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On course for escape

Titre : Exclusive: A first sail and sea-trials on the Excess 11!

by Par François Tregouet – 18th march 2020

With the launch of their second catamaran brand, the Bénéteau Group are promising to renew the sailing experience. While the first Excess models, the 12 and the 15, inherited Lagoon platforms, the 11 is the first Excess designed from scratch. A fact consistent with the desire to enhance sensations, and this has led to a refreshing design of the topsides, sculpted in grey gelcoat with understated and chic fittings. So, has the promise been kept? We had the chance to confirm this during the very first sea trials off La Rochelle, taking an exclusive look!



There's all the characteristics of the Excess range: the aft helm stations invite you to climb aboard by raising their seats. Two steps up to the deck or on the same level to the cockpit, making it easy to move around. The outside table with its L-shaped bench seat, the port seat and even more so the aft one, will allow you to invite a few friends in your anchorage to come aboard for an aperitif. But what about the opening bimini? With its fabric center section on tracks, and two side pillars, it combines the advantages of the flexible and rigid versions, offering both effective protection and a view of the

stars in the evening. Only the lazy-bag becomes a little less easy to access, but this is a minor flaw given the benefits it provides.



Very lightly smoked plexiglass, the vertical uprights of the panoramic windows are in limited number (5 here as opposed to 9 on the Lagoon 380), and once inside, the luminosity is striking. Although the 11-meter (36') long hulls and the 6.59-meter (21'7") beam don't allow for any extravagance in the layout inside the nacelle - galley aft to starboard, dining area forward to port with a small chart table opposite, - there is abundant light. With white sand-colored floors and immaculate white cupboard doors, the design is resolutely modern and, in this sense confirms the unique character of the Excess range. In the hulls, this impression is confirmed all the more, as the injected sandwich deck is free of any headlining. The coatings are limited to the hull sides, where white satin ABS panels diffuse the light.



On board the 3-cabin version we tested, the starboard owner's hull is worthy of a much larger boat. The 200 x 200 cm (6'7" x 6'7") aft berth will allow for the most comfortable rest, and always with a sea view. As for the very large forward bathroom fitted with a walk-in shower, it is worthy of a 3-star hotel. The port hull accommodates two cabins of equally generous dimensions, even the forward one.



With the sun finally appearing, the breeze looked light as we came out of La Rochelle. While in medium airs and stronger winds, all multihulls appear to perform well, the conditions on the day of our test were perfect for discovering the true potential of this latest addition to the Excess family. With a displacement of 9 tons, it's closer to the mythical Lagoon 380 (7.5 tons, and more than 1,000 examples built) than the 11 tons of the current Lagoon 40. Weight being the enemy of the multihull, this is a first good point, which is coupled with a generous sail area, especially in the Pulse Line version we were testing. In these light airs, we could forget about the self-tacking jib and immediately unfurl the magnificent gray triradial Code Zero, as elegant as the mainsail, and let the

magic begin. You find yourself standing upright, leaning to one side, like on a high-performance monohull, with just a finger-touch required on one of the two very nice steering wheels, (optionally in composite). Of course, the biminis, more essential than elegant, of these two remote helm stations hamper the view of the mainsail a little, but you still have a clear view of the telltales on the headsail. So you align the bows with the end of the fiber lines, to follow the oscillations of the wind as closely as possible.



At 60 degrees off the apparent wind, with 7.5 knots true, it was good to be consistently touching 5.5 knots of boatspeed under sail. The long trampoline forward will delight hedonists for the useful sunbathing surface it offers, and reassure sailors that the center of gravity is positioned carefully backwards. The mast, once again stepped on the deck, lightens the coachroof, distributes the sailplan better and allows all sailing maneuvers to be carried out from the cockpit, using just two winches.



Our opinion:

With her easily-handled size, where everything seems easy and within reach, the Excess 11 offers characteristics and behavior that truly correspond with the advertised positioning. Despite the array of options, the budget remains reasonable and will open the pleasure of sailing at windspeed alone to newcomers. Her lines and elegantly sober interior won't fail to seduce a rejuvenated clientele eager for more sensations, more fun, but not neglecting comfort, if he knows how to stay restrained. Certainly a catamaran of our times, in a way.

The plusses

Light airs performance

Comfortable and understated interior

Cockpit bench seats and sunroof

Minuses

Galley storage

Coachroof handrails

Numerous options

Technical specifications

Overall length 11.33 m (37'2")

Maximum beam: 6.59 m (21'7")

Air draft: 17.27 m (56'8")

Draft: 1.15 m (3'9")

Light displacement (CE): 9,000 kg (19,850 lbs)

CE Certification: A

Upwind sail area: 77m² (830 sq ft)

Upwind sail area PULSE LINE rig: 85m² (915 sq ft)

Code 0 (option): 54m² (580 sq ft)

Fresh water tank: 300 l (80 US gal)

Fuel tank: 400 l (105 US gal)

Engines: 2 x 29 hp

Standard price: around € 235,000 ex-tax

Price of the boat we tested: around € 343,021 ex-tax

Principal options:

Sail Away Pack: € 11,050 ex-tax

Pulse Line Pack: € 13,838 ex-tax

Code 0 Mylar Pulse Line: € 7,006 ex-tax

Canvas sunroof: € 2,021 ex-tax