



Hunter 45DS

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Hunter turns 35 years

old this year. It's amazing just how far they've come and what an integral role they have played helping sell the sport and lifestyle. How? Hunter has worked hard to build affordable, quality boats that were easy to own and, more importantly, easy to sail. This review on the Hunter 45 DS reflects a lot of what Hunter has learned over its 35 years in business. Co-founder, Warren Luhrs – a knowledgeable sailor – helped the company grow to a global brand with over 80 models launched from its design boards.

The 45DS is a big boat with a big rudder and a small keel. These boats are built to foot and get you to your destination in comfort and with speed. The boat we tested sails and handles extremely well in a breeze (11+ knots). It's very comfortable to steer and sail in mild chop. The broad bow configuration lifts over the waves. But don't try and pinch this boat; you'll get better performance by cracking the sheets and sailing a bit open (55+ degrees). Below the water line, the newly developed all iron keel, with its larger shoal draft wings, gives the 45DS good stability.

The DS moniker stands for Deck Saloon, the new class of boats that are designed for families who want to live and cruise in style and comfort. The Hunter philosophy of simple, safe and fun comes alive in this boat. Right off, the extra large welcoming cockpit with dual steering stations catches the eye. With its large entry path, the large open transom is great for aft docking or a safe swim. The cockpit table is a wonderful touch as well seating six easily.

The DS has the now standard B&R rig that eliminates the traditional backstay that can cut back on transom access but easily allows the efficient setting of the larger roach mainsail. The long swept back spreaders intermediates and the 9/10 fractional forestay support the spar well. Early on, this rig took some getting used, but now it's a standard that I'm surprised we don't see on more models. Taking a risk on this innovative rig configuration has paid big dividends to Hunter and the sport. Forward, the jib is small but powerful enough to help drive speed. It's a good size for a cruising set up – easy to trim and control.

The Hunter signature arch graces the cockpit. The obvious advantage is space in the cockpit but with such a robust structure available to tie into, many get hooked on the concept of building a formal addition rather than having convertible like flexibility. (Many have used it to build massive dodgers and cockpit enclosures, however we suggest you spend some time with your canvas supplier to understand the balance between good visibility and easy access. The arch is wonderful as it allows solid and easy control of the sails with its end boom sheeting when its visible

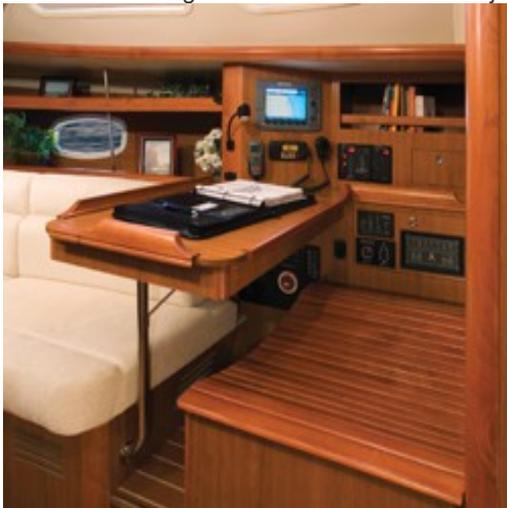


traveller and sheet tension are easy; however when you can't see it, you forget it, so don't be afraid to tweak the canvas here, add some windows above and make them large enough to see up and forward.

Overall the deck layout and visibility of the electronics are well done relying on Hunter's alliances with solid and well known brands in the industry.

Below decks, the classic Cherry interior complements the boat well. Utilizing large windows, the space is bright and well ventilated, with tons of headroom. It's a wonderful living space with plenty of light, great visibility and wonderful storage. The L-shaped galley to port is a great use of space and well done. It's perfect for those who wish to prepare a meal and entertain at the same time. It integrates beautifully with the interior living space, lying just aft of the settee area and well thought out with its handholds and counter layout.

Standard equipment includes a Waeco refrigerator, Force 10 stove and microwave. The main head with shower lies to starboard along with the nav station tucked just forward. I loved the nav seat, neat detail with its wooden rolled profile. Like the galley, the nav station fits perfectly into the interior space.



Moving aft, you will find an expanded stateroom that boasts a queen-size bed, large hanging lockers, more than enough storage and a private entrance to the main head.

Going forward, the neat side-mounted double berth to port graces this Pullman style cabin. Opposite to starboard is a wonderful vanity that's separated from the forepeaks private bathroom and shower.

Having visited the Hunter plant recently, it's easy to see how Hunter has done such a good job in providing value through a fairly sophisticated production line approach that is cleverly done – and mimics a car assembly facility in many ways. Using a simple but

focused approach, the Hunter team fabricates three distinct hull components – hull, deck, and hull liner – and then adds rig and rudder, etc. The process is neat: Hunter staff actually work inside out on various pieces and components. They work on preassembling modular components that are ultimately glassed into a single moulded structural grid.



I was personally impressed with the enthusiasm on the shop floor. The plant truly reflects the "employee-owned company" business model very well. From the test lake facility to the glass shop, the work flow is an excellent example of how to make boats efficiently – which is what Hunter has done so well in its 35 years.

By John Kerr

To see if this boat is available, go to www.boatcan.com to check listings!