

# NEW YACHT REVIEW

## OYSTER 745



*Facts, figures and statistics are all very well, but when it comes to understanding what the new Oyster 745 is all about there are easier ways of getting to grips with this new model. One is to simply look at her deck.*

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WORDS BY MATTHEW SHEAHAN // PHOTOS BY MIKE JONES (INTERIOR) & JOE MCCARTHY (SAILING)

Aside from the familiar, trademark wraparound deck saloon windows, her flush foredeck is the first indication of a more modern style that characterises the new Oyster generation. Another example is the short bowsprit which carries twin anchors and provides easily accessible tack fittings for a gennaker and code zero. And when it comes to the quality of fit-out, the immaculate, clear lacquered Hall Spars carbon mast and the impressive array of high spec Spinlock rope clutches clustered around the mast wall on neatly engineered carbon plinths say it all. Then there are the halyard locks for the staysail and code zero, modern race engineered details that have been applied for this bluewater configuration. Details that mark a bold step forward in the quest to create the next generation of bluewater cruisers.

It's not just fancy fittings and high spec deck gear that set her apart. Her guest cockpit offers another clue to the new approach. Twenty percent larger than her predecessor's cockpit, there are no ropes, clutches or clutter of any kind in this deep and secure cockpit. >>

Unlike similar configurations that can be exited simply by stepping over the coamings, it feels both awkward and wrong on the 745 to do so. The more natural and preferred way is to use the centreline passageway between the twin carbon wheels where grab handles on the large pedestal/instrument plinths provide perfect hand holds.

This leads you to the working area of the 745 where a pair of powered Lewmar 88STs provide the muscle for the jib sheets while a pair of manual 68STs are the secondary winches. All four winches sit just behind the helmsman's steering positions making it easy to both communicate with sailing crew and operate the sheets when sailing shorthanded.

It is not until you look forward, especially when you are underway, that the penny drops fully. Viewed as a whole, the complete deck layout is not only clean and clutter free, but also offers superb visibility. It is perhaps only then that you realise that the very feature that characterises an Oyster, its distinctive deck saloon structure, is lying low. At least that's how it appears from the cockpit. Yet from off the boat the 745 has lost none of its DNA.

This effect is no accident. The style and proportions of the new look superstructure is another area in which the Oyster design team and the Humphreys Yacht Design office have worked hard. And the results are impressive.

Indeed, so clear are the decks forwards, it is as if the control lines and associated deck gear have been led under the deck to save you from tripping or stubbing your toes. Yet no such masking tricks have been used. Instead, the designers have utilised a more traditional, practical approach to sail handling where reef lines and halyards are gathered around the mast. But unlike classic designs where multiple winches are scattered on deck like mushrooms around a tree, the Oyster 745 has just two powered Lewmar 68STs and a collection of perfectly positioned clutches. Another clever detail is the pair of flush fitting rope tail lockers built into the deck alongside the mast - simple, effective, clean and tidy.

Meanwhile, her jib sheets are led back to behind the twin steering pedestals. One of the benefits of a blade jib is that flogging sheets are kept well away from the cockpit, but the 745's configuration goes one step further with the sheets led neatly along the lower outside edge of the deck superstructure. Keeping them low and running them through several stainless steel fairleads ensures that they remain out of harm's way no matter what the conditions.

If this was where the innovation stopped there would be plenty to recommend her, but the reality is that the new style goes way beyond an ingenious new deck layout. In fact, the catalyst for this new design came from a different set of considerations.

On the face of it, upgrading from say a 50 or 60 footer should provide plenty more volume below decks to install additional creature comforts along with more sophisticated handling systems that make light work of the extra power that a bigger boat can generate. But a bigger boat along with more complex engineering can in turn require a skipper/engineer and/or crew.





One or two extra crew can then mean extra cabins which quickly swallow up some or all of the additional volume that had been gained. Moving up another notch in size may be a solution for some, but it's easy to end up with a much bigger boat than you had originally intended with the added limitations that come with size. Going bigger doesn't always work for all.

