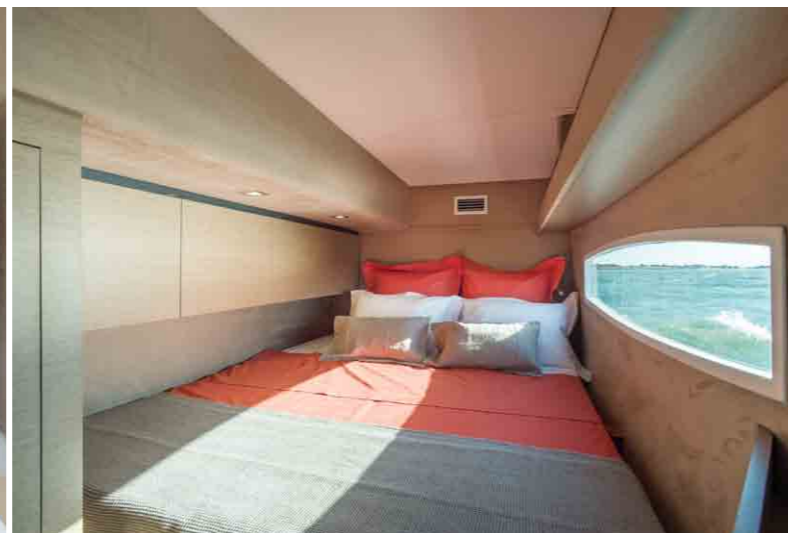




# monster MAKER

Three legged luxury with performance make the Neel 65 an awesome trimaran to go aboard, reports KEVIN GREEN.

Boss Eric Bruneel has put decades of racing and building experience into his first Neel 65.  
*Photo Kevin Green*



**ABOVE LEFT:** Starboard and port lounges in the saloon. Note the opening side windows for ventilation. *Photo Neel*  
**ABOVE RIGHT:** Ama cabins are spacious with bathrooms containing separate shower cubicles.  
**LEFT:** Six ensuite toilets so plenty of ablutions on the Neel 65. *Photo Neel*

**ABOVE:** The two deck level double cabins with island beds and panoramic windows are outstanding. *Photo Neel*  
**ABOVE RIGHT:** The galley adjoins the aft cockpit so is a good serving spot and social meeting place with its tall bar-style benches. *Photo Neel*  
**RIGHT:** From the navigation station you can look aft past the galley plus have commanding views forward. Note that access to the ama cabins and forepeak cabins is from here as well. *Photo Neel*



The Neel 65 is an amazing looking trimaran that I enjoyed boarding but there's a lot more than mere looks to this monster 65 footer that has three levels and unusual interior space. Commissioned to be a fast cruiser and a commercial charter boat, the new trimaran joins its successful

A major attraction of trimarans is their performance, as I recalled racing through Sydney Harbour on Sean Langman's Orma 60 *Team Australia* doing 34kts with one reef in, so there's an obvious reason why ocean records are made by 'tris' as they have both speed and stability; and to a lesser extent this applies to the cruising varieties. "Trimarans

smaller sibling, the Neel 45. Walking around the La Rochelle yard chatting to managing director Eric Bruneel we also looked over hull #15 of the Neel 45 that is destined for an Australian owner and local distributor Multihull Solutions are negotiating more sales.

have the weight centralised unlike a catamaran that has 50% on the downwind side whereas tris have 80% centralised," explains Eric as we walk around the 65. Built near the grand old port of La Rochelle with its signature twin towers the area is one of the largest yachting centres in western France and home to Nautitech, Dufour, Fountaine Pajot and other builders, so the region is a great place for us yachting tragics to visit. The yard is named after Bruneel himself and also produces race boats, so his team is very aware of weight efficiencies, as I found when looking closely at the 65. Bruneel is a former general manager of Fountaine Pajot and OSTAR winner (on his 55ft *Trilogic* trimaran) so knows what it takes to build a fast and safe multihull.

