten the saloon; a down-galley is a popular and smart arrangement for living aboard and extended cruising.

larger yacht. Perhaps it's the portside chaise lounge abutting a large window, which practically begs you to relax and watch the sea go by. A luxury, to be sure, but one that almost every buyer goes for, Wilkes says, instead of the other, more practical option for this area of the cabin—a storage cupboard. The ensuite head has a separate shower, abundance of storage and quite possibly the most generous amount of headroom you'll encounter on a boat in this size range: seven feet, seven inches.

The helm offers a nicely upholstered bench for two with a bolster option and a sharp-looking dashboard accentuated with silk-finish chestnut paint. The centerpiece of the instrument panel is a Simrad S12 multifunction display (MFD) with sonic hub, depth finder, 4G radar, AIS receiver, autopilot, and Wi-Fi interface module. The model we reviewed was fitted with a single MFD, but dual displays are an option.

As we cleared the ICW entrance and headed into open water, the Volvo Penta IPS drives put on quite a show, flatly and smoothly popping the GT 49 up onto the plane. "Because the boat's designed for IPS,



the drives create a parallel pull on the hull, as opposed to shaft drives where you've got a 15-degree angle that goes down and makes the boat want to dig in," Wilkes says. "For Beneteau, ride quality is critical—they believe you should never lose sight of the horizon when getting up on plane."

The boat handled a series of turns at both cruising speed and top speed—and everywhere in between—with a high degree of poise, stability and responsiveness. Spray was routinely directed off to the sides, never up and over—no small feat in the churned-up chop during our

time off shore. The GT 49's center of gravity feels low and solid, instilling confidence in the hull's ability to run straight and true while under way. Wilkes attributes the boat's sea-keeping abilities to Beneteau's emphasis on performance and efficiency.

If amazing performance isn't what you expect from a production builder like Beneteau, we suggest you take a good, long look at the Gran Turismo 49. It lives up to its race-car moniker while offering comfort and quality for those who prefer a slower pace—a combination that's tough to beat. 🐾

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