

BENETEAU 373

This 2004 model is new and significantly improved.

Cruising yachts in the mid-size range are bread-and-butter for Beneteau—the world's largest sailboat manufacturer—so exhaustive effort has clearly gone into fine-tuning their latest 37-footer. After all, in today's ultra-competitive market, every new yacht is up against not only boats from rival manufacturers, but late-model stablemates as well. Ultimately, the only way that even a mammoth builder like Beneteau can maintain sales momentum is through an endless cycle of product improvements.

DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION The lineage of the new 373 traces back to the 1964 Oceanus 352, followed in 2000 by the Beneteau 361. All three are based on a commodious yet slippery hull that was drafted by Jean Berret and Oliver Racoupeau. The 373 goes far beyond being just a refreshed version of an existing design. In most respects, it's an all-new boat.

Most conspicuously, the 373's deck now sports the same split-level cabin profile and forward-angled skylights that characterize Beneteau's other recent introductions: the 473, 393, and 423. Compared to the 361, the 373 hull appears to be extended aft a bit to increase effective sailing length (i.e. hull speed) and accommodate an extra 363 kgs (800 lbs) displacement without excessive transom drag. External ballast in the standard cast iron keel has been boosted by about the same amount, which should more than offset for the new boat's slightly increased sail area. As well, there's now a 2 m (6' 6") deep keel option—a sure way to boost upwind performance. And unlike the masthead rigs of its predecessors, the 373 boasts a 15/16th fractional rig—a worthwhile change that will definitely make handling easier.

COCKPIT AND ACCOMMODATIONS Top-sides, the Beneteau 373 benefits from a couple of nifty innovations—specifically an articulated steering wheel that pivots to allow unimpeded passage the length of the cockpit, and a stowaway helm seat for easy



SVEN DONALDSON PHOTO

access to the transom swimming/boarding platform. However, the major differences between the 373 and its predecessors will be noticed below-decks. To begin with, the big skylight windows over the dining area will dramatically brighten the entire salon, and there's now a third pair of fixed portlights in the hull topsides forward to provide a direct view out from the V-berth. Interior space utilization has been tweaked to add an extra hanging locker and considerably more all-around stowage.

Most interestingly, there's now a fully functional three-cabin layout available—a real rarity in yachts under 11.5 m (38'). Substantially different from the two-cabin arrangement, the three-cabin juggles the position of the forward-facing nav station and utilizes a completely different head module that appears almost identical to the excellent head in the 361. Naturally, the two-cabin 373 offers extra galley space and cockpit stowage, but the three-cabin should be entirely satisfactory for families or chartering. Tank volumes have been increased by 15 to 25%, extending the 373's powering range to well over 200 miles, and providing extra water capacity useful for passages or cruising remote areas.

BENETEAU 373

LOA	11.25 m (36' 11")
Hull Length	11 m (36' 1")
LWL	9.8 m (32' 10")
Beam	3.8 m (12' 4")
Std. Draft	1.3 m (4' 11")
Deep Draft	2 m (6' 6")
Std. Ballast	2,197 kgs (4,844 lbs)
Deep Ballast	1,757 kgs (3,873 lbs)
Displ.	6,586 kgs (14,520 lbs)
Sail Area	56.4 sq-m (607 sq-ft)
SA/D	16.3
D/L	183
Fuel	115 litres (25.3 gals)
Water	360 litres (79 gals)
Std. Power	27 hp Yanmar diesel

Built by Beneteau USA

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843-805-5000
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Sold by Westerly Yacht Sales

Vancouver
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All in all, the new 373 is simply "more boat" than the 361. While for now, the latter remains in the Beneteau USA line-up, most future production will surely be shifting to the new model. —Sven Donaldson