

Sea Trial

Grand Banks 47CL

BY GEORGE SASS, SR.

Regardless of one's religious beliefs, an inspection of the recently introduced Grand Banks "Heritage" 47CL will result in a convincing argument for evolution. This yacht is a modern interpretation of the highly regarded line of Grand Banks cruisers introduced more than 50 years ago, designs that have been largely responsible for creating the now-popular category "trawler yachts."

While "evolution" describes this new boat's appearance and interior design, "revolution" more accurately describes its underbody. The original Grand Banks semi-displacement hull was meant to run at or slightly above displacement speeds, meaning that a GB46 was most comfortable and efficient running between 9 and 10 knots.

But, the market eventually demanded higher speeds, and during the 1990s, GB 42s and 46s were powered (some would say *overpowered*) with bigger and bigger diesels. While a GB42 with twin CAT 375s could attain 17 knots or so, the ride was relatively wet and uncomfortable compared to that of a true planing hull.

Grand Banks successfully answered the call for still higher speeds with the

introduction of its go-fast Eastbay series, designed by C. Raymond Hunt Associates, and this line now represents a major portion of Grand Banks sales. But, the demand for the company's classically styled series never waned, so it commissioned another renowned design firm, Sparkman & Stephens, to create the "Heritage" series, based on a modified deep-V hull.

The new 47, first introduced as the 44 Europa (it was renamed the 47 to reflect the hull's overall length instead of its waterline length) has been followed by the Classic, featuring the highly popular aft-cabin layout. Capable of reaching speeds in excess of 20 knots, this hull is also comfortable and efficient at 10 knots or less.

Having owned one of the original GB42s for several years, I was anxious to test the performance of this new design and happily caught up with hull number three in New York while it was on its way to Baltimore. My first impression was that Grand Banks had maintained — even enhanced — its leadership in exterior and interior workmanship. The fiberglass and gelcoat finish is flawless, and the attractive teak interior is signature Grand Banks, richly finished in satin varnish.

My test boat had the optional Caterpillar C9s, rated at 567 hp. With her fuel and water tanks three-quarters full, and with help from her trim tabs, the 47 got on plane at 16 knots while turning 1,900 rpm and burning 26 gallons per hour. At 2,500 rpm, the boat hit



As is obvious above, the newly introduced 47-foot aft-cabin design is fully capable of "stepping out," and the boat cruises nicely at 20 knots with twin 567-hp Cat diesels (right). Still, her styling, inside and out, is true to her trawler heritage.

26 knots while burning 53 gph. This boat's cruising sweet spot seemed to be 20 knots, and at this speed it has a range of nearly 300 nautical miles.

At 9.5 knots, range increases to over 700 nautical miles. While the trim tabs helped get the 47CL on plane at lower cruising speeds, the boat ran better without trim at higher cruising speeds, a function of the prop pockets giving the hull extra lift. In any event, I would like to see trim-tab indicators included as standard equipment.

While most owners will drive the 47CL from the flying bridge in good weather, the interior helm station features good visibility, a fully adjustable Stidd chair and plenty of room for electronics. Sound levels at the lower helm, located directly over the engine room, measured 80 dB at 20 knots and 90 dB at top speed.



SPECIFICATIONS

LOA: 46' 10"
Beam: 15' 9"
Draft (maximum): 3' 8"
Fuel capacity: 610 gals.
Displacement (half load): 52,333 lbs.
Power (as tested): Twin Cat AVERT C9s
Base price (as tested): \$1.1 million
Information: 800-809-0909
www.granbanks.com

The Cat C9s, an 11.5-kW Onan generator, four fuel tanks totaling 610 gallons, two engine-starting batteries, three house batteries, a generator-starting battery, an inverter, a water heater and the air-conditioning compressors are all located in the engine room, which is accessible through a floor hatch in the saloon. There is room for an optional watermaker, and the basic prep work for one has been done.

All four fuel tanks are gravity fed. To change fuel filters, you need to turn off the supply valves located on the tanks themselves. I would add a more

convenient crossover fuel-filter system, with two more Racors.

This particular 47CL featured the galley-down layout. Just a couple of steps below the main saloon and helm area, this location works well. Open and airy, the galley is easily accessible from the main saloon and yet remains out of the main flow of traffic. An optional galley-up layout yields an extra stateroom (or an office) below.

The spacious owner's cabin, located aft, boasts a private head and shower, an island berth, a walk-in hanging locker and tons of stowage space. The forward

guest stateroom also features an island berth and a separate head and shower.

The flying bridge is accessed through a door (at the aft end of the saloon) that leads outside, to four wide stairs flanked by stainless-steel safety rails. The bridge itself features built-in seating, a teak table and a centerline Stidd chair. All-around visibility at the fully equipped helm is very good.

This particular boat was equipped with a Steelhead davit that was cleverly incorporated into the superstructure's profile. A dinghy cradle or chocks can be installed on the roof of the aft cabin.

The new Heritage series is proof that the original and often-imitated Grand Banks, one of the most successful production-boat lines ever built, has evolved into a luxurious cruiser. The 47CL has all the amenities, styling and speed that today's market demands and is willing to pay for. With this new series, Grand Banks has shown that it recognizes the future of boating while paying homage to the company's traditional past. 