

# LEADER OF THE PACK

JEANNEAU'S LEADER 40 IS A CAPABLE EXPRESS CRUISER  
BRIMMING WITH SPIRITED PERFORMANCE AND GOOD IDEAS  
FOR COMFORT AFLOAT. ♦ BY CAPT. JOHN WOOLDRIDGE



## LEADER 40

LOA: 40'5"

BEAM: 12'5"

DRAFT: 3'7"

DISPL.: 16,603 lb.

FUEL: 192 gal.

WATER: 66 gal.

STANDARD POWER: 2/320-hp

MerCruiser 6.2 Magnums

OPTIONAL POWER: 2/380-hp MerCruiser 8.2L

Magnums, 2/300-hp Volvo Penta D4s

TEST POWER: 2/370-hp Volvo Penta D6s

GENERATOR: 7.5-kW Kohler

WARRANTY: 2-year stem-to-stern warranty,

and a five-year warranty on structure.

BASE PRICE: \$391,300 (w/ test power)

*Smoothness at sea, whether on  
the hook or at 35 knots, is what  
the Leader 40 is all about.*

Satisfaction. That's what I expect every time I get behind the helm of a yacht with a Michael Peters pedigree, and the Jeanneau Leader 40 met my expectations emphatically. In addition to sparkling performance and well-balanced handling, this contemporary express cruiser blends the talents of Jeanneau's design staff and Garroni Design to create a yacht that's equally well thought out for day-tripping, overnighting, or longer stints of coastal cruising.

Jeanneau offers the Leader 40 either as an Open with a nicely proportioned, forward-slanting radar arch supporting a canvas Bimini top, or in a Sportop (hardtop) version that features an abundance of sunlight and natural ventilation when the electrically controlled sunroof is open, and also excellent protection from the elements when desired.

The particular Leader 40 I had the pleasure to test was a Sportop model, which I recently boarded behind the Jeanneau America offices in Annapolis, Maryland. Nicolas Harvey, president for Jeanneau America, and the company's marketing director, Margriet Mitchell, joined me for a run on the Chesapeake Bay. Power for our test boat was a pair of 380-horsepower MerCruiser 8.2L Magnum gasoline engines mated to Bravo 3XR, twin-prop sterndrives. These are the most powerful gasoline stern drives available (twin 320-horsepower Mercs are the other offering) on the Leader 40, capable of a hair-blown-back 37-knot top end under the right conditions.

The optional Axius Joystick gave us one-handed control around the docks, spinning the boat in its pivot point and moving side-to-side or diagonally with great precision. Simple and intuitive to use, even for a beginner, Axius technology melts away the need for twin-throttle/shifter experience around the docks—although I'm convinced that we all need to learn and practice departing or docking without the joystick for good measure. To be clear, Axius is only available with the 380-horsepower Mercs.

For those desiring diesel, the boat can be ordered with twin 300-horsepower Volvo Penta D4s mated to Duoprop outdrives, either with or without Volvo's joystick technology, or a pair of 370-horsepower Volvo Penta D6s with joystick capabilities.

From a standing start, the MerCruiser-equipped Leader 40 reached a high cruising speed of 30 knots at about 4000 rpm in just under 20 seconds, and achieved an economical range of consumption, roughly 30 gph to 44 gph, between 3000 and 4000 rpm. Best cruising-range figures, computed with a 10-percent fuel reserve, went from 137 to 109 nautical miles within that same rpm envelope. Bow rise was minimal, and I never lost sight of the horizon, even while comfortably seated at the helm.

But for safety reasons, I like to stand for a more elevated view of the waters immediately ahead when accelerating from idle speed. In this case, I opened the electrically operated hardtop, flipped up the forward edge of the helm seat so that it acted as a bolster, and stood up so that my head was above the hardtop roof—a wonderful viewpoint, unless it's pouring rain, of course.

Did I mention that the Leader 40 is a Michael Peters design? It shows immediately when running at high cruising speeds in a chop: Wave penetration is clean with no slamming, hard turns are banked enough to enjoy the sense of turning without scrubbing off gobs of speed, and downwind runs track straight and true, while allowing plenty of maneuverability to select appropriate angles to waves as they grow. Most satisfying.



Equally satisfying is the open cockpit layout. The deep and wide swim platform can be fixed or hydraulic (not available with all engine options), but it is large enough for easy boarding from a floating dock, and spacious enough for more than two people to relax in deck chairs. The designers included a molded-in step on the starboard side to make stepping up from the lowered position of the hydraulic version much easier. Our test boat had a pair of extra cleats on the swim platform that help to keep crossed dock lines low and less likely to trip someone boarding or debarking from the platform. The swim ladder resides under a flush-mounted lid that can close when the ladder is deployed or stored.

