

GRAND BANKS 52 EUROPA

"WE DON'T SELL BOATS,
WE MAKE DREAMS COME TRUE!"





IT'S NOT OFTEN I WOULD PASS UP AN OPPORTUNITY TO GO RACING ON PITTWATER TO SPEND A DAY ON A POWERBOAT. BUT WHEN IT IS A NEW GRAND BANKS ON SYDNEY HARBOUR, YOU JUST CAN'T SAY NO.

Over the last couple of years we have been privileged to cover several of the new arrivals from Grand Banks into Australia. In this time we have come to know Adrian and Bill Alle and their administration manager, Jodie, quite well. The reason I mention these people is that, in every instance, this team have proven a key factor in selling boats. You don't just go and buy a boat, you actually buy a boat from someone. It is plain and simple that if you don't like the salesperson, then you won't buy the boat from them. I have had the opportunity to speak to several owners of new Grand Banks, even ones we didn't test, and they all have the same praise for the team at Grand Banks Australia.

If you visit the office at Marina Mirage on the Gold Coast you will be greeted with a friendly smile and then you will be treated as the most important person in the world. Every detail is taken care of and it doesn't matter how many changes or options you want, it is all no problems to Adrian and Bill. In fact this latest launch, the new 52 Europa, had over three pages of changes and options requested by the owner. I first saw this when Adrian was pouring over the pages making sure everything was right before the ship left the factory for Australia.

When the owner of this vessel requested that the boat be commissioned in Sydney instead of at Millkraft in Brisbane, the arrangements were made to ship the boat into Sydney and have it taken straight to Noakes Shipyard and for all the work to be carried out there. This meant several trips to Sydney for Bill but as he put it, "this is all part of the service."

Upon my arrival at Noakes, I walked down through all the race boats being prepared for the Sydney to Hobart Yacht race. Hulls were being polished, masts stepped, keels modified and everything checked on some of Australia's finest racing boats. Sitting amongst all these high tech racing machines was our test vessel. At first I thought I had misread the details as this was meant to be a 52. This was too big to be a 52 and with an overall length of 60ft, this was a big 52ft boat. It never fails, when you look at the lines of a Grand Banks, you picture yourself cruising anywhere you like, sitting on the flybridge out at the reef, watching the fireworks with your family in the Harbour, or just plain cruising. There is always something about a Grand Banks that a person who doesn't know boats would never understand.

Stepping off the dock and onto the deck, the first thing going through my mind was to make sure I don't put a finger print on it. This was someone's "dream boat". Someone had worked long and hard to afford such a masterpiece of craftsmanship. It was like jumping into a Bentley, you know everything is handcrafted perfectly and the last thing you want to do is scratch her, or put a mark on her. However, Bill put my mind at rest and made me feel at home.

As the day was quite warm we headed inside and closed all the doors and turned on the A/C. Within minutes the cabin was a cool 24 degrees as the powerful Marine-air units pumped out the cool air. The interior of this boat is an eye opener. The minute you walk in it hits you with the WOW factor. Open spaces, plenty of lighting, typical Grand Banks quality timber work, matched in with a blue Ultra Leather, this interior would impress anyone who loves traditional timber interiors. There is no fancy curves made of plastic, this is all solid timber.

We had entered the side door and hence were located at the helm. A helm that gives total control to the skipper with all the





necessary toys within easy reach. The wheel is a piece of work in itself. Handcrafted like the old days, this wheel was perfect in every way. There was not one fault on this wheel that I could find, not one scratch, chip, or fault in any way. Everything was perfect, each handle identical, as though it had come out of a mould. On the main panel in front of you there was a complete package from Raymarine including a E120 Chart Plotter/Radar Display, 240E VHF, ST7001+ Auto-pilot and ST60 Tridata for speed and depth. You had a set of Morse Controls with remote option, Sidepower bowthruster controls, Maxwell Auto-anchor system and a KVH Trac Phone. Neatly concealed away under the navigation area was an extensive Mastervolt circuit board with all the switches you need to turn anything on or off as well as a computank system to inform you of tank levels throughout the boat. All of this all within easy reach of the luxurious Stidd Captain's Chair covered in a cream Ultra Leather.

