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Innovative alternative

Creative thinking in a highly practical, trailable sports-cruiser – that's the Huzar 21, says David Harding



Boats designed for the family market tend to be conservative in appearance – but not this new addition to the Huzar range from Poland. Sporting a well-raked rotating mast with a square-top, fully-battened mainsail, plus an open transom and one of the broadest stems in the business, she makes a brave statement for a 20ft (6.09m) trailable weekender.

At first glance her rakish appearance belies the fact that she was conceived as an alternative to boats such as the Etap 21, Bénétteau First 21.7 and Jeanneau Sun 2000 – the best-known of the small, sporty cruisers that you can trail home for the winter (or to a new cruising ground for a week during the summer). That's what the designer and builder of the Huzar had in mind – it's just that they went about things in a rather different way.

One difference you don't see until you look a little more closely is that they didn't worry too much about keeping the price down. They realised that small and cheap don't have to go together; that some people are prepared to pay

more if they're offered something in return. The new arrival is very nicely finished and well equipped, both above decks and below, and exudes a feeling of quality and solidity rarely found in small boats.

Rationalising the rig

Despite her other features, it's the rig that will inevitably be the main talking point, so let's start with that. The Huzar's designer, Tymon Butkiewicz, explained that he wanted something more akin to a wing sail than to the type of rig normally found on sailing yachts. His aim was to extract maximum efficiency from the sail area, and for inspiration he turned not to yachts but to windsurfers – whose rig development, he says, is way ahead. Since a wing sail isn't always practical on a cruising yacht (or on a windsurfer, for that matter), he settled for a square-top main on a rotating mast with plenty of rake to optimise upwind efficiency and reduce drag from tip vortices. While less extreme than seen on International 14s or America's Cup yachts, it's a bold rig for a family trailer-sailer.

Equally bold is the width of her stern: with the point of maximum beam (all 2.5m/8ft 2.5in of it) just a



HUZAR 21: 6.09m (20ft) trailable sports cruiser

few inches forward of the transom, this boat is as wedge-shaped as they come. And that makes it a surprise to find a single rudder, because on stems this wide you would normally see two. Tymon believes that one blade is best if you can get away with it: twins, he maintains, are often used to address control problems brought about by imbalances in the boat's design (unless they're needed because of shallow draught or a lifting keel).

The single-or-twin question relates to many design issues, but it's hard to disagree with the 'one is best' philosophy. You rarely find

the same responsiveness with twin rudders because there's so much more friction and less feel – especially when, as inevitably happens, a clump of weed gets caught on the windward blade.

The right balance

On seeing the Huzar's underwater profile, my first thought was that the drawing showed the centreplate in the wrong place: it looks about a metre (roughly 3ft) too far aft. The drawing is right, however. The plate is where it is for good reason, and it's all to do with balance.

You would normally expect a boat of these proportions to exhibit substantial weather helm at a modest angle of heel as the rig's centre of effort (CE) moves aft and to leeward, the bow dips, the stern rises and the underwater sections develop a marked asymmetry. But with the centreplate so far aft, the CLR should be in the right place to act as a countermeasure and keep the boat on track.

The potential problem is that, because of the plate's position, the CE is some way forward of the CLR, and this would normally lead



Woodboards stow abaft the sill and can be raised to close off as much or as little of the companionway as you like



PRICE: £23,319 including delivery to Southampton and commissioning

to lee helm when the boat is upright in light winds. Tymon acknowledges that you can't have a boat that's perfectly balanced all the time, yet maintains that the plate is in the right place. To keep his options open during development he built the full-sized prototype with a keel-box 2m (6ft 6in) long and tried moving the plate forward and aft. The aftermost position was still best, so that's where it stayed on the production boat.

A bonus of its being so far aft is that only the forward end of the case intrudes into the cabin. This leaves much more clear space than on most boats that can float in just 0.32m (1ft) of water.

Theory and practice

Having listened to the designer explaining the Huzar's background I was keen to see how it all worked in practice, so our next job was to go for a sail.

Getting the sails up takes longer than with some boats, as the nicely-cut, fully-battened radial main – with a bolt-rope, not slides – needs to be unrolled carefully and fed into the luff groove. It's



Wide beam and a well-proportioned cochruff allow useable side decks

easiest with two pairs of hands.

Once it's up, handling the mainsail is little different than with a conventional rig. The Huzar has no spreaders and no backstay (the roach wouldn't allow it). Instead, the caps run straight from the hounds to the chainplates, with mid-section lateral stiffness being provided by diamonds. The idea behind a rotating mast is that,

because it's aligned with the mainsail's angle of entry, it creates substantially less turbulence over the mainsail's luff than does a conventional fixed alternative.