Our test boat had several add-on packages, and some important optional ones, that would make an owner's time on the water more enjoyable. The Electronics Pack included the 12-inch Raymarine e127

MFD, preloaded with Navionics cartography, a Raymarine Wi-Fi wireless module, and a P79 transducer for the depth sounder. The Comfort Pack includes the above-mentioned extra stern mooring cleats, an electric freshwater toilet, a larger-than-standard 34-gallon fridge in the galley, a clever and unexpected set of stacked storage drawers under the galley floor, and stowage in the outdoor locker appropriate to its use as a second galley.

The Premiere Trim package includes indirect, outside LED lighting for late-evening enjoyment in the cockpit; a teak sole on the swim platform and in the cockpit that runs right up to the companionway for a traditional look and good footing; a folding outdoor teak table with cover for alfresco dining; overhead spotlights when indirect lighting simply won't do; additional opening ports and hatches for improved natural ventilation in the saloon and aft cabin;

*Some people like dark, enclosed saloons where they can escape from the world. Those people wouldn't enjoy being aboard the Leader 40, where light and fresh air hit you from all sides.*

and a white-lacquered finish on the overhead lockers in the galley that on our test boat looked clean and contemporary.

Optional air conditioning—20,000 Btus for the cabin and 16,000 Btus for the cockpit—makes sense for those who deal with hot and humid boating seasons regularly, with reverse-cycle heating capabilities to extend the season for hardy boaters who live in northern climes and want to push the season's length a bit longer. Plan on adding the 7.5-kilowatt generator, in either gas or diesel, to take your climate control away from the dock.

Once equipped for the kind of comforts that put you on the water as often as possible, the Leader 40 offers some noteworthy exterior fea-

## Test Notes

**MOST BOATERS** in the U.S. think of Jeanneau as a builder of sailboats, but Henri Jeanneau founded the company that bears his name in 1957 with a wooden racing powerboat, a one-off that he entered in the Six Hours of Paris race, and won.

**FIBERGLASS** became the company's stock in trade, and Jeanneau built a well-received line of runabouts before embarking on sailboat production in 1964.

**TODAY JEANNEAU** produces four lines of sailboats, three lines of inboard boats, and six lines of outboard powerboats that are sold throughout more than 80 countries.

**THE INFLUENCE** of sailing is apparent in all designs, paying close attention to weight distribution, and creating seating areas that allow those aboard to spend time in comfort underway.



*Jeanneau has taken the Leader range to the next level by following a clever formula: Give boaters what they need in galley and dining areas (above), and make accommodations (below) surprisingly delightful, with good stowage and ventilation through opening ports.*

tures: A large aft-facing bench seat is the perfect place to perch and watch swimmers, or just hang out with a cool beverage when the anchor is down. Underneath, there's stowage enough to hold an inflatable dink as well as a liferaft (which, of course, goes hand-in-hand with CE safety regulations). Whether you have need for a liferaft or not, the locker is large and deep, perfect for holding those long-handled items like a fishing net or boat hook. Directly above, a transom-wide stainless steel handrail helps make navigating a wet swim platform safer.

It's only a couple of steps up through a locking transom door to the after end of the cockpit, which has a U-shaped settee for five or six to port, with room for the folding table mentioned above, and a starboard locker, with a molded-in sink under a lifting cover, that has room for a fridge below and can be equipped as an outdoor kitchen. Kudos to the designers for including a stainless steel handhold on the face of the locker. On closer examination, the aft bench pad is contiguous with the forward-facing portion of the settee, and it will become a long sunpad for two when the seatback is shifted forward. Fold the table in once, turn it 90 degrees, and you still have a usable sitting and dining area for some guests while the sun pad is in use by others.

Forward to port and high enough for sweeping views forward and to both sides, the companion seating area opposite the starboard-side helm has a nifty L-shaped seat that allows forward-facing or helm-facing companion seating. A fixed cushion mounted to the bulkhead forward makes it comfortable for one crew or guest to face aft and stretch out his or her legs—a chaise longue, if you will. The builder wisely included a stainless steel handrail, and an elegant one at that, to add security for those getting in or out of this seating area.

