



# LEGENDARY CRUISER

THE 59 ALEUTIAN RAISED PILOTHOUSE  
CONTINUES THE GRAND BANKS TRADITION OF  
CLASSIC STYLING, LUXURIOUS APPOINTMENTS,  
AND STERLING PERFORMANCE

STORY BY JOHN WOOLDRIDGE  
PHOTOGRAPHY BY JONATHAN COOPER

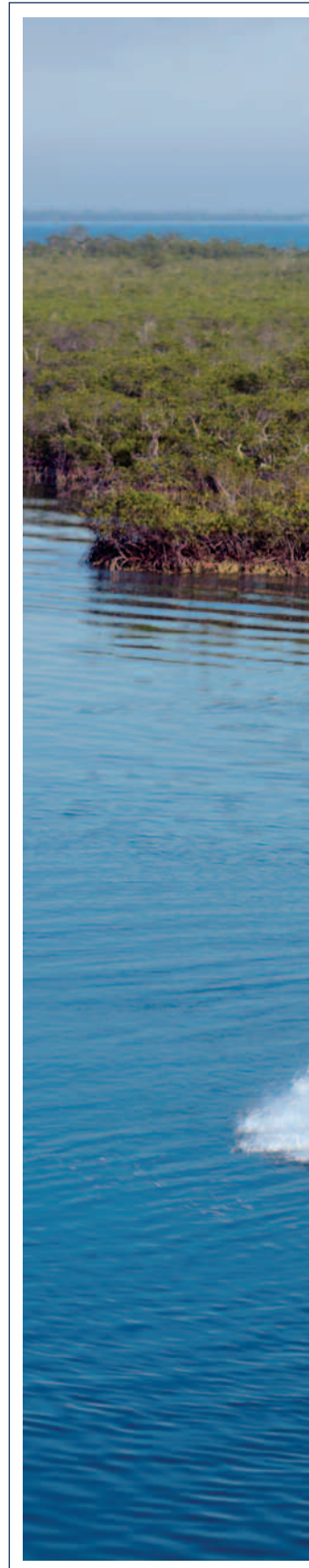
As I walked down the dock and came alongside the Grand Banks Aleutian 59 RP, a question popped into my mind. What becomes a legend? Or, more pointedly, what becomes a legend in the world of cruising boats?

It's a double-edged question, really, looking back to identify highly prized boats and their well-regarded characteristics, and casting forward for changes that advance their hard-earned status as legendary cruisers.

This was undoubtedly on the minds of Grand Banks senior management when they decided to take a page out of their considerable history and launch a new line of raised pilothouse cruisers that would build on their popular Alaskan series of wood trawlers. Continuing the Grand Banks philosophy, the new line would have to be engineered to be stable and safe in a seaway, designed to be timelessly graceful and pleasing to the eye, and constructed with the care and craftsmanship that only professional boat builders and carpenters can attain.

And, to take its rightful place as the flagship of the Grand Banks hierarchy, the new line would need to blend the beauty and luxury of teak furniture and cabinetry in interiors that offer logical form and function afloat.

Grand Banks launched the Aleutian series in 2001 with the 64 RP and followed that in 2004 with the 70 RP. Both were from the board of Tom Fexas Yacht Design, and both fused excellent seakeeping characteristics with luxurious, livable layouts finished in a contemporary version of the hallmark Grand Banks style. As you would imagine, Fexas and his associates worked closely with Grand Banks management to maintain the traditional lines of the Alaskan series but also to give the new Aleutian line a styling that is distinctly its own.







Twin Stidd helm seats graced the GB Aleutian 59 RP I tested, along with exquisitely crafted teak tables and an optional hard top.

### STARTING FRESH

In 2004, I had the good fortune to cruise a 70 RP from Ft. Lauderdale to Key West with Jay and Rex Bettis, a father-and-son team of Grand Banks dealers from Seabrook, Texas. It was the first Aleutian I ever helped deliver, an eye-opening ride that included 12 hours of strong headwinds and choppy offshore waters. I am pleased to report that the 70 RP and her crew arrived in Key West in very good condition, ready to roam Duval Street.

