



FACTFILE
Bénéteau Antarès 11
LOA: 37ft 3in (11.35m)
PRICE: from £183,480
TOP SPEED: 27 knots

MOTOR BOATS TESTED

Bénéteau Antarès 11

The saying 'if it ain't broke, don't fix it' always comes to mind when builders replace popular models, so can the Antarès 11 trump its 10.80 predecessor? **REPORT BY MARK TURLEY**

Mark says...



Don't let the photo above fool you. It was taken in a lull between heavy squalls and I wasn't going to be coerced up top from the comfort of the lower helm, even if the flybridge is a marked improvement on its predecessor's

Bénéteau has continued the redesign of its flybridge line-up by bringing out a successor to the popular 10.80. The new Antarès 11 is a smidge longer and a good foot wider than its predecessor, and the new saloon enjoys a more convivial layout. However, the biggest transformation can be found on the flybridge, which has become so much more than just a place to site an upper helm. So far so good, but does it still possess the easy 'get in and go'

practicality that defined the 10.80's appeal? We took a weather-beaten trip to the south of France to find out.

Design & build

This is very much an all-new design, right from the keel up. In fact, unlike the 10.80, this hull has done away with a shallow keel and introduced prop tunnels, to help reduce the height required for the twin inboard



installation. The boat's overall length comes out at just over 37ft but the actual hull length is less than 33ft. The difference between them is accounted for by a stub anchor platform and the 3ft-deep add-on bathing platform. We say 'add-on' because as well as being a bolt-on extension, the platform is actually a £1530 option. At first this seems a bit odd but by forgoing the bathing platform – which isn't needed as a means to board – you can shave 3ft off your mooring fees.

The flybridge design ticks all the boxes in terms of looks and layout because it offers a helm and a social area, complete with a dinette and rear sunpad, rather than just the minimalist helm found on the 10.80. The extra square footage this requires accounts for the slightly larger superstructure, and the fact that the whole flybridge has been pushed further forward to enjoy more of the boat's length.

The larger superstructure is apparent down below. With extra space forward for a good-sized galley opposite the helm, the saloon can enjoy full-width status with seating on both sides.

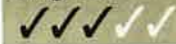
Two double cabins and a toilet compartment

with separate shower cubicle complete the accommodation.

The fitout is a balanced combination of mouldings and wood joinery, the latter being slotted together like a mammoth jigsaw. This method clearly saves a good deal of time for the builder and the finished article is surprisingly solid and pleasant to look at. It is only when you delve around behind the scenes that it can look rather odd and unsubstantial.

Design & build

Well proportioned inside and out, a tidy fitout



Exterior

Boats of this length must be a nightmare for designers, as the expectation of a well-designed two-cabin interior with all mod cons and an impressive exterior – with a roomy cockpit, safe side decks and a functional flybridge – is a big ask. All these areas need to be useable, without compromising each other, and you have to



Although the flybridge isn't huge it has all the right features, including a dinette and sunpad



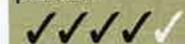
Good side decks include a scupper to keep water out of the cockpit



The busy but functional lazarette

Exterior

Easy to get about and all very practical



Accommodation

Although the Antares 11 still has an open-plan saloon/galley arrangement, the galley is set right forward rather than running along the starboard side as was the case with the 10.80. This means there is space for some facing seating in the saloon, a layout that lifts the whole feel of the boat to a slightly more sophisticated level.

The main dinette with its extending table falls to an L-shape, while two seat pods that make up the mini-sofa opposite can be drawn across to the table so up to six can get around it. When the pods are back in situ they benefit from side tables

The sunpad area further aft can be enlarged by dropping the bench seat's backrest, and because this area is raised there is storage beneath for covers, or an optional fridge.

A ladder runs up to the flybridge and although we didn't find it particularly onerous to negotiate there are plans to make it slightly less steep. The flybridge coaming is relatively low but the horseshoe-shaped seating to port and adjustable single helm seat don't feel too exposed, and it is a convivial spot whether underway or alongside.

Set in the wings of the moulded-out lazarette are the fuel tanks and a dedicated spot for a gen set, if required, not to mention plenty of useful stowage space. Siting these important service items here makes them readily accessible, and the consideration Bénéteau has given to aiding access to the aft end of the compartment, with a removable portion of bulkhead, is to be applauded.

hand it to Bénéteau as it has managed to pull this stunt off in spades. The only thing we don't understand is why the side decks are asymmetric to the tune of just an inch, one being 10in the other 11in. It looks more like a slip of the designer's pen than a meaningful addition. Not that it matters, though, as both side decks, complete with chunky toerails, end up a useable width. The safe decks are also protected by guardrails that run right back to the cockpit, with handrails sited just where you want them.