In the light conditions we experienced initially we had ample opportunity to test the boat's ghosting abilities – and to find that, when a powerboat passed astern, its wash flowed straight into the open-ended cockpit. A small sill should put paid to that, especially when around 200kg (440lb) is taken out of future production boats and they float several inches higher. I was pleased to hear about that, as the stern did tend to drag on our test boat even with our weight right forward in the cockpit.

Because the weight of the centreplate (250kg/550lb) is so far aft and it's impossible to move the boat's centre of buoyancy far enough aft to compensate, the Huzar carries 100kg (220lb) of ballast in the bow (along with the battery and water tank). Even so, the broad stern sections lead to a substantial wetted area and I couldn't help thinking that she could carry a larger rig (the optional genoa notwithstanding),

especially since the crew's weight on the weather side of such a wide cockpit contributes substantially to the righting moment. Her centreplate is also good and deep, its tip being all of 1.63m (5ft 4in) below the waterline.

Her sail area/displacement ratio is a healthy-enough 21 and the displacement/length ratio an equally normal (by modern standards) 155, but these numbers on their own only tell half the story. Some other modern, broad-sterned cruisers whose numbers suggest a sporty performance tend to stick in light airs: keeping the weight down and the sail area up is the best way to get them going, as well as positioning the crew's weight in the right place.

Although she did carry slight lee helm when upright, it was less than I had suspected and was soon countered by the heel that you want to induce anyway in light airs.

Building breeze

Eventually the wind picked up to 8-10 knots and the boat slipped along happily enough. Nonetheless, she still felt underpowered even when

we finally enjoyed an all-too-brief spell of around 14 knots that saw us clocking a respectable 5.4 knots on a fetch. By then you would normally be starting to think about de-powering the rig, whereas I was wondering how to extract a bit more from it.

The rudder appeared to stay well immersed if we heeled deliberately, partly because of the rounded stern sections. This bodes well for control in heavy airs.

Where a third crew member would sit might need a little negotiation. As on most boats, in light winds everyone needs to be well forward to get the stern out of the water (and that will apply even when the boat's weight is reduced). As you start shifting weight to weather in more breeze, the helmsman slides abaft the Harken 16 jib-sheet winch on the coaming and the crew moves up between the winch and the bulkhead.

Three's company

To accommodate an extra body on the high side, either you slide right aft (which would be tight for the helmsman) or the third person hops up on the deck. A little shifting around is inevitably needed on any small boat with a long coachroof and relatively short cockpit.

If you're happy with the minimal-overlap jib and don't want the extra drive from a genoa, you could free more space by having the optional inboard jib tracks and leading the sheets aft over the coachroof. Then you wouldn't need the winches on the coamings. Inboard tracks would also narrow the sheeting angle by about 4° for better upwind performance.

To get the best from the boat across a range of conditions, you would have inboard tracks for the jib and use a genoa in light airs. Add a bigger rig (a boat has



A comfortable and well-appointed interior for a boat of this size

recently been sold in Germany with a mast 0.5m/1ft 8in taller) and an asymmetric for the offwind legs, and the Huzar's true performance potential should be unleashed.

Back on the subject of the deck layout, everything seemed to work well and the mouldings were neatly finished. The Moonlight windows have aluminium frames and the hardware comes from Harken and Easylock, supplemented by some nicely-made stainless custom fittings. In the bow is the water filler and a shallow anchor locker. At the other end of the boat, the deep rudder blade is supported by a stock that looks well engineered. In typical Polish style, the tiller is a stainless steel tube.

For simplicity the mainsheet is taken to a dinghy-style stainless steel strut in the middle of the



With the table lowered the Huzar offers an enormous double berth

cockpit. If you wanted more control over the mainsail, there would be much to gain from having a full-width traveller forward of the cockpit lockers. Like the genoa and the taller rig, this is available as an option.

On the starboard side of the cockpit, just above the sole at the forward end, is the handle for the Pfaff winch that raises the centreplate via a 9mm stainless steel cable. The cable is attached fairly close to the plate's pivot point, so it's kept inside the case to minimise the chances of weed or underwater debris getting caught. About 100 turns are needed to raise the plate – or to lower it again – but a higher gear might be used in future.

Should you need to get intimate with the plate assembly, you undo a few bolts and – theoretically – just lift the boat off (or jack the boat up and lower the case out of the bottom). The pivot bolt is contained within the casing, so there are no holes into the boat. Replacing the lifting cable can be done without removing the casing.

