



Grand Banks Aleutian 59RP

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Grand Banks' new 59RP, the first Aleutian model designed by Sparkman & Stephens, is a worthy addition to the builder's 50-year portfolio.

Phil Draper recently put her through her paces off Miami Beach.

'trawler' yachts, although these days there is quite a bit more to the Grand Banks portfolio than the quintessential GB models for which it is best known.

Indeed a lot has happened since 1956 when the company first started building sailboats in Hong Kong, and since 1962 when it launched its first motor boat, the Spray, a Kenneth Smith-designed forerunner of the Grand

Celebrating its 50th anniversary this year, Grand Banks Yachts, often referred to simply as 'GB', is one of the most evocative of the motor-cruiser brands. With a name that comes from the shoals to the south and east of Newfoundland, one of the world's most notorious fishing grounds, it has all the right seafaring connotations – traditional motor boating, real adventuring!

For decades Grand Banks has been revered in yachting circles the world over and unlike just about any other motorcruiser brand it enjoys broad appeal from both power and sailing fraternities. Even the most die-hard rag-and-stick sailors, those that normally would instinctively lump all motor boats into the "stinkpot" category, will usually admit to being drawn to the company's handsome range of classically-styled semi-displacement



Banks 36, the first true GB with the now characteristic trawler-yacht look. The 36 was a hugely successful model, especially when considering that well over 1,100 of those were delivered prior to the model being retired in 2003. And a lot has happened since 1972 when the whole Grand Banks operation 'upped sticks' and moved the 1,700 miles or so from Hong Kong to Singapore.

Today, built in plants in Malaysia and Singapore, the GB portfolio consists of three distinct lines – Heritage, Eastbay and Aleutian. The Heritage Series includes five models on three hulls – the 44EU, a new incarnation unveiled at the 2005 Fort Lauderdale International Boat Show; the 44CL, the first of which launches in time for summer 2006; the 46EU, 46CL, and the 52EU. All of the older semi-displacement

Designed by Sparkman & Stephens, the 59RP (opposite top) has all the ingredients of a successful model.

The hardtop flybridge (opposite bottom) is spacious and protected.

The main saloon (below) features large picture windows and is entered through a half-glazed door.

One level up, the well-equipped galley (right) is open, allowing the chef a birds-eye view.



Heritages are in-house designs, except for the new deep-V-hulled and planing 44s, which are the work of the revered Fifth Avenue, New York-based firm Sparkman & Stephens. Then there is the Ray Hunt-designed Eastbay Series, which now includes the new 39SX,

435SX, 43HX, 47FB, 49HX, 54SX and 58FB. And finally there is the Aleutian Series of motor yacht models – the new 59RP, first shown at the 2006 Miami International Boat Show; the 64RP, first shown five years ago; and the 70CP, which is based on the same





Grand Banks' signature satin interior is a result of Timberstone teak oil. The helmstation (left) is to port, while to starboard a set of stairs accesses the large and luminous owner's en suite (below).

is pure motor yacht. Take notice of the walkaround decks cocooned behind deep teak-capped bulwarks and battresses, the aft deck, plus the hardtop-protected flybridge that includes room for a crane and 12ft tender. Like her bigger Aleutian sister, she is pitched against the likes of the Marlows, Flemings and Ocean Alexanders.

When it comes to performance, like the rest of the GB portfolio the Aleutian 59RP can be a lot faster than she looks. The standard power package includes twin Caterpillar C9 diesels, which really only give her displacement performance – 14 to 15 knots at full load – but the model's deep-V hull makes it capable of much more, given more thrust.

Twin 835hp Caterpillar Acert C18s are one option, increasing her speed to around 23 to 24 knots. However, our test boat, the first

hull as the 64 and was introduced at the 2004 Fort Lauderdale show. Tom Fexas designed the first two Aleutians, which take their name from the island chain that strings across much of the Bering Sea between the Alaska and Kamchatka Peninsulas, but for the 59RP, the newest and smallest of its Aleutian motor

yacht series, Grand Banks also opted for the considerable talents of Sparkman & Stephens.

Outwardly the Aleutian 59RP certainly "keeps the faith" in terms of styling. She has the trademark Grand Banks character – plank-effect molded into her topsides and the flared bow and pulpit platform – but the rest





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59RP, was specified with the biggest engines, twin 1,000hp C18 Caterpillars, which really allow her to accelerate well and plane comfortably given the opportunity. At half load and with 2,300rpm on the rev counters she's good for a maximum speed of just over 27 knots. Her cruising speed is around 22 knots at a similar load condition and the engines spinning at a little over 2,000rpm.

Despite the 38in five-blade props running in shallow half-tunnels, much effort has also been made to keep sound and vibration levels down throughout – and she was certainly remarkably quiet during our test, conducted on a rather breezy and choppy day in February off of Miami Beach. Bennett trim tabs and Nakad Multi-Sea II stabilizers serve for trim and countering roll respectively. There are two main fuel tanks amidships, although the boat we tested also had converted the grey water tanks forward for added capacity. As for range, when in a hurry a standard-specification 59RP will do 350 miles at 21 knots. But at a more sedate 10.5 knots or so she is capable of around 1,000 nautical miles, good enough for some more adventurous cruising.