Hardware for mooring lines is impressive but the foredeck doesn't come equipped with a windlass as standard – an irony given this is our anchoring issue. The most cost-effective way around this and a few other extras – such as a bow thruster – is to opt for one of two option packs. The Avantage pack includes the windlass and bow thruster, plus a CD/MP3 set-up, while the Elegance pack includes a comprehensive Raymarine electronics installation and a bench locker for the cockpit. While you're at it you also might want to consider opting for the neat canvas awning extension, that pulls out from the flybridge overhang.



Cleanly styled but still inviting, the saloon has a welcoming feel



The seat bases pull out

on either side, perfect for placing a glass or mug, and it is these thoughtful design touches that run through the rest of the boat.

Indeed, the galley-up arrangement offers plenty of practical touches with neat counter-height cubbyholes and lockers for all the hands-on stuff, like tea and coffee. The spec here includes a two-burner gas hob, an oven unit and a fridge. The only quail we had was over the small size of the sink but we are told this has now been changed for a larger one.

When it comes to the sleeping accommodation,

the forecabin boasts a decent island double with a good array of storage. It also feels incredibly roomy thanks to a sliding entrance door, rather than a hinged one. Headroom here, as found throughout the boat, is most adequate, and there is plenty of room to sit up in bed. Handy, deep-fiddled shelves run outboard and there are neat tables set either side of the berth.

The forecabin is incredibly roomy thanks to a sliding entrance door

Such detail is less apparent in the midships cabin which frankly feels a bit bland, plus it is fitted with a double berth, rather than a couple of singles, so it lacks

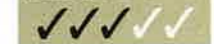
versatility. Better is the access to auxiliary systems. A panel set into the cabin's inboard bulkhead reveals the holding tank, pumps, batteries and calorifier – which, usefully, leaves very little to clutter the engine room.

The toilet compartment shares the same practical, pleasing design flair as the forecabin with the shower tucked behind a screen it shares with the WC.

This is a neat idea that saves the rest of the compartment getting soaked while showering, without wasting space on a completely separate shower stall.

Accommodation

A useable layout is let down by a poor midships cabin



The forecabin is spacious and well thought through, as is the en-suite toilet compartment but the midships cabin is pretty plain



Galley counter top storage



Performance & handling

Practically every time MBM heads to the south of France for a boat test the weather turns cold and blustery, with enough underlying swell to make a dog's dinner of a lumpy sea. Our image of the Med is therefore becoming a touch jaundiced, it has to be said, but at least it means the boats we test don't get let off the hook easily.

In fact, given the messy sea state off Marseille, we were pleasantly surprised by the lack of squeaks, knocks and rattles from a fitout which appears to be based on push-fit joinery and

noise augmenting mouldings.

The ride proved to be commendably soft too, and you had to be extremely unlucky through a turn to clobber a wave on the chine. However, visibility from the lower helm does suffer as the wheel goes over, and true to a tunnelled hull's form it isn't a live wire on helm response. Straighten back up, though, and the hull quickly levels off again, with a natural balance that gives just the

“We managed to push the A11 to 27 knots in less than perfect conditions”

right attitude across the water without resorting to the trim tabs.

When it comes to performance we managed to push the A11 up to 27 knots in

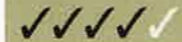
less than perfect conditions but for most of the time you'll be happy to set the throttles around 2800-3000rpm, which will happily deliver cruising speeds in the low 20s with a healthy mpg figure.

The only issue we had at the lower helm is that you have to peer over the bulbous pod of a dash that sits on top of the main console. Adding an inch or so on the two-seater helm seat would probably help but knocking a similar amount off the dash is the real answer as long as this doesn't compromise the space allocated for a plotter.

Juggling these heights and levels aside, the rest works well. The screen is serviced by two wipers and the designers have managed to work in a couple of bits trays, for sunglasses and the like.

Performance & handling

Runs well but you have to peer over the helm console



Specification & value

To achieve what most owners would perceive as a properly equipped boat, the standard spec really requires the meatier of the two option packs – the £18,700 Elegance package. This includes the Raymarine electronics, in addition to

the windlass and bow thruster. Most folk will probably opt for the bathing platform too, unless they have a real length restriction on their berth, and this then brings the total drive-away price (once you have factored in delivery and commissioning) to something close to £210,000.

A glance at the rivals indicates that this is priced

about right, especially as we've loaded it with a stack of electronics. And as a full-on flybridge boat, with a dinette and sunpad, it is – in estate agent terms – priced to sell.