Accommodation

For a small boat, the Huzar is particularly well appointed below decks. Even the companionway has been given a lot of thought. It's unusually wide, and closed off by three acrylic washboards that drop down neatly abaft the sill, solving the problem of where to stow them. You can lift and fix one, two or all three depending on how much of the companionway you want to close off.

Once down below, you're confronted by a twin-leaf table. Supported at its aft end by a handsome stainless steel post, it can be swivelled to either side or lowered between the settee berths to form an enormous double. Then the backrests hinge inwards and down to create a cushioned infill. It's a particularly neat solution.

A more conventional but equally well-executed idea is the sliding galley, which pulls out from under the cockpit seat on the port side. It incorporates a single-burner spirit cooker, a sink (with electrically-pumped water), some storage and a mirror on a telescopic



Bunk tops are clear acrylic. The water tank is in the bow, together with the battery, water pump and battery charger.



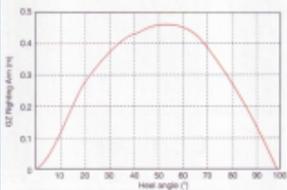
Here the galley is in its stowed position, under the cockpit...



...and here it is ready for use

Huzar 21 data

LOA	6.09m (20ft)
LWL	5.75m (18ft 10in)
Beam	2.90m (9ft 0.5in)
Draught – centreboard up – centreboard down	0.32m (1ft) 1.63m (5ft 4in)
Displacement	1,050kg (2,315lb)
Ballast	250kg (551lb)
Sail area (main and 100% foretriangle)	21.56sq m (304sq ft)
Displacement/length ratio	155
Sail area/displacement ratio	21
RCD category	C
Engine	2-4hp outboard
Headroom (max)	1.32m (4ft 4in)
Designer & builder	E M Yachts, Poland
Distributor	Simply Yachts, 102 Lower Green Road, Esher, Surrey KT10 8HB, Tel: 0870 061 2039 Email: info@simplyyachts.com - www.simplyyachts.com



The GZ curve shows the maximum righting moment at 52° and an AVS of 98° (the rest of the graph showing the inverted stability is not available)



A rotating mast and square-top mainsail maximise efficiency from the rig

The Huzar is steered by a single rudder

The 250kg/550lb centreplate is unusually far aft

The galley slides forward from under the cockpit seat to port

Only the forward end of the centreplate case intrudes into the accommodation

bracket. Overhead are a stalk light and an opening port.

Further sensible thinking shows in the form of bunk tops in clear acrylic so you can see what's stowed underneath. The full interior moulding reduces storage space but the compensation is a

smooth, wipe-clean gelcoat surface to the lockers.

Right in the bow – to keep the weight forward – are the battery, battery charger, water tank and water pump.

Above your head the one-piece moulded headrest restricts access

to the deckhead, so deck hardware is tapped into aluminium plates. There is, however, space outboard to reach the stanchion bases. At 1.32m (4ft 4in), headroom is reasonable for a sporty boat of this size.

Overall the impression below

decks, as elsewhere, is of thoroughness in design and construction. The drawback is that such a fully-fitted interior adds to the weight, so if you want to maximise performance you will need to reduce the level of luxury.

Other boats to look at



Bénéteau First 21.7
PRICE: FROM €30,000

■ Bénéteau's First 21.0 became the 21.1 and is now in her third incarnation as the 21.7, though retaining most of the original features including the swing keel and twin rudders.
www.beneteau.com



Jeanneau Sun 2000
PRICE: FROM €20,000

■ Also with a swing keel and twin rudders, she comes in basic form for the budget-conscious or with an inboard engine and more trimmings. Simple, lively, economical and extremely popular.
www.jeanneau.com



Etap 21i
PRICE: FROM €15,000

■ The baby of the Etap range has a fixed fin or tandem keel, so she's not quite as easy to launch from a trailer. As with all Etaps, a double-skinned hull with foam injection makes her unsinkable.
Available second-hand

PBO verdict

This is a cleverly designed and nicely built little boat that, being produced in relatively small numbers, also allows scope for some customisation – something rarely offered in a 20-footer. Her designer and builder aren't bound by convention, yet have done nothing that's radical or likely to upset those who favour a conservative approach.

Although conditions on our test didn't allow the Huzar to show her performance potential, I believe it's there: in sportier guise or more breeze! I see no reason why she shouldn't fizz along merrily. And if performance is less important to you, she still stands out as a deluxe trailable weekendender with more of a big-boat feel and finish than most of her competitors.

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