

SINCE 1907

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On the cover:
**Grand Banks
55 Eastbay SX**

An aerial photograph of a boat moving across dark, deep blue water. The boat is at the bottom left, leaving a wide, white, frothy wake that curves sharply to the right and then back towards the top of the frame. The water's surface is textured with small ripples. The overall mood is serene and dynamic.

change is grand

THE NEW 55 EASTBAY SX IS A DEPARTURE FROM GRAND BANKS PAST,
AND A CRUISABLE WORK OF ART

BY JOHN WOOLDRIDGE

While inspecting the interior of the new Grand Banks Eastbay 55 SX, a refrain from a popular Sheryl Crow song flashed in and out of my mind, to wit "Change is gonna do you good." To this I added my own refrain: "How true, how true."

When the professionals at Grand Banks Yachts decided to redesign the Eastbay 54 SX, a popular enclosed saloon model and the largest in their SX model line, they began by listening extensively to owners and dealers for suggestions that would help guide the process. Retaining the excellent performance and seaworthiness of the original C. Ray Hunt & Associates hull design was key, a proven foundation for a new yacht intended to improve on the high production standards, luxurious living spaces and the meticulously crafted interiors that set Grand Banks Yachts in a category of their own.

"In our discussions with owners who used their boats extensively more and more of their focus was up in the saloon, the main living area," said David Hensel, Grand Banks' director of marketing. "So we extended the deckhouse by three feet, making it a brighter, more airy interior with larger windows and an opening sunroof."

This in no way destroyed the classic style lines of the yacht, which, from its gently raked stern and modestly springy sheer to its carefully rounded transom, looks well balanced to my eye. If anything, the added beauty is proportional to the usable space it creates. Grand Banks' designers are as meticulous about outside details as they are about interior details, judging from the care taken to paint the bronze thru-hulls in the bootstripe with the same Awl-Grip, making them visually disappear.

On deck, safety is key for those who must move around and tend to lines, or deploy and retrieve the anchor. Boarding the Eastbay 55 SX from a floating dock from the teak-slatted swim platform is through a substantial transom door supplied with a heavy-duty stainless steel latching mechanism that will never come open accidentally. Our test boat had a hand-laid, teak-planked cockpit sole, precisely installed and caulked, with hatch covers that lined up fore and aft. The cockpit is actually larger than the one found on the 54 SX, with an aft-facing bench seat that cleverly conceals engine room access under one of its cushions.

Teak treads lead up into the cabin, as well as up to the side decks. Excellent Awl-Grip non-skid on the wide, walkable side decks, hardtop and cabin top help knock down glare and improve footing when conditions are damp. Stout welded stainless steel handrails make the transition from cockpit to side decks safer, and include a welded secondary rail to help keep crew on deck. There are opening sections on both sides for those times when you are boarding from a fixed-height dock. The high-gloss teak toe rail, as well as the teak navigation light boards, hearken back to the traditions of all wood Grand Banks. Stainless steel chocks and oversized cleats with large backing plates are positioned for securing the boat properly at the dock or in a slip. There are even pop-up cleats aft dedicated to fender deployment, making docklines on mooring cleats easier to adjust, snub and release.

The standard saloon layout on the new Eastbay 55 SX includes a large seating area aft to port facing a long, beautiful teak entertainment center to starboard housing the stereo system and TV on a lift, as well as a drawer storage and a refrigerator. A high-low folding table of quarter-sawn teak, lovingly matched in grain and color, serves as cocktail or dinner table for this comfortable sofa. There's a second seating area to port forward, opposite the helm for those who want to keep the helmsman company underway, and hidden in the structure between the two



WHETHER IN THE CLEVER CONCEALED ENGINE ROOM ACCESS (TOP) FROM THE COCKPIT, OR THE STUNNING MASTER (RIGHT), THE GRAND BANKS' TRADITION OF TEAK-ENRICHED DESIGN COMES THROUGH.





LOA: 59'10"
LWL: 50'10"
Beam: 16'0"
Draft: 4'4"
Transom Deadrise: 19.5 degrees
Displ. (half load): 63,300 lb.
Fuel: 1,000 gal.
Water: 180 gal.
Black Water: 68 gal.
Naval Architect: C. Raymond Hunt & Associates
Exterior Styling: Grand Banks Yachts
Interior Design: Grand Banks Yachts
Engines: 2x 853 hp Caterpillar C-15 AC- ERT diesel inboards (tested); 2x 873 hp C-18 (standard, derated); 2x 1,000 hp Cat C-18 diesels (optional)
Transmission: Twin Disc 5114A
Gear Reduction: 1.92:1
Props: 33" x 34", 4-blade ZF Marine, NiBrAl
Generator: 1x 13.5 kW Onan e-OD
Steering: Hydraulic
Engine Controls: Twin Disc Electronic EC 300
Price: Price On Request

lounge spot. The use of carefully matched teak in bulkheads, built in furniture and cabinetry continues to set the standard for fit, finish and beauty. The satin finish is achieved with six coats of varnish inside (seven coats outside) and Grand Banks offers an option of high gloss finish, as well.