The Neel 65 is a performance cruiser for big daily mileages so ideal for the downwind ARC Rally (a Neel 45 crossed the Atlantic averaging 10kts) and its shallow draft is good for my favourite spots in the Caribbean such as the Tobago Keys. Walking

around the Neel 65, the most striking thing is its sheer size – at nearly 40ft wide and with towering heavily rockered hulls – yet it only weighs 22 tons semi-dry. The beam allows for a huge bridgedeck and aft cockpit with tall flybridge helm controls, while inside there's berths in each ama as well as the hull; totalling six double cabins with a bathroom for each in the owner's version. For the charter version there's eight cabins and bathrooms, so combined with the huge 25m<sup>2</sup> aft entertainment area, it could be party-time on the Neel 65. Stepping inside the single level saloon brings me to the large open centralised kitchen with navigation station forward in front at the main windows with couches along each side. Running nearly along the beam, the saloon windows give panoramic views from the Neel 65 and the entrance to the ama cabins are at each end. Visibility is enhanced by opening side windows which allow you to peer aft as well when working around the nav table. The spacious navigation station has plenty of



bulkhead space for extra electronics in addition to the B&G equipment fitted, so controlling the helm using the autopilot can be done without climbing to the flybridge. Also there's an unobscured view aft through the galley so skippers can rest easy.

## DECK CABINS

Off the passageway are the two double ensuite cabins, with a third down steps in the hull and another in the forepeak. The Franck Darnet designed interior is a stylish mix of man-made materials with woven polyester flooring and suede lookalike wall cladding. Certainly a wee bit more luxurious than the Orma 60 which has a centre cabin so tiny even my medium frame had

VISIBILITY IS ENHANCED BY OPENING SIDE WINDOWS WHICH ALLOW YOU TO PEER AFT AS WELL WHEN WORKING AROUND THE NAV TABLE

**BELOW L-R: Outdoor kitchen, fridges, kayak storage and large dining space makes the aft cockpit a comfortable space on the Neel 65. Photo Neel**  
**A surprisingly spacious ama layout on the Neel 65. Photo Neel**  
**A new Neel 45 was launching during my visit to the La Rochelle yard. Photo Kevin Green**

a job squeezing in! The bar-style high benches around the galley are a natural meeting place and they don't have fiddles but then again this beast doesn't tilt much at sea so your G&T should be safe. Dining is on two tables (one of which is convertible into a cocktail table) so the Neel 65 can host up to 12 diners. Also, opening the main sliding door creates a large indoor-outdoor area

with the aft cockpit and there's a separate single door as well.

**HUGE AFT DECK**

On the aft deck the large cockpit (25m<sup>2</sup>) with its wetbar-kitchen is well sheltered under the flybridge and has spacious L-shaped lounge seating with lockers. Outboard of this are elongated storage bins for kayaks and these can be launched from

the amas. Hatches on the amas are good places for your diving gear and there's enough space to house the noisy compressor as well. Main swim access is from the hull, where two rows of moulded steps guide you into the briny. Lifting the locker top here reveals a garage for the tender which can be easily pushed back on rollers for launching. Moving forward on the 65, you are well supported

by the tall saloon bulkhead, before reaching the foredeck where two sets of trampolines guide you to the artificial Teak clad pulpit. Anchoring is via a meaty vertical windlass/capstan with the rode running out to the bowsprit anchor; with a chain locker behind the collision bulkhead. Climbing up the single ladder to the flybridge brings me to yet another huge lounging space (33m<sup>2</sup>) with



the area behind the double helms devoted to dining for eight, with a double sunpad starboard. At the helms wide seats on each allow four people to enjoy the all round views, while between them is the centralised winch pod for crew work. Hull #1 will operate with a skipper, deckhand and a chef and the layout is designed to allow guests undisturbed relaxation in the flybridge while the boat is sailed. System controls include throttles on both helms and remote control

**BELOW L-R: Infusion process for the saloon roof of a Neel 45. Photo Kevin Green**  
Opening the aft cockpit hatch reveals a deep and specious engine room for the Volvo 150hp shaft drive, with plenty of space for optional equipment including the Cummins Onan generator that is at the front of this space.*Photo Kevin Green*  
The pronounced chine reduces the wetted area while giving accommodation space above; and note the tunnel thruster. *Photo Kevin Green*

**BOTTOM: Moored at the old port of La Rochelle, the Neel 65 shows off its reverse bows that maximise the waterline. Photo Neel**





Sail controls are separated from the lounging space in the flybridge and comprise three Antal winches at the mast foot plus outboard primary winches. Photo Neel

of the engine along with tunnel bow thruster, so the skipper can lean out on the flybridge while docking the Neel 65.

