

BENETEAU BARRACUDA 9

Beneteau

Barracuda 9 *Test Report*



ON TEST

Dave Marsh

reflects on a blast from the past with this review of the new, and comparison with the old, Barracuda 9 from Beneteau, and reveals several notable assets along with a few points that merit further consideration ...

Time for an early confession – because of my unadulterated passion for the previous Beneteau Barracuda 9 that I reviewed at the Southampton Boat Show in 2011, I jumped on board this boat at Beneteau's test facility in Port Ginesta with a whole bag of

preconceptions. The outgoing BB9 had been a very cleverly styled beast – with its rod holders and live baitwells, clearly designed with far more than just a nod to the fishing brigade, but so smoothly fashioned externally that it could hold its head high among the more sophisticated walk-around wheelhouse fare from the likes of Paragon and Aquador, albeit not in the quality department once you moved inside.

Anyway, maybe I was alone in my appreciation of the previous BB9's dual-purpose character, because with their new BB9, Beneteau have returned resolutely to the more severe pêche-promenade style, typical of the zillions of small glass-fibre fishing boats that flood out from French marinas

at the weekends, crewed by improbable numbers of eager Francophiles. This chunky style is not without its advantages – the new BB9 is blessed with great expanses of glass, including twin pilot house side doors and a terrific multi-panel sunroof, complete with a sliding section. And although I mourn the passing of the brilliantly conceived micro-flybridge that topped off the previous BB9, its omission does allow Beneteau to fit the big glass doors that connect the tail end of the pilot house to the cockpit. Ergo, much easier movement in and around the boat, far better ventilation, and a much lighter pilot house that functions more effectively on all levels.

The new BB9 incorporates several ingenious design niceties. Most impactful is the

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LAZARETTES



ONBOARD THE BENETEAU BARRACUDA 9



The mouldings to the left of the helm conceals a micro-galley.



The second sleeping area directly adjoins the forward cabin.



Headroom in the pilothouse is around 1.93m (6ft 4in).

versatile cockpit that allows owners to arrange this space in several different ways, assuming they shell out for the appropriate extras. One option comprises a pair of foldable seats recessed into the cockpit sides - in my opinion, well worth the extra 1,836 (inc. VAT) euros. Then there's the 1,230-euro sliding cockpit seat bench, which, by dint of some clever nesting and hinging of the rear bench seat, allows a second bench seat to be dragged to the front of the cockpit, so four beefy fishermen (or six at a squeeze) can sit around the optional cockpit table, sheltering their tackle under the optional cockpit sun awning if they so chose. It is worth noting that even with the second bench seat hard up against the main pilot house doors, those twin side doors still leave unobstructed passageways in and around the rest of the boat. Just across the 275mm (11in)-wide side decks there's a bulwark side door adjacent to the helm, and the unobstructed bathing platform even pokes out a little from the sides of the hull. All told, Beneteau could not have made it any easier or safer to move around, on and off, this boat.

Storage is extremely generous, not least because the new BB9 has two lazarettes - one under the cockpit floor and a second, full-

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beam space just inside the pilot house; this houses a few small electrical items but is otherwise unencumbered. No surprises in the forward cabin, which, along with its compact en suite heads, is arranged conventionally. The surprise is the potential second berth area ('cabin' would be far too grand a description) located underneath the helm and galley area, which can be accessed from the forward cabin but also through a plywood trap in the saloon floor. It's a canny arrangement, fine if you don't mind overnighting with friends in an extremely proximate way, but probably far more useful as yet another grand storage area for the forecabin - one that you could handily drop heavy or bulky items into from above without having to negotiate the forward steps.



Behind the scenes finish is extremely rudimentary in places.

Headroom in the cabin and the en suite heads is 1.68m (5ft 6in), so OK if you're a shorty like me, but a slight stooping zone for most.

Quality control

So far, so very good. However, that useful second forward lazarette did reveal much about why Beneteau's boats seem to be such good value for money. The behind-the-scenes finish here (see image) was extremely rudimentary, with rough unsealed edges on the plywood (likewise on the edges of the numerous moulded GRP lockers inside), very crude finishing along the runs of mastic that bond the bulkhead to the GRP structure, and patches of bare green glass fibre that are crying out for the white topcoat to be extended by only the most modest amount to finish them off nicely.

Driving down prices to make a budget product competitive in the marketplace does have to be a top-to-bottom process, but at times I wonder if it has to be quite so ruthlessly relentless. Just how much more would it cost to get the mastic gun operator to produce a smooth joint? And surely applying a few extra square metres of white topcoat would not break the bank ... It's hard to believe that a typical BB9 customer would not be prepared to spend a couple of hundred extra euros on a potentially £100,000+ boat for the marked increase in perceived quality that such minor improvements would make.

Fast fisher

This is one nippy fishing boat – we clocked 40 knots with the most powerful twin 250hp



Numerous mix-n-match seat options provide a remarkably versatile cockpit.

This is one nippy fishing boat – we clocked 40 knots with the most powerful twin 250hp outboard engine option.

outboard engine option. Impressive perhaps, but if this were my boat, I'd fit much smaller engines. The BB9 porpoised (hobby-horsed) if I trimmed the engines up more than 25%, and the boat was generally at its best with the engines trimmed fully down. Perhaps the optional Zipwake trim system would have improved matters, but however I tried to trim the boat with the big Suzuki outboards, to me at least, it never felt as though it had properly

settled into a comfortable groove. Difficult to pinpoint, but instinctively I felt there was just too much engine weight (circa 600kg) hanging off the transom.

In the moderate chop we had on the day of our test, the BB9 dished up a rough ride, even crossing our own modest wake. Noise has a big impact on the perceived ride quality, so that feeling doubtless wasn't helped by the BB9's constant internal rattling underway.