The build quality is certainly up there with all of the Grand Banks models. The 59RP is solid glass above and below the waterline. Indeed it is that way with all Grand Banks, except for the Eastbays and the new Heritage 44, which are cored above the waterline. However, PVC foams are used for decks and superstructures and plenty of Tricel honeycombs are used in bulkheads and furniture to help reduce weight and hence assist performance. For anyone in doubt of the GB build quality, however, a glimpse of the engine room is normally enough to suffice. Its installations are exceptional.

Grand Banks also prides itself in its teak work, inside and out, and sources all its own wood from Burma – keeping nearly 882 tons of teak logs in stock. Grand Banks' classic satin interior look is produced using Timberstone teak oil, and the equally characteristic teak-and-holly soles are sealed with Sadolin, a polyurethane varnish system.

The interior of the 59RP is actually the work of UK-based Design Unlimited, but of course still retains the real GB feel and practicality. In through the half-glazed aft deck door is the aft saloon, consisting of a tweed-upholstered sofa to port and a pair of chenille-clad swivel chairs to starboard. The picture windows to either side make this a very attractive space. The bridge area is located up a couple of steps from the lounge, which is why the model has the raised-pilothouse or 'RP' designation. Certainly the 270-degree views through the side glazing and side deck doors from there are excellent, whether standing at the big wheel or perched before it in the single Striéd 'Admiral' pedestal pilot seat.

It is apparent that this Grand Banks model, just like the rest of the range, is a real sea boat by all the grab-rails positioned throughout the interior. Most motorcruisers don't take their offshore capabilities quite so seriously.

The galley area is well-equipped, complete with Silestone work surfaces and plenty of storage, benefitting from being part of an open-plan scheme. The dinette is adjacent and consists of an L-sofa and a long, leaved table.

Guest cabins, accessed via stairs to starboard of the bridge console, will accomo-

This small twin cabin (top left), set to port amidships, can also be specified as an office.

The en suite VIP (above) along with a double cabin forward and the twin, accommodate up to six.



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date up to six. They are all half-paneled, with teak below waist-height and fabric above.

Amidships finds a small but comfortable twin cabin to port – which could be specified as an office should a third cabin not appeal – and a separate head/shower compartment to starboard that will also serve as the dayhead. A large double cabin is forward, which benefits from the flare in the bow and a reasonable amount of light from the rectangular portlights on both sides and two hatches to the foredeck.

The owner's cabin is located aft and particularly well-specified, with a good-size forward-facing double bed, desk, full-height beveled mirrors, loads of storage, and an en suite shower room. Portlights on both sides provide plenty of natural illumination.

Publicly quoted on the Singapore stock exchange, Grand Banks boasts a turnover of around \$65 million and builds around 85 boats a year, of which 55 to 60 percent are Eastbay Series, and 40 percent are Heritage



The Aleutian 59RP takes its place within the distinctive lines of Grand Banks.

Series. In all there are over 20 GB dealers around the world.

The Aleutians are not produced in any volume. Just 12 of the 64RPs have been delivered in five years and five of the 70CPs, although the expectation is for eight to ten 59RPs to be delivered a year.

In previous years more boats were produced, but the average sizes are a lot bigger these days thanks to the bigger Fastbays and Aleutians. In fact, as a company Grand Banks has never been as large as it is today. Its workforce numbers around 1,300 people – 900 on a growing site in Pasir Gudang in Malaysia, which they have owned for the past dozen years and that lies just across the Johor Strait from Singapore. Another 300 people are based on another large site located at Loyang Crescent, which is to the northeast of Singapore and conveniently close to that island state's Changi International Airport.

Since it started Grand Banks has delivered no fewer than 5,000 boats, and has been headed by Robert 'Bob' W. Livingston since the mid-70s from its commercial headquarters in Seattle, Washington. The Aleutian 59RP will never sell that many – it is far too exclusive – but it certainly has all the ingredients of a very successful model. □

GRAND BANKS ALEUTIAN 59RP

LOA: 61ft 7in (18m)
LWL: 53ft 4in (17m)
Beam: 17ft (5m)
Draft: 4ft 10in (2m)
Displacement (full load): 81,990lbs
Engines: standard: 2 x 500hp CAT C9s (C15 and 2 x 1,000hp C18 CAT diesels optional)
Speed (max/cruise): 27.5/22 knots with optional C18s, otherwise 17/13 knots
Fuel capacity: 1,700gals
Range: 350nm @ 21 knots/1,000nm @ 10.5 knots
Bow thruster: Seipner SidePower
Stabilizers: Nalae Multi-Sea II
Generators: Onan 20kW main (standard)/Onan 13.5kW light duty (optional)
Freshwater capacity: 385 gallons
Air conditioning: Marine Air
Entertainment systems: Bose premium package
Tenders: Owner installed (up to 12ft 6in)

Tender launching system: Airtex 1,000lb SS davit, hydraulic
Hull: Modified deep-V
Construction: FRP
Category/classification: A-Ocean/CE Homologation
Naval architect: Sparkman & Stephens
Exterior styling: Sparkman & Stephens/Grand Banks Yachts
Interior design: Design Unlimited, UK
Price guide: From \$1.8 million excluding shipping
Builder/Year: Grand Banks Yachts/2006
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