The pod design does place the three Antal winches – two XT66 and a single XT 62 – very near one another when operating manually, rather than electrically. These control the main halyard and twin main sheets – which operate on outboard blocks at the far end of the booms so offer good control of the fully battened sail. Outboard on either side of the

flybridge there's plenty of space around the primary XT 70 winches which have tracks in front that's easily adjustable. Dacron Incidence Sails have been used throughout the Neel 65. Conventional slab reefing and lazy jacks are used on the big-topped mainsail while the genoa runs on a self-tacking track and the big gennaker/asymmetric (250m<sup>2</sup>) rolls out from the GRP bowsprit, so there's enough sail power on the Neel for her varied role as an owner and charter boat. The polar

chart projects a brisk performance both upwind and down for the Neel 65 – 6kts upwind at 40° in 10kts of wind with 10kts off the breeze at 150° in 15kt winds using the gennaker. The standard alloy rig and wire shrouds can be upgraded and a lot of performance items added that reduces the weight by 1,100kg, should you opt for the Performance Pack.

### INFUSED BUILD

The Jubert-Nivelt designed hull's big rocker promotes tacking, something that could be a challenge with all this wetted area. The deep and wide hull uses a chine to minimise the drag, while above it the greater beam enhances the living space. Additional directional stability comes from a fixed centre keel, similar to the Neel 45, but obviously much deeper and designed to protect the drive shaft and the deep spade rudder.

Engine power from the 150hp Volvo is delivered by shaft to the folding propeller and the relatively deep position should minimise cavitation,



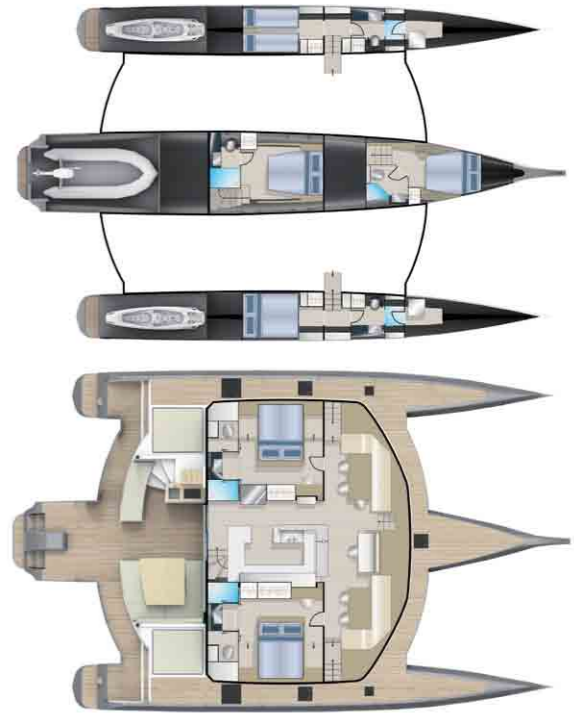
a common multihull problem. Climbing down the aft deck hatch gives me access to the 150hp Volvo shaft drive, with plenty of working space around it, as it uses the full beam of the hull and a lot of length as well. Stability is gained on the Neel 65 by having all systems in the hull – the engine, electronics, electrical wiring, genset, plumbing, diesel and water tanks as well as long-term supplies storage. The large engine space allows room for the installation of desalinators and air conditioning, along with the already installed Cummins generator.

Hull construction is infused polyester with closed cell foam and honeycomb PVC sandwich for rigidity and lightness. Three bulkheads in each ama and the hull itself further add to the structural integrity. The company worked with material specialists Tensyl to optimise the build components and material usage on key structural areas. Depending on their role in the structure of the trimaran either unidirectional, bidirectional or a woven variety of both have been used. "Sampling was determined from the most critical cases of offshore loading on the structure, for example catching a wave at high-speed or sailing with the wind on the beam," explained Eric as we looked at the bow. Here the tunnel thruster has been moulded in, an essential item for pushing the big hull off the dock. Hull number #1 is named Stergann II and leaves the stone docks at La Rochelle to work the charter season in the western Med during the northern summer and Caribbean in the winter, so you can try before you buy!



The dinghy slides out of the garage on rollers (not shown in this graphic). Photo Neel

### SPECIFICATIONS



Price: \$3.6m tax paid and landed in Australia	
Overall Length	19.80m (65ft)
LWL	19.0m
Beam	12.05m
Draft	1.8m
Displacement (semi-light)	22,500kg

<b>Sail areas</b>	
Mainsail	114m <sup>2</sup>
Genoa	93m <sup>2</sup>
Jib/staysail self-tacking	40m <sup>2</sup>
Gennaker (optional)	160m <sup>2</sup>
Water	1000L
Fuel	1000L
Engine	Volvo 150hp shaft drive
Design	Joubert-Nivelt
Interior Design	Franck Darnet
Builder	Neel Trimarans, La Rochelle France

Australian distributor:  
[www.multihullsolutions.com.au](http://www.multihullsolutions.com.au)

