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Lakeland BOATING

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BENETEAU GRAN TURISMO 45

THE QUALITY OF LIGHT.

BY JOHN WOOLDRIDGE

PHOTOS COURTESY OF BENETEAU

Of the many virtues of the new Beneteau Gran Turismo 45 — and there are a multitude found throughout this express design — perhaps the one that will stick with you the most is the quality of light throughout the yacht. This is what you would expect from Beneteau, the world's largest boatbuilder, when the company fuses its 136-years of engineering expertise with the best European designers, to create the flagship for its express cruiser lineup.

With the air-step hull naval architecture a joint effort between MICAD naval architects and Beneteau Engineering, and primary styling from Andreani Design, the GT 45 was

destined to be a knockout from its inception. Fold in Beneteau's reputation for precision market research and its understanding of the needs and desires of its customers and you have a formula for lasting owner satisfaction.

THE HULL

That satisfaction begins dockside with an appreciation of the sleek hull lines and the curving hardtop that stretches from slightly ahead of amidships and terminates over most of the aft portion of the main deck, partially shading a large sunpad. From forward, your eyes will appreciate the well-raked stem and the full-length spray strake that stretches all the way to the transom, forming wide,

flat chines that hint at excellent planing and roll dampening. There is good flare forward and a foredeck that is lightly crowned for excellent runoff and sprung down for better visibility from the helm. This model features Beneteau's unique Air Step hull that's designed to reduce friction, which results in improved speed and acceleration and reduced energy consumption.

Side decks are modest but wide enough for walking straight ahead and are backed by stainless steel handrails wrapping the weather decks, making the trip forward safe for line-handling or anchor duties. Increased safety will be appreciated by those going forward to rest and relax on the foredeck's recessed sunpads.



THE TOUR

Your appreciation can only increase as you make the easy transition from floating dock to the wide, long swim platform. It's a great place to hang out when at anchor. This large teak beach is perfect for folding deck chairs, and it can be partially lowered for easy re-boarding of swimmers young and old. The hydraulic platform can be lowered deeper still to make launching or retrieving an inflatable RIB easy. And when you're ready to run, Beneteau has provided a snug under-transom garage with winch and rollers sized for a 7.5-foot dinghy. There's also room in here for inflatable paddleboards (with an optional electric air compressor), plus the tenderlift bathing platform can support up to 771 pounds of dinghy or PWC simultaneously. When you close the hatch, another feature completes the well-thought-out functionality of the GT 45. Recessed into the after edge of the transom hatch is a food prep area and an outdoor barbecue, taking grilling and its sometimes smoky, spattering byproducts out of the seating area beneath the hardtop.

Climbing the portside steps up to the aft deck level, which is continuous with the main deck under the hardtop, you pass the massive sunpad set to starboard and step through the main entrance into what, in boating seasons past, used to be called the "sun deck." Wide open to the sun and wind, with the exception of shade provided by a cloth Bimini and Isinglass for protection from the wind and slanting rain, this was and still is the primary space for enjoying the boating experience in family express cruisers.

THE IMPROVED SUN DECK

As they have with express cruisers over the last decade or two, Beneteau provides the ultimate weather protection with a tall hardtop and a full glass aft bulkhead abaft the broad windshield. Cabin-side glass panels are tall and deep, increasing a visual connection with the water streaming off the hull while underway or at anchor. All closed up, it is easily air conditioned or heated. The effect is remarkable, allowing abundant natural light and virtually unhindered visibility in every direction. Acknowledging that boat owners are outdoor aficionados, the designers then provide openings for increased natural ventilation.

In addition to an opening glass door between the aft deck and the sun deck, there is a push-button operated pane of glass to starboard that swings upward and aft from a low bulkhead separating the C-shaped seating abaft the helm seating to starboard and the sunpad. Another button engages a sliding overhead hatch forward, reaping volumes of light and natural ventilation that flow cleanly through the sun deck and provides another connection with the outdoors. Finally, there are large rectangular sliding windows in frames in the center of the side window glazing. They appear very watertight and are effective in a cross-breeze, but are at odds visually with every other smoothly flowing line in the deckhouse. Perhaps there will come a day when future GT models will have sections of side glass that lower and raise on lifts. That's more maintenance and production cost, to be certain.

Visibility from the helm is unparalleled when the primary deck is encircled with so much glass. There are two seats at the helm: A single helm seat outboard and a wider bench nearer the



centerline. Two children or one adult can join the helmsman to watch the progress of the voyage, and perhaps even participate in navigation. The helmsman is given a wealth of tools for slow speed maneuvering, including a dual binnacle, a joystick to control the standard Volvo-Penta IPS pod drives and a side-to-side bow thruster control stick — all positioned within easy reach of the tilting wheel. The advantages are clear: Moving forward, back or sideways are functional strengths of the IPS system, but if you find yourself in a cross-winded situation at the dock or backing into a slip, a touch of the bow thruster helps align the boat properly and in short order.

DOWN BELOW

A gently curved portside staircase that is illuminated by overhead glass panels as well as large hullside windows lead down to the accommodation deck, featuring a two-cabin, two-head layout with a central living area that includes a portside galley and a U-shaped dinette to starboard. Gray walnut and white lacquer are the predominant visual themes, along with plenty of dedicated spot lighting. Fit and finish are clean and precise, perhaps the finest Beneteau has ever produced.

The forward stateroom has twin berths, perfect for kids, that can easily swing together, scissors-like, to form a comfy double berth for another couple. There are two hanging lockers and handy companionway access to the portside day head and its shower compartment. The amidships owner's stateroom features a centerline fore-and-aft berth flanked by a desk to port and a bench seat to starboard. Large hullside windows illuminate the compartment that might otherwise seem too dark. Owners have private access to an ensuite head equipped with a separate shower.

UNDERWAY

The GT 45 gets up on plane in less than 10 seconds and carves turns that are smooth and predictable. Twin IPS 600 drivetrains provide the precision handling at speed or at idle around the docks. Our test boat was hull No. 2, the first in the U.S., and it achieved 33 knots at WOT with nearly a full load of fuel. Best operating speed was 22.5 knots at 3000 RPM, producing a fuel burn of 23.2 gph for a rating of 1.0 nautical miles per gallon and a range of 207 nautical miles (with a 10% fuel reserve).

Moving up to a larger boat is an exciting prospect for most boat owners. Beneteau has designed the new Gran Turismo 45 with the multiple qualities of light, finish, comfort and performance that will satisfy the most demanding owner. ★



BENETEAU GRAN TURISMO 45

» SPECIFICATIONS

LOA: 48'5"

Beam: 13'8"

Draft: 3'9"

Weight: 24,782 lbs.

Fuel Capacity: 238 gals.

Water Capacity: 106 gals.

Power: 2 x 440-hp Volvo-Penta IPS 600

MSRP (as equipped): \$941,000

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» DEALERS

Centerpointe Yacht Services
CENTERPOINTESERVICE.COM

Maple City Marine
MAPLECITYMARINE.COM



Spectacular fit and finish everywhere.

The light and visibility beneath the hardtop is exceptional.



The rectangular, manually operated opening windows set into the cabin side glazing seem visually out of place, but accomplish their function well and economically.

▶ Watch the video at LAKELANDBOATING.COM!