

# TIDELINES

## A Grand way to go places

The intrepid can range far in first-class comfort thanks to this cruiser, writes **David Lockwood**.

**T**he Aleutians are a far-away chain of 300 islands off southwestern Alaska, visited by Captain James Cook in 1788, kissed by the far North Pacific Ocean and the Bering Sea on the flipside of the archipelago, with the Russian Komandorski Islands just a sling of an empty vodka bottle away.

Beauty abounds at such high latitudes. There are snow-capped mountains, no trees except for the occasional stand of (introduced) spruce, 57 active volcanos, abundant whales and seals, great kelp forests and salmon that spawn en masse in the sapphire-like streams.

I haven't been to the Aleutians, mind you, but I have travelled on the eponymous motor yacht while entertaining thoughts of embarking on a serious cruising odyssey. As the name implies, the new Grand Banks 65 Aleutian is a long-range passage-maker designed to wing it to far-flung corners of the globe. And aboard this

baby, you get to travel first class all the way.

The new boat will be the centrepiece of a Grand Banks display at the Sydney International Boat Show beginning on July 31. And believe me, this is a boat worth experiencing, even going nowhere much at all.

In short, the Aleutian 65 is a luxury floating abode wrapped in a fibreglass cloak that conceals the latest in on-water comforts and accoutrements.

The new 65 enjoyed its world release at this year's Sanctuary Cove International Boat Show in May. Like the 64, she is certified by Lloyds to CE Category A for ocean travel in weather and waves to four metres and above. And she's also a blend of old and new. Only the new bits are more impressive than ever.

Needless to say, the 65 Aleutian flaunts a forest of signature honey-coloured and homely Burmese teak joinery, but she takes the relatively brave step of introducing free-standing furni-



Making a splash in Moreton Bay ... the new 65 Aleutian from Grand Banks stirs the adventurer within.

Photos courtesy of R Marine

ture to the conservative Grand Banks family. The Tom Fexas-designed hull remains, but it's been stretched 30 centimetres to provide a bigger cockpit.

If you want to make seafood chowder en route to your next port of call, Naiad stabilisers with fins, each 0.84 square metres, help keep the boat on an even keel and the soup in the pot. Meantime, the press of a button sees a concealed rangehood rise from the galley counter and to enhance the gourmand's views, the overhead cupboards retracts at the press of another button. Snappy indeed.

But before the stainless-steel anchor bites, you can range safely outdoors and around the deep bulwarks to the Portuguese bridge on this boat. The twin wing doors are an addition designed to provide extra weather protection to the cockpit. There's also improved engine-room access via a dedicated side door leading down to the accommodating crew quarters. Oh, and the separate Miele washer and dryer

and central vacuuming system come standard.

Unbridled, the 1015hp Caterpillar C18 engines thrust the 48 tonne-plus 65-footer to an eye-watering 23-knot top speed and an 18-20 knot continuous cruise in case you need to get places in a hurry. The standard engines are detuned C18Ds producing 875hp. Either way you get Twin Disc gearboxes with electronic shifts, a matching remote Power Commander so you can range about the decks and berth the big gif short-handed, and hydraulic bow and (optional) stern thrusters to shunt your ship off the fuel wharf.

With a Delta T fan-forced ventilation system with internal intakes, the engines breathe salt-free air. Onboard power comes courtesy of a 22.5kW Onan generator, with scope to fit a second gennie if you want more redundant systems, plus a heavy-duty 4000W Mastervolt inverter that powers the boat's Bose and AV systems and more. I also noted a trick fuel manifold system for the

four tanks that collectively carry more than 8000 litres of diesel, a whopping great 1666L water supply (desalinator extra), and 568L black-water tank so you can stay in port for a week without having to pump or dump.

The hull is a modified-vee design with a sharp entry tapering to a flat run aft for lift and stability.