"Many of our customers still want to single-hand, so we gave them quick access to the side deck with an outward-opening and latching door," Hensel said. They also gave the helmsman a highly adjustable, comfortable Stidd Admiral helm seat and lifting teak-rimmed steering wheel, making it easy to stand or sit while underway. The helm console is laid out with two large Raymarine E-120 multifunction displays in mind, and with room left over for the autopilot and VHF close at hand,

lounges, a slide-out liquor locker provides storage for 10 wine bottles. The triangular teak table for the forward lounge pivots to make access easier. There is an option to replace this forward seating lounge with a single or bench style Stidd seat for the crew or guests. If you'd prefer to have more seating aft, you can opt for a barrel chair and ottoman in lieu of the starboard entertainment center.

The other interesting option for the saloon is to bring the galley up from the accommodation level and locate it in the aft port corner, moving the large lounge forward and eliminating the small lounge. This appeals to those who don't need the extra seating and would prefer to minimize the number of trips down and up to reach the accommodations.

Styling is consistent with contemporary trends established by Grand Banks Yachts in their new models dating back the last five to six years, with large bonded, tempered safety glass windows all around for outstanding visibility plus a pair of curved aft corner windows that add transparency in a traditional prob-



THE EASTBAY 55 TASTING WIDE-OPEN SPEED (TOP) TRACKS EASILY; HELM (BELOW) HAS BEEN MOVED FORWARD FOR VISIBILITY. ADDED SPACE OPENS UP THE SALOON (RIGHT BOTTOM) YET LEFT A SPACIOUS COCKPIT (RIGHT TOP).



lem. There were several nice touches to appreciate: A rudder angle indicator is mounted ahead of the wheel, the control for the Sleipner Side-power bow thruster is easy to reach just ahead of the digital engine controls, and a chart flat is included just to port—a practical feature that Grand Banks owners will simply not do without.

The helm is also positioned closer to the windshield than was the case on the 54 SX, and the sense of improved visibility is profound. Three large Exalto windshield washer/wipers controlled by a touch-pad should keep visibility forward perfectly clear. The electrical panel, set on the face of a panel just to port of and below the wheel, includes six keyed remote battery switches, so you won't need to enter the engine room to turn on or off all the battery banks. In fact, there is a day hatch in the gorgeous teak-and-holly cabin sole, on the centerline very near the helm, for those who want to drop down and do fluid checks without entering the engine room from the cockpit. Overhead, the optional power-actuated Trent Marine sunroof slides smoothly and quietly open and shut, and includes hideaway Ocean-Air screens to block out unwanted sun when desired.

On the accommodation level of the previous 54 SX, the galley was U-shaped and set to port, across from a dinette (or office/stateroom), with the master in the bow. The new Eastbay 55 SX layout stretches the galley out along the port side, places the master stateroom to port and retains a large guest stateroom. The galley seems much more spacious, well lit from the windows overhead,



RPM	KNOTS	GPH	dB(A)
700	6.5	1.8	67
900	9.0	5.8	68
1200	11.4	10.2	73
1500	15.5	18.4	74
1800	20.5	25.2	76
2100	25.4	33.0	78
2323	29.2	44.7	82

Speeds measured by GPS on Narragansett Bay w/three adults, 158 gal. water and 453 gal. of fuel aboard. Sound levels measured at the pilothouse helm in dB-A. Fuel consumption measured by the Caterpillar electronic engine management system.

deck. What they achieved first was a spacious starboard owners stateroom with enough floor space to allow easy access to both sides of the large berth. The built-in bureau with drawers along the hull side is a gorgeous piece of teak furniture you'd be proud to have in any home. And the en suite head compartment offers kind of privacy and luxury Grand Banks owners have come to expect, with Corian sinks and countertops, separate shower stalls and Sealand Vacuflush MSDs.

In the hallway leading to the guest stateroom, (which has about 6'8" of headroom and the lowest overhead

clearance I found) there's a locker with a Spledide combo washer/dryer below and a Vitrifrigo freezer above. The forward stateroom has a large island berth with upholstered headboard, equipped with an innerspring mattress much like the one in the master. Teak storage cabinets flank the berth, with two cedar-lined hanging lockers nearby. The portside head compartment has a private access door, plus another in the hallway for ease of daytime use.

For all her length and weight, the Grand Banks Eastbay 55 SX is a dream to drive. I have had open water experience in a blow in this hull in its previous configuration and found it a wonderfully comfortable platform in three- to four-foot waves. It banks gradually into turns and is capable of tight turns at speed, no more than four lengths in diameter, that will serve you well when agile maneuverability is necessary. As my sea trials of the 55 SX showed, none of the modifications to the deck or the interior have changed the way this yacht handles.

Change can mean many things to different people, but for the owners of Grand Banks' new Eastbay 55 SX, I'm firmly convinced that it will do them good. ▣

Contact www.grandbanks.com

In the galley, the microwave is installed aft above the optional granite countertop, with the door opening forward, a sensible placement for use underway. Lots of clever storage ideas appear in areas that might have been wasted space otherwise. The deep stainless steel sink, large and enough to hold soaking pots, is below the microwave and within easy reach of the twin below-counter, drawer-style Vitrifrigo refrigerators.

Storage is voluminous, enough for living aboard for longer cruises; beneath the steps, under the sole, beneath the refrigerators, and over the counters. Twin opening portholes bring more light and the option of fresh air when you want it.

"There was also a fair amount of living space devoted to the accommodations on the lower level forward in the 54 SX that we wanted to preserve," Hensel said as we walked through the lower