Specification & value

Options need to be added but it works out fine in the end



Engine options

The standard engine option is a pair of Volvo D4s rated to 260hp but the more potent 300hp D4s will push your cruising into the high rather than low 20s. Access to the engine compartment is very good as the fuel tanks, associated filters and raw water strainers are sited in the lazarette.



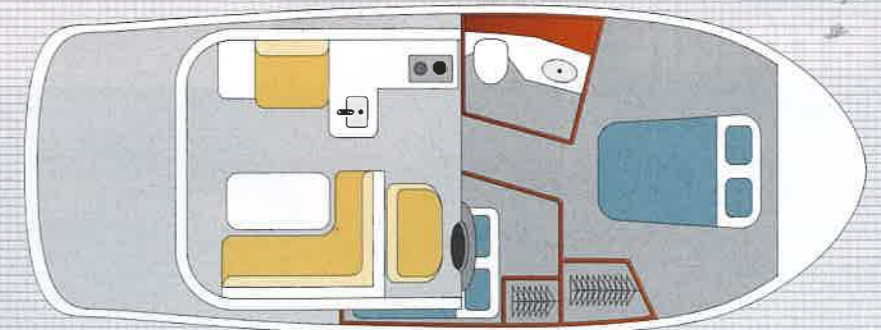
MBM verdict

The Antarès 11 differs in many respects from the boat it's replacing, notably by way of a larger saloon and a very useable flybridge, yet it retains all the previous model's appeal. With this in mind it is a

welcome addition to the mid-30ft flybridge market – a sector that is seeing some useful new models after several lacklustre years.



Béneteau Antarès 11 technical data



specifications

BUILD	GRP
RCD	B
LENGTH OVERALL	37ft 3in (11.35m)
HULL LENGTH	32ft 9in (9.97m)
BEAM	12ft 6in (3.80m)
DRAUGHT	3ft 3in (1m)
AIR DRAUGHT	15ft 5in (4.70m)
DISPLACEMENT	7.5 tonnes (loaded)
FUEL CAPACITY	140gal (640lt)
WATER CAPACITY	70gal (320lt)

key dimensions

WIDTH OF SIDE DECKS	10/11in (25/28cm)
HEADROOM IN SALOON	6ft 4in (1.94m)
FORECABIN BERTH	6ft 5in x 4ft 6in (1.96 x 1.37m)
MIDSHIPS CABIN	6ft 5in x 4ft 10in (1.96 x 1.47m)

performance

Engines	twin Volvo D4 260hp diesels
Configuration	4cyl, 3.7lt, 260hp @ 3500rpm
conditions	W'lly, Force 4, sea moderate
Load	fuel 50%, water 50%, crew 4

Rpm	knots	gph	lph	mpg	range	noise
1500	8.5	3.3	15	1.67	189	70
2000	11	5.7	26	1.93	218	73
2500	17.3	9.2	42	1.88	212	75
2800	21.3	12.3	56	1.73	195	78
3000	23.6	15	68	1.57	177	79
3450	27	22.6	103	1.19	134	82

Range figures quoted above are in miles based on standard fuel tanks and include a 20% margin. GPH & MPG refer to imperial gallons. These figures may vary due to weather conditions, air, water, engine temperature, crew numbers, hull fouling, fuel quality and other issues. Noise readings in dB(A) were taken in the saloon.

prices

STANDARD BOAT	inc VAT
with twin Volvo D4-260 diesels	£183,480
ELEGANCE PACKAGE	£18,715
TRIM TABS	standard
SHOREPOWER	standard
COCKPIT CANOPY	£2540
WOOD IN COCKPIT	£4230
HEATING	£3000
DELIVERY & COMMISSIONING	£7515

BOAT AS TESTED £209,705

ENQUIRIES For your nearest UK dealer, visit www.beneteau.com

the rivals



JEANNEAU PRESTIGE 36
£226,474
This rival French builder's 36 is getting a tad long in the tooth but there is no denying it has plenty to offer – it still feels like a much bigger boat with a classy interior.
www.jeanneau.fr



SEALINE F37
From £233,590
The smaller F34 has a similar layout to the Antarès, but the shaftdrive F37 is the more comparable cruiser with an excellent flybridge and cabins.
Tel: 01562 749100
www.sealine.com



AQUALUM 35
From £214,130
This Argentinian-built boat fared well in a recent MBM test (April 09) with a particularly roomy cockpit and a decent-sized flybridge.
Tel: 01305 782080
www.blue-horizons.co.uk



The lower helm layout is easy to follow, but the raised dash could be lowered to improve visibility