Away to port and slight aft of the helm chair, sat a raised two seat lounge with small table, a perfect spot to sit when underway so the skipper isn't left alone. As Grand Banks likes to use every possible space, there were two compartments under this seat as well as a garbage compactor. The front right hand corner of the table even folded down to allow easier access past the captain's chair and this table. Aft of this lounge was the dinette with seating for four comfortably and six at a squash. With so many other places to eat, this isn't a spot you need to sit large amounts of people anyway. Opposite to starboard was the galley. This would make anyone want to be chef. The cream corian benchtops set off the timber nicely and provided plenty of preparation area. There was a separate fridge and freezer, both Waeco 12v Coolmatic, a Miele Cooktop and Convection Oven, Fisher & Paykel Drawer

dishwasher and even the taps were a bit of luxury, provided by Grohe.

What was really special was the cabinet space above the cooktop. Most companies would try and put cupboards in this space and only the tallest people would ever find what was in them so usually they would end up with all those things you think you may need one day but never do. Instead of this they had little fold down doors underneath, within easy reach of anyone. And each of these little cupboards had slots in them for plates, or glasses. This was one of the most clever innovations I have seen on a boat for a long time and a very good use of space. And to make sure there are no problems with steam or smoke filling the cabin, there was a large sliding window right behind the cooktop. If you couldn't prepare a sumptuous gourmet meal in this galley then you aren't trying.

Heading further aft in the cabin that seems to go on forever, there is the lounge area. Just behind the dinette is a mini bar area with Raritan icemaker and storage for wine and glasses. Along the remaining port wall is a beautifully craft cabinet with pop up flat screen TV built in. Opposite to starboard is the lounge area with a hydraulic adjustable height table. I can't give this table justice as it has an exceptional quality and finish, so it is best to look for the pictures in this article or have a look in person, it is the only way you can come to appreciate the difference between this table and a good table seen in many other boats.

Picture sitting out at a reef or in the harbour sitting in the comfort of this aft lounge area and looking out through all the windows, you have a 5 speaker Bose sound system playing your favourite tunes, fine wine and champagne flowing from the mini bar and great company. This is living.

Heading out the aft doors and you have a large aft deck. Most





trawler style vessels only have a small area here but this area was massive. There is also a large teak swim platform with access by a neat teak tread ladder, making passage to and from the water very simple. Accessed from the aft deck is the stairwell leading to the flybridge. I did say stairwell and not ladder as this is a feature of the boat. Easy access up and down to the flybridge is essential and when you get up to the flybridge you know why. This is the entertaining area of the boat. There are masses of seating and lounging areas. A large BBQ sits near centre dividing two areas, the area under the large bimini and the large area in the sun, aft of the bimini. There is a fridge and icemaker up here too. The captain's chair on the flybridge is identical to the one in the cabin and there are plenty of repeater instruments to drive the boat all day long without having to go downstairs.

On the very rear of the flybridge is the tender which in this case is an Avon Jet Rib 400DL, quite a large tender but the polished Stainless Steel Davco crane make light work of lowering into or out of the water. In the centre of the boat is a hydraulically lowered tower which had the two KVH Tracvision domes on them. Whilst the hydraulic lowering system is an option put on by the owner, the tower gives the traditional trawler style look.

Downstairs and back to the accommodation. There are three cabins forward of the helm station. The stairwell winds down and under the helm area is a full width master cabin with separate head and shower. When I say separate I don't mean with a dividing wall, I mean on opposite sides of the cabin. In the head there is a vacuflush toilet with "Tank Watch" gauges, very handy to make sure you don't flood the holding tank. There is a 19" Sony LCD and large hanging lockers both sides of the cabin. This space is light and airy with cross ventilation provided by opening port holes but you also have the A/C to control your sleeping environment.

In the bow of the boat is the VIP cabin with infill piece to make a large double berth or leave out for two singles. There is once again plenty of storage all around and even under the berth. Aft and on starboard side is the guest room with another double berth. Again full size queen this cabin is quite roomy and has ample air from the port holes. Both guest and VIP of course have separate A/C controls. The VIP and Guest cabins share the one head/shower which is to port of the guest cabin. This is quite large and again fitted with quality fittings.