When I boarded the GB Aleutian 59 RP with David Hensel, Grand Banks' director of brand and marketing, I was primed for another exceptional example of the marque. I wasn't disappointed. Like the 70 RP (now called the 72 RP due to a change in nomenclature), the layout was created around a three-stateroom design with a midship master cabin, a spacious guest

stateroom forward with a private entry to the day head across the passageway, and a second guest cabin to port—in this case, configured as an office. Two things proved different on the newest, and until 2010 the smallest, Aleutian RP model.

“From the beginning, the GB Aleutian 59 RP was designed to be under 60 feet LOA, a size limit where lots of people still feel comfortable as owner-operators,” Hensel said. “Our thinking was to start fresh, rather than scale down from the 72 RP. We selected Sparkman & Stephens for a design that maintained the styling of the original Aleutian and offered compelling interiors and deckhouse layouts. And we tapped Design Unlimited in the U.K. for the interior, a relationship that began with the launch of the GB Heritage 47”

Grand Banks designer Earl Alfaro told me that the hull is a modified-V design that has a sharp entry, 48



The aft deck features a portside staircase with teak treads and stout stainless handrails leading up to the flybridge.

degrees at the stem, and then gradually adds more bearing surface and volume until it finishes at 17.5 degrees at the transom. He cited a pair of traditional single chines, which each end up measuring 8 inches wide aft, as the chief feature for spray deflection, supplemented by a single spray rail below the chine.

The hull is a handlaid structure, with solid fiberglass laminate from the keel to a point above the boot stripe. Sandwich laminate in the hull sides, decks, and superstructure uses Herex cross-linked, closed-cell foam that is vacuum-bagged in place to resist water intrusion, add stiffness, and improve thermal and sound insulation. Grand Banks uses a clear gelcoat below the waterline to aid visual inspection of the outer laminate layers, and finishes the bottom with three layers of epoxy barrier coat to minimize osmosis. The hull structural grid is all

fiberglass over foam, with watertight bulkheads protecting the engine room and the anchor locker.

Deck plans include: the flybridge with a boat deck that extends aft to a point above the transom and out over the teak caprails on the side decks; the main deck, which begins on the aft deck and extends forward well into the saloon; the raised pilothouse deck, which extends aft from the helm to include the galley and a built-in dinette; and the accommodations deck, forward and below the pilothouse deck and the foredeck. This multitiered approach makes the most of the usable volume in the 59 RP, creating numerous possibilities for storage and comfortable living areas for owners and guests.

### FUN ON THE FLYBRIDGE

I admired the twin entrance stairways from the swim platform, as well as the stout stainless handrails. The aft deck's built-in bench seat is well protected from the elements overhead and is accompanied by two handmade teak-inlaid tables that can stand alone, making it easy for the person seated in the middle to exit, or can be converted into a single table with folding panels. Optional teak wing doors and side curtains will make this a fine retreat, even when the weather is less than perfect. An interesting standard feature is the Power Commander Twin Disc remote engine control that plugs in on the aft deck, or on the side deck or foredeck, to make docking easier from the main deck level.

Side decks are wide enough for the average adult to walk without turning sideways, and they're protected by bulwarks and stainless handrails that come to hip level. Overhead protection extends from the stern to the three steps leading up to the foredeck level, but bulwark protection is continuous all the way up to and around the Portuguese bridge. A pair of solid doors mounted on massive stainless hinges swings open for access to the foredeck, where there are bench seats on both sides with storage underneath. The skid-resistant pattern underfoot is very effective when damp, and there are substantial bulwarks with hawseholes and dual-level stainless bow rails enclosing the entire foredeck. The hydraulic-powered Lofrans windlass includes two opposing horizontal chain-and-rode gypsies to handle the double anchor setup on the bow pulpit. Foot controls, twin anchor lockers, and a massive bow pulpit to aid in the observation of an anchor rising from the bottom are outstanding features.