Interestingly, towards the top end of the range the balancing act between length and number of cabins can become harder rather than easier. Take the Oyster 100. Her length means that she has to comply with the Marine and Coastguard Agency Large Yacht Code (LYC) which, among other details, sets out minimum dimensions for some of the accommodation. The net result is that this professionally run 100 footer has two cabins for crew and just three for guests.

Owners of say a 56 or 575 who have no crew to cater for and will be used to having four cabins for themselves and their guests, may raise an eyebrow or two at the thought of a boat that is nearly twice the length but has less guest accommodation. Which is where the concept for the new generation of Oysters started and has led to the development of the 745.

Drawn to the limit of the LYC, the designers of the 885 were able to make full use of the cavernous hull without restrictions while also looking carefully at how they could boost performance. This fuller form with its subtly refined distribution of buoyancy helped to achieve a more powerful, yet easily managed hull. The next stage was to refine and validate the design with a towing tank programme at the Wolfson Unit in Southampton. It was this work that both validated the performance predictions, but also highlighted a significant gain in another area, the rudders.

*"We have designed a good deal of boats with twin rudders over the years, but mostly with boats that are restricted by draft or have lifting keels," said Rob Humphreys of Humphreys Yacht Design. "But one of the interesting results to emerge from the tank testing was the reduction in drag from the rudders when sailing upwind. Because the leeward rudder is off the centreline it is out of the turbulent flow from the keel. Here it is operating in a much cleaner flow and therefore requires significantly less rudder angle when sailing upwind and this reduces drag." >>*

The concept was repeated aboard the 825 and now appears on the 745. In practice, under sail, she is certainly easy on the helm. Upwind in 10-15 knots of breeze she has a balanced feel, one of the key characteristics of a twin rudder configuration. Downwind, with her large asymmetric gennaker set, she sets into an equally purposeful stride with a direct feel and plenty of grip through the helm, even when pushed hard.

If this configuration does have a flipside it is the 745's ability to keep pressing on with the same full sail plan as the breeze builds with good control and no hint of the rudder stalling out. Yet even so, this is also a benefit, especially in squally, changeable conditions where her surefooted feel will carry you through the worst of the weather and out to the other side with ease.

The bottom line is that her performance under sail is as big a step up as her deck layout. But still there's more.

Below decks she can cater for a wide range of different layouts. But there are several key features that make her stand out here too.

In particular, the clever balancing act that has been struck in the main saloon where the full width of the hull has been exploited without making the deck saloon feel like the glazed dome of a cathedral. Instead, the saloon cabin sole is at just the right height to allow good, near all round visibility when standing and moving around. When seated the vertical, rectangular orientated 'Seascape' windows that have become part of the signature of the new breed come into play.

Beneath the saloon floor lies the engine room where appliances and critical items are well spaced and are easy to get to for servicing.

Aside from the light, visibility and space afforded by the new look deck saloon, the next detail to stand out is the dual companionway forward either side of the mast. To starboard lies another guest cabin, while to port the longitudinal galley also provides a passageway forward to the crew accommodation.

This clever detail was taken directly from the 825 and has proved to work well, allowing crew and guests to move back and forth without having to pass through each other's areas.

A further innovative detail in this area is the sliding panel and door on the galley side that allows the galley/crew accommodation to be closed off completely from the guest accommodation. Particularly useful when chartering the boat.

Abaft the saloon lies the guest double with en-suite to port with a cabin on starboard that can be arranged for a variety of purposes from pilot berth cabin and utility room to an office, workshop or children's play room.

Furthest aft is the owner's cabin, a spacious and comfortable layout that can easily be configured from comfortable to cavernous depending on how owners wish to use their own space. But for all the details above and below decks, perhaps the cleverest aspect of the 745 is how easily she can switch roles between being a professionally run charter yacht and a private yacht for an owner and friends.

In the past this would have been considered a clever compromise. Today it is simply one of the latest generation of bluewater cruisers. A new bar has been set.

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See the Oyster 745 at Cannes Yachting Festival, 6<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup> September 2016. For further information, please contact +44 23 8083 1010, email [info@oysteryachts.com](mailto:info@oysteryachts.com) or visit [www.oysteryachts.com](http://www.oysteryachts.com)

