



A NEW CLASS

With the **44 Heritage EU, Grand Banks** puts the emphasis on performance in a luxury trawler.

GRAND BANKS 44

SPECIFICATIONS

PRICE (AS TESTED): \$818,900

LOA: 49'11"

BEAM: 15'3"

FUEL: 600 GALS.

TEST POWER: (2) 506-hp

Caterpillar C9 diesels

PERFORMANCE

RPM	KNOTS	GPH	DB-A
900	7.4	4	64
1200	8.9	10	72
1500	10.1	16	73
1800	13.4	24	76
2100	18.1	30	77
2400	22.3	40	79
2550	24.0	44	82

Speeds measured with GPS off Sanibel, Fla., in a one-foot chop and eight-knot winds w/five people on board, half fuel and half water. Sound levels measured at the helm in dB-A.

Grand Banks Yachts
www.grandbanks.com

By John Wooldridge
Photography by Gary John Norman

CRAFTSMANSHIP: Beautiful joinery is a Grand Banks trademark (above); handrails (left) make the deck safer.

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SPARKMAN & STEPHENS, THE DESIGNERS of this new hull, along with the designers at Grand Banks must have been pleased when the 44 Heritage EU first made the smooth transition from displacement to planing speeds. The boat's predecessor, the 42 Europa, was capable of cruising speeds in the high teens, yet this new model quickly passes that mark and climbs right up to a fast cruising speed of 22 knots. With the throttles to the stops, the elegant 44 can produce a steady 24 knots. Yet more important, the quality of the ride is comfortable, at any speed.

It was with a certain amount of caution that Grand Banks approached the redesign of its old 42, since it was one of the builder's most popular powerboat designs of all time. Since 1965, the company built 1,560 of those hulls, and in three different configurations—the sedan-like Europa, the two-cabin Classic with its signature aft cabin trunk (a new 44 Classic will launch later this year), and the three-cabin Motor Yacht with its raised deck and full-beam master stateroom. That's approximately half of the boats sold by the company over a 40-year period. That kind of success is hardly accidental. But when Grand Banks owners began requesting more

- 1 Deck is made safe with wide walkways, teak planking and stout handrails.
 - 2 Flybridge deck enclosed on three sides for the crew's safety.
 - 3 Centerline helm on bridge improves visibility for docking.
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- 1 There's a blind spot to port when driving from the lower helm.
 - 2 With no plothouse door to port, walk around the deck house to work lines.

powerful and more technologically advanced engines, the builder recognized a growing need for a revised running surface that would maximize performance and comfort under way, a hull that would also support and improve the classic styling and luxurious interiors the company and the 42 were known for.

From the waterline up, the 44 is unequivocally Grand Banks. Below it,

the wizards at Sparkman & Stephens have delivered a modified deep-V hull with a 17.7-degree transom deadrise, a near full-length skeg keel to improve handling and protect the running gear, and substantial chines to optimize stability. These features showed well in a series of hard-over turns at various speeds during our test drive. The stem is nicely raked and there's a pronounced flare to



SLEEP TIGHT: The master has an island berth (left); hard-wood sole is hand-laid (above).



the upper bow sections that adds buoyancy and helps create a drier ride for this faster design.

Twin tunnels aft raise the props to minimize draft; tunnels also create a more shallow shaft angle for efficiency.

A pair of 455-hp Caterpillar C7 diesels are standard, but the boat I tested was equipped with two 506-hp Caterpillar C9s. Twin 490-hp Cummins QSC8.3s or 480-hp Yanmar 6LY3 diesels also are available. The C9s were pretty quiet when measured at the helm on the flybridge, and not that much louder inside—I recorded 78 dB-A topside and 82 at the lower helm while at a cruising speed of 18.1 knots. The small increase in decibels below is impressive when you consider the sound can bounce off a number of hard surfaces.



To call this cabin a galley-up layout is accurate, but not nearly descriptive enough. A hand-laid hardwood sole runs from the salon door aft to the master cabin forward; it's a touch of home in a modern marine setting. Traditionalists can order a teak-and-holly sole. Two teak armchairs store out of traffic (until they're needed) in recesses flanking the built-in, flawlessly joined teak locker to starboard. This locker houses a flat-screen TV on a lift. To port, there's an Ultraleather settee with seating for four and a high/low teak table for cocktails or dinner. Grand Banks selected the firm of Design Unlimited (UK) to create an interior that is at once practical but also contemporary. Highlights include designer soft goods, massive cylindrical handrails, granite-like Silestone countertops in the galley and hardware throughout that is both elegant and substantial.

The standard layout for the 44 includes a large master cabin forward with private head, and a central walkway with a day head to port that serves the guest stateroom with twin berths opposite. Two optional layouts show the guest stateroom equipped with a double berth or configured as an office that converts to a guest stateroom.

Grand Banks has always made safety on deck a priority. On the 44, that emphasis shows in the teak planking from stem to stern. I like the inboard and out-

board safety rails under the covered walkways—they're made possible by the flybridge deck overhangs. I also like the engine room access below the lifting stairway in the cockpit; a technician can go below without passing through the salon.

The flybridge is enclosed with fiberglass to increase passenger safety, add seating and enhance protection from the elements. The centerline helm, which replaces the traditional starboard helm, offers better visibility all around, particularly when maneuvering in tight quarters. Flybridge electronics are mounted on a panel that folds down and is hidden from view when the boat is not in use.

With the 44 EU, Grand Banks puts a new emphasis on performance, yet the boat retains the quality craftsmanship that is a hallmark of this brand. As such, this boat is a fine example of what can be accomplished when a builder cherishes the past and embraces the future. ☺

THE LAYOUT: GRAND BANKS 44



1 The aft cockpit has fine weather protection; engine room access is under the set of lifting stairs. **2** At the lower helm, there's an adjustable seat that's comfortable whether you sit or stand. **3** In the master stateroom, home-style features include walkways around the island berth and a dressing table to port. **4** Silestone countertops are in the modern galley.