Because the designers elected to maximize the interior living area, there is no inside stairway leading to the flybridge. In its place, on the aft deck there is a curving stairway with excellent handholds and teak treads that is





comfortable to use. Our test boat's flybridge had the optional factory hard top, a beautifully molded piece with integral lighting and accessible wire runs, and a fine selection for those wishing to limit their sun exposure. Twin Stidd helm seats, one on the centerline facing the teak-and-stainless wheel, offer the helmsperson and mate wonderful support for long runs on beautiful days. A pair of comfy upholstered settees with teak tables provides additional seating for guests, and there is a large starboard locker aft of the settee for storage of the wet bar, ice maker, and grill that will make entertaining at mealtime more fun on the flybridge.

Between the Stidds, the designers have included a waterproof hatch to facilitate communication with the galley and ease the chore of carrying food, drinks, and dishware to and from the bridge. The tall console is

## THE COMFORTS OF HOME

The main saloon is an outstanding example of Grand Banks' traditional craftsmanship and contemporary styling. Large side windows flood the saloon with excellent natural light and provide stellar views of the world around you and your guests. A flawlessly handcrafted teak-and-holly sole that extends all the way forward to the pilothouse deck anchors the look, augmented by custom seating on both sides of the lounging area. The large entertainment cabinet to starboard has plenty of room for your favorite movies and music while housing a CD/DVD player and a flat-panel TV on a lift. A teak table with maple and burl inlays fronts the settee. Designer fabrics and draperies of the best quality, all picked by the owner, add a touch of home. Overhead on the centerline, a



Opposite page top: Large side windows flood the saloon with light when desired and provide stellar views of the cruising world outside. As in all Grand Banks designs, handcrafted teak joinery and designer appointments are generously applied. Opposite page bottom: The well-appointed galley, furnished with a complete selection of topflight appliances, and the comfortable raised dinette are ideally located for easy meal prep and serving. They're also near the helm. Above left: Electronic engine and bow thruster controls are close to the teak-and-stainless destroyer wheel at the lower helm. Above right: Flanked by an abundance of storage, the master stateroom's island berth offers quiet repose to serious cruisers.

wide enough to accept a pair of large multifunction displays, as well as the VHF radio and attendant control panels for the engines, autopilot, anchor controls, and more. A single set of binnacles to the right of the wheel is augmented by nearby controls for the bow thruster and optional hydraulic stern thruster. On the boat deck aft, a 1,000-lb. hydraulic davit with remote makes launching and retrieving your choice of dinghy that much easier to manage.

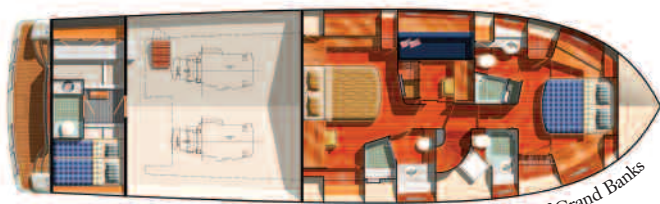
teak-and-leather handrail makes moving fore and aft in seaway much safer.

Three steps up and forward between two teak cabinets is the bridgedeck, which is open to the saloon for easy communication with guests and for excellent visibility aft from the lower helm. To port is a large, U-shaped galley furnished with equipment that's sure to please a demanding chef who loves to entertain aboard: copious granite counters with backsplash guards and teak fiddles,

**GRAND BANKS 59 ALEUTIAN RP**

LOA	58' 7"
LWL	55' 4"
BEAM	18' 0"
DRAFT	5' 4"
DISPLACEMENT	90,000 lb. (half load)
BRIDGE CLEARANCE	22' 6"
FUEL	1,400 U.S. gal.
WATER	385 U.S. gal.
HOLDING TANK	110 U.S. gal.
GENERATOR	21.5kW Onan e-QD
ENGINES	1,000hp Caterpillar C18s (as tested)
MAXIMUM SPEED	25 knots (as tested)
CRUISE SPEED	10.3 knots
RANGE AT CRUISE SPEED	1,000nm (approximate; with 10% reserve)
DESIGNER	Sparkman & Stephens
EXTERIOR/INTERIOR STYLING	Grand Banks Yachts
BUILDER	Grand Banks Yachts
BASE PRICE	On request