**Above the waterline, the Aleutian 65 looks every bit the serious little ship: powerful and purposeful.**

Fast or slow, the boat doesn't push a lot of water off her bow. Prop pockets or tunnels lower the shaft angles and there's a full-length protective keel that enhances tracking and stability. Underwater exhausts help to reduce noise levels, but trim tabs are not needed since the boat lifts horizontally and bodily with just four degrees of trim angle when you plant the throttles. That's impressive.

Above the waterline, the Aleutian 65 looks every bit the

serious little ship: powerful and purposeful thanks to a combination of moulded clinker topsides, a pilot house with Portuguese bridge forward, and a so-called command bridge that is reached by internal and external moulded stairwells to placate veterans with creaky knees. In fair weather, family and friends will

doubtless gravitate to the bridge for the superior views.

There is air conditioning for year-round cruising in comfort up top, repeater electronics with closed-circuit cameras and a big timber ship's wheel to remind you that you're driving a Grand Banks. The high-gloss lattice teak tables are a nice touch, although on the small side if you want to lunch with the pack, and there's room for 10 or more on the twin L-shaped lounges. A companionway runs

between the lounges to an amenities centre with icemaker and double griddle, but a boat like this could do with a serious barbie.

An upgraded Opacmare 600 kilogram telescopic davit hoisted the 3.9-metre Zodiac RIB with side console and four-stroke 40hp Yamaha outboard. Tender dispatched, you gain a big entertaining space surrounded by usefully high rails. However, the primary al fresco setting is an accommodating cockpit where you can enjoy the shade from the hardtop, as the water laps nearby and the bream await your chicken bones. Double doors lead to the swim platform with safety rails for staying put when fishing, while a ladder helps retrieval of swimmers and divers.

The beauty of a floating abode like this is that you can drive from the protected internal pilot house while cocooned aboard. While you plod to your next port, the galley behind stirs the imagination and doubtless some pots. The four-burner induction cooktop, combination convection

microwave oven, and dishwasher are from Miele. There are twin Vitrifrigo fridge drawers and separate freezer drawer, trash compactor and In-Sink-Erator. And let's not forget the retractable overhead storage cabinets.

As with all pilot house boats, the main accommodation is forward, down six steps that aren't too steep, ranging through three cabins each with an en suite. Layout options include moving beds about and/or creating an office. But the owners' stateroom amidships, with a king-sized bed lying expectedly athwartships, is hard to beat. There are sliding Shoji screens, cedar-lined hanging lockers, drawers galore, and a telly at the foot of the bed. The VIP guest's cabin is forward with an island double bed and the third cabin has twin single beds.

With 8328 litres in her belly, you can most certainly go places in the 65 Aleutian.

Top speed was 23 knots for almost 400L/hr, while maximum continuous revs of 2150rpm returned 22.2 knots. But with consumption of 340L/hr, it's doubtful you will run your ship for long at such speeds. For the sake of the exercise, 2000rpm returned 20.4 knots for 280L/hr, while 1857rpm gave a smooth cruise of 17.4 knots - give or take a knot due to the tide - for 242L/hr.

Yet the speed that matters most on a boat like this is hull speed, calculated by multiplying the square root of the waterline length by 1.35. According to my calculations, that returned a maximum displacement speed of 10.5 knots. At 1270rpm and 9.5 knots into the tide, I noted a 90L/hr fuel burn. Leaving 10 per cent of the fuel supply in reserve, your safe passage-making range is more than 800 miles uphill.

The motion with the stabilisers deployed is to die for. And with the docking remote, owners will be able to berth this baby without needing hired hands. All aboard for the Aleutians.

### THE LOWDOWN

■ The Grand Banks 65 Aleutian was selling for \$4,082,187 with upgraded Caterpillar C18 diesel engines and extensive options. More from R Marine Sydney, d'Albora Marinas, Rushcutters Bay. Phone 9327 0000; see [www.rmarinesydney.com.au](http://www.rmarinesydney.com.au).