On the aft deck there is a large hatch which leads to a huge lazarette. At the time of this test the KVH Tracvision domes hadn't been installed and both of these fitted down in the lazarette

and there was still plenty of room to move around. There is also a Whirlpool 6kg dryer and separate washing machine in this area.

Access to the engine room is off the front of the lazarette and when I stuck my head around the corner I couldn't believe what I saw. This space was the best engine room I have seen on a boat of this size. In between the engines there was 6'6" headroom. Everything was crisp and clean, expected of a new boat, but the impressive thing was how well it was all laid out. Usually I don't get excited about engine rooms but this was something special. That comes from someone who thinks there are two items for engines. A key to start it, and if it doesn't start, a mobile phone to ring someone to make it start. But as much as I hate to say it, I think I would have a go at finding the problem down here. The two Cummins 540's looked a treat. On both sides there was a hydraulic stabiliser system fitted and aft was the Onan Genset. So impressive I would recommend anyone to take a peak if you get a chance.

After a couple of hours playing all over the boat we decided we should actually go out for a run. I was sitting talking to the skipper when I heard a slight rumble. I asked him if he had turned the genset on and instead he told me had had fired up both of the Cummins. I was floored at the thought. It was so quiet you had to strain to hear the engines running and without instruments, if your hearing wasn't up to scratch you would have no idea if they were running or not.

We were in quite a tricky little spot but our skipper manoeuvred her out easily and we set off towards the Sydney Harbour Bridge. As we came around the corner the wind was blowing hard on the nose and there was the usual wash from ferries and other recreational boats. The stability was exceptional, beyond what I expected and then I recalled the stabilisers. These operated from a panel at the helm and when we switched them off you could notice the difference immediately. Whilst this is an option, it seemed a very good option to take up.

As we passed the Sydney Opera House my mind was ticking over and thinking what an iconic place this is. You have both the Opera House and the Harbour Bridge. And there we were aboard a boat that is iconic in the marine game. A boat that is recognised in any country around the world and a boat that everyone dreams of owning. It seemed the perfect place for our test. We cruised on out towards the heads with a stop off to take some external shots. We wanted to try the boat in some rough stuff so we stuck the nose out of the heads at Sydney Harbour. Unfortunately the swell wasn't as big as what we hoped for so we played close to shore to test the

stabilisers. The boat handled everything we threw at it proving once again that this is a proven offshore hull. The chimes threw the water out from the side of the boat meaning the decks were dry.

Now it has always taken a lot to impress an out and out yachting that a power boat can be good, let alone great, but Grand Banks have done it again. This is such an impressive vessel all over. From the engines room to the little touches like the cupboards in the galley, everything is hand crafted and it shows.

I have been asked many times why someone would buy a Grand Banks over the cheaper imitations and it is quite simple to answer, step on board and you will see first hand. The quality, the name, the reputation and service are all aspects of what makes a Grand Banks exactly what they are. They are not for some people, but a true boating enthusiast will always tell you that if you want a traditional vessel with sea keeping ability, you can't go past a Grand Banks.

And here in Australia they have refined to an art. With Adrian and Bill taking care of you, flying to meet you if you are interstate, making sure your boat is exactly what you want, you couldn't ask for a better combination. It just wouldn't be the same if you didn't get the service that Adrian & Bill provide to each and every owner and prospective owner as the boat demands this kind of service.

Bill once told me, "We don't sell boats, we make dreams come true" ■

For full details on the range of Grand Banks Yachts visit www.greatbarrieryachts.com.au and speak to Bill and Adrian yourself.



SPECIFICATIONS – GRAND BANKS 52 EUROPA

LOA	59ft 8in (with swim platform) 54ft 1in (without swim platform)
LWL	51ft 9in
Beam	15ft 5in
Draft	4ft 10in
Displacement	26,309 kg
Maximum Speed	21+ knots
Fuel Capacity	4,542 litres
Water Capacity	1,893 litres
Engines	2 x 540 Cummins

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