SPECIFICATIONS



Length overall: 8.91m (29ft 3in)
Beam: 2.95m (9ft 8in)
Fuel capacity: 400 litres (88 imp. gal);
 600 litres (132 imp. gal) optional
Water capacity: 160 litres (22 imp. gal)
Draught: 0.90m (2ft 11in)
Air draught: 2.78m (9ft 1in)
RCD category: C (10 people) & B (for 4-6)
Displacement: 4.35 tonnes (light)

PRICE

From: 65,760 euros, exc. engines (inc. 20% UK VAT) Bates Wharf: £124,486 incl VAT with twin DF200APX Suzuki outboards

NOTABLE EXTRAS

(In euros, inc. 20% UK VAT)

€8,664	Cruising pack (various items)
€2,676	Bow thruster
€3,444	Zipwake trim system
€2,600	Engine pre-rigging (average)
€1,836	Foldable cockpit seats
€708	Mid-cabin mattress
€605	Cockpit table

ENGINES

Smallest engines: Twin 40hp outboard
 Biggest engines: Twin 250hp outboard
 Test engines: Twin 250hp Suzuki

CONTACT

For full list of international dealers see
www.beneteau.com
 UK: www.bateswharf.co.uk

WHAT WE THOUGHT?

HIGHS

- Immensely versatile cockpit
- Very generous storage levels
- Walk-around decks + side door
- Big sunroof (inc. sliding section)
- Exceptional (safe) view out
- Potential second double berth

LOWS

- Harsh ride through chop
- Rattles noisily underway
- Behind-the-scenes finish
- Poor range with 400L tanks



Moulded lockers provide storage under the roomy double berth.



Small table can be hoisted out of the way to sit against the overhead.



Headroom in heads and forward cabin is around 1.68m (5ft 6in).

We also experienced huge bangs when, on two occasions, we dared to cross the waves in anything other than the upright condition. But then, perhaps that's no surprise, because if you look at pictures of the BB9 running along, it's clear to see just how rapidly the hull shape of this beamy boat flattens off. All

told, that's why my personal BB9 would have much smaller and lighter engines - I do not think this is a convincing 40-knot hull, and a pair of 150hps should still top 30 knots, while even a more modest twin 100hp should give 25 knots.

Conclusions

Despite the criticisms of the ride quality, Beneteau's Barracuda 9 is not a bad boat - in my opinion, it is simply one that was overpowered in the form we tested it. Fitted with modest 100hp or 150hp engines, I think



it would probably dish up a better ride, be quieter and more economical, and its speed would be far more in keeping with the BB9's true character.

That would leave its owners to revel in its good qualities: its immensely versatile cockpit, the tremendous view out, its very generous storage levels, and the exceptional way the spaces hang together to provide such safe, free-flowing and easily accessible cockpit and deck areas. And it's not just the fishing contingent that will find those qualities appealing. **PBR**

PERFORMANCE DATA

	Slow cruise	Fast cruise	Flat out
RPM	2500	4000	5750
Speed (knots)	10	27	40
Fuel (LPH)	37	70	165
Consumption (MPG)	0.81	0.81	0.81
Range (400 litres)	86	123	78
Range (600 litres)	130	185	116

Speed in knots. Range in nautical miles and allows for 20% reserve, based on standard 400L tanks. Calculated figures based on readings from on-board fuel gauge; your figures may vary considerably. 75% fuel, no water, no stores, 3 crew, relatively calm for speed trials.

Beneteau *Flyer 8*

Micro Report



For as little as 31,600 euros (exc. VAT), plus the cost of an engine of your choice, it is possible to head off in a boat that you could overnight in (courtesy of the V-berth), enjoy the privacy of a compact heads compartment, rustle up coffee and bacon sandwiches, and legally squeeze 10 people on board to enjoy the fun (although in our opinion, that would be too much moveable mass on board a boat weighing 1685kg excluding the engine).

With the most powerful 350hp engine option, we achieved 43.8 knots on test. That's an impressive pace, but be aware - at that speed, Beneteau's AirStep hull becomes very lively indeed in all but the flattest water. In fact, when we conducted the speed trials in slightly choppy conditions, my skipper was clearly exploiting his impressive racing boat driving skills to pilot the boat. If that sort of haste is unnecessary, Beneteau will happily pre-rig the boat for a single 150hp (this is what I would do - it should still give around 28 knots) or even for engines as small as 40hp.

The Flyer 8's pared-down price does inevitably mean a pared-down product - an extremely basic fit-out and absolutely everything non-essential on the extras list.

You'll need the SUNdeck version for overnighting, but if you prefer foredeck space to cabin space, the even cheaper SPACEdeck version still has a sea toilet down below, albeit in a much reduced space (see image). The Flyer 8's pared-down price does inevitably mean a pared-down product - an extremely basic fit-out and absolutely everything non-essential on the extras list. But then, Beneteau's Flyer 8 is largely about value for money. **PBR**



SPACEdeck above, SUNdeck on left, but both models can be fitted with an optional T-top.



Both versions of the Flyer 8 are around 7% lighter than their predecessors.

SPECIFICATIONS



Length overall: 8.10m (26ft 7in)
Beam: 2.53m (8ft 4in)
Fuel capacity: 340 litres (75 imp. gal)
Water capacity: 80 litres (18 imp. gal)
Draught: 0.90m (2ft 11in)
Air draught: 2.36m (7ft 9in) with T-top
RCD category: C (for 10 people)
Displacement: circa 2100kg
Max. engine: Single 350hp outboard

PRICES (INC. 20% VAT)

From: 33,480 euros (SPACEdeck, no engine);
 37,920 euros (SUNdeck, no engine)

CONTACT

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