For more information:  
Grand Banks Yachts  
2288 W. Commodore Way, Suite 200  
Seattle, WA 98199  
206.352.0116  
[www.grandbanks.com](http://www.grandbanks.com)



Courtesy of Grand Banks

Sub-Zero freezer and refrigerator drawers, a Miele electric cooktop, a Sharp microwave, and a Fisher & Paykel dishwasher. Opposite to starboard, there's a built-in dinette on a raised platform for good views outside, plus two tall chairs on the inboard side of a beautiful inlaid-teak dining table.

The helm has a single Stidd Admiral Low Back seat,



Looking forward from the lazarette entrance, the engine room is conveniently laid out for service and routine maintenance.

adjustable in many ways. The teak-rimmed stainless destroyer wheel is mounted vertically and is large enough in diameter to make steering while sitting or standing a pleasure. The helm console features a glare-defeating black matte surface, large enough for two or three displays, with a functioning chart table to port that has its own storage under a lifting lid.

Just ahead of the wheel, another large, black matte surface provides a place for the digital engine displays, ship's system switches, thruster controls, twin-lever engine control binnacle, and more. An overhead teak panel provides extra room for VHF radios and other small digital readouts. Sliding teak-and-fiberglass doors on both sides of the pilothouse make it easy to move fore and aft on the side decks.

The accommodations deck is reached from curved stairs to starboard that lead down to a landing, putting you directly in front of the second guest stateroom. I like this layout because, with the sliding doors opened, it lends a capacious feel to the landing. The master



The boat deck extends well aft to protect the bench seat and tables below, with overhangs to shelter the side decks, as well.

stateroom amidships has a sprawling island berth with innerspring mattress. In addition to the handcrafted bureau, our test boat had two rows of three drawers for storage in lieu of the standard vanity, a feature that will make sense on long hauls. The private head compartment had an optional granite countertop with under-mount sink, a separate fiberglass shower stall with topflight fixtures, and a Sealand VacuFlush toilet. The VIP guest stateroom forward was no less appealing in appointments and berth comfort, with a private entrance to the day head to starboard.

There are two entrances to the engine room, both through watertight doors. One leads down from the port side deck, the other from the spacious lazarette beneath the aft deck sole. I tried them both and appreciated the opportunity to enter from the side deck for engine checks, without having to raise the hatch aft. Twin 1,000hp Caterpillar C18 diesels filled the engine room, but there was a fine service passage along the centerline, as well as handed dipsticks and excellent access to the large Groco strainers. Twin duplex Racor fuel-water

separators were equally easy to service, as was the big 25kW Onan genset, housed in a sound shield with an access hatch starboard and aft.

The GB 59 RP was exceptionally quiet under way, even though the large genset was running. In the pilothouse, I recorded sound readings of 61dBA at idle, 67dBA at 13.2 knots, and 76dBA at wide-open throttle: 26.2 knots. At 10.3 knots and 1100 rpm, the big Cats burn just 12.5gph, giving the boat a cruising range of approximately 1,000 miles, with a 10 percent fuel reserve. Like the 70 RP mentioned earlier, the ride is stately and stable, with a responsive steering system that answers the hydraulic steering quickly and efficiently when you need a course correction to avoid a trap marker or deadhead.

The 59 RP is a fine example of the luxury, comfort, and performance that are standards of every Grand Banks yacht that plies the waterways of the world. By this time next year, Grand Banks will have launched another yacht from the board of Earl Alfaro and the dedicated professionals at Grand Banks—the 53 RP. I can hardly wait for a ride on the next legend. 