The helm has a wide bench seat, molded-in footrest, small stainless





Spending time together makes boating better, and companion seating is a priority on the Leader 40.

steel handrail for safety, and, in the case of the Sportop, a sliding window outboard. The console layout is damn near perfect, with the MFD screen directly ahead of a tilting sport wheel, ideal for quick updates, and an extension shelf outboard for the dual binnacle shifter/throttle controls. I particularly liked the placement of the joystick aft of the binnacle—you don't have to reach over the levers to perform those fingertip maneuvers. A set of analog-style digital engine gauges is clustered together in a separate area directly ahead of the wheel, as is a small, magnetic compass on the upper edge of the dash.

The interior layout features an aft cabin with twin berths under the cockpit, a saloon with an L-shaped lounge and dining table to port, an L-shaped galley, a large head compartment to starboard, and a master stateroom forward. The aft cabin has several interesting features worth noting: The twin berths are long, the after berth has a back cushion forming a couch that can be placed between the twins to make a spacious double, and a bench seat to port adds a fine place to relax or retire one's Top-Siders. A locker at the end of the berth farthest aft has a stool seat underneath and a clever freshwater sink below a lid, convenient for those who want to wash their faces or brush their teeth in the privacy of their own cabin—especially when the head compartment is otherwise occupied.

With an opening hatch and porthole for added natural light and ventilation at anchor, the galley invites the cook to a well-organized workplace with loads of storage above and below the Corian countertops. All the necessary appliances are there, including an electric Kenyon stove with pop-up pot holders, plus a couple of unexpected touches, such as a well-organized cutlery drawer, dedicated draining storage for washed dishes, and a slot beneath the countertop to stow the flush-mounted sink cover. A vertical stainless steel handrail on the forward galley bulkhead adds security for the chef, as well as for those who transit the center of the cabin fore and aft. And inset between the galley and the head compartment door, there's a locker specifically fitted for bottle and glass storage.

The main electrical panel is at eye level on the back bulkhead of the galley, with a French-made Navicolor touchscreen control and readout panel monitoring the battery levels, water-tank level, selection of power sources, and even generator control. All of your main battery switches are also found here—far safer than in the engine room.

The head compartment has a door opening on the saloon for gen-

eral use, as well as private door access from the master stateroom forward. The design decision to have only one head contributed space for a separate shower compartment. A large fiberglass cover drops down over the head fixture, forming a seat that will make scrubbing the bottoms of your feet that much more convenient.

A large, double berth with thoughtful step access on both sides dominates the master stateroom. As you might expect, there's abundant stowage beneath it, but what you won't expect is the convertible foot of the bed, which slides out over the aft-facing bench in this open layout to add extra length for long-legged sleepers, and slides in to add more sitting space during the day. A hideaway screen provides privacy. Opening portholes on both sides and a large opening hatch are fine sources of natural light and ventilation. There's stowage for loose items along both sides of the berth, plus a hanging locker to port.

Contemporary design, comfortable surroundings, and sterling performance flow together wonderfully in the Jeanneau Leader 40. It figures to satisfy your cruising needs for days, or weeks, at a time. □

Jeanneau, 410-280-2775; [www.jeanneau.com](http://www.jeanneau.com)

#### LEADER 40



RPM	KNOTS	GPH	RANGE	dB(A)
1000	5.4	4.8	194	67
<b>1500</b>	<b>7.4</b>	<b>8.5</b>	<b>150</b>	<b>74</b>
2000	8.7	13.2	114	76
<b>2500</b>	<b>9.2</b>	<b>19.0</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>78</b>
3000	16.0	30.1	92	76
<b>3500</b>	<b>25.6</b>	<b>39.1</b>	<b>113</b>	<b>78</b>
4000	30.5	44.4	119	83
<b>4400</b>	<b>34.0</b>	<b>61.8</b>	<b>95</b>	<b>85</b>
4850	37.0	63.9	100	87

**TEST CONDITIONS:** Air temperature: 75°F; humidity: 79%; Seas: 1-2'; load: 3 persons, 200 lb. gear. Speeds are two-way averages measured w/ Simrad multifunction display. GPH estimates taken via MerCruiser VesselView display. Range is based on 90% of advertised fuel capacity. Sound levels measured at the helm. 65 dB(A) is the level of normal conversation.

**NOTEWORTHY OPTIONS:** Glendinning Cablemaster (\$6,290); 7.5-kW Kohler genset w/enclosure (\$21,310); Teak on side decks (\$6,000); Raymarine High Definition Radome; Raymarine Ray260 VHF (prices for electronics available upon request).