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*-By Jeff Holland*

## Back Cove 29

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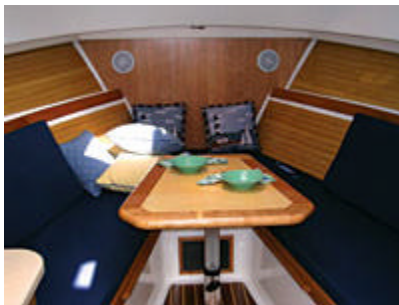


Sabre Yachts has come up with an elegant little dayrunner they call the Back Cove 29, boasting clean lines that speak of a simplicity that belie the sheer functionality of the design. But don't look for it on the Sabre website. It's being marketed as the first of a whole new line of relatively affordable lobster-style boats, each powered by a single Diesel and a bow thruster.

Sabre has built more than 2,300 hulls since it was founded in 1970. Their current fleet includes four Sabre sailboat models from 36 to 45 feet in length, and six Sabreline powerboat models from 34 to 47 feet long.



*The single Yanmar 315 hp Diesel sits in a well-insulated compartment underneath the helm deck. The dinette (below) in the bow converts to a generous-sized double berth.*



The Back Cove 29 is built in Rockland, at North End Composites, a major builder of marine molds and production fiberglass parts which Sabre acquired in 1994. "A lot of people ask, 'why didn't you call it a Sabreline?'" muses Sabre's marketing director, Bentley Collins. "The reality is that if we called it that, people would expect a higher price." One of the most attractive aspects of this pretty boat is the base price of just \$154,500. Also, he explains, "Sabreline is semi-custom, and people can 'tweak and twist'" the design details, which makes for added expense. "So it was simpler to start from square one" with a different name. "But we still want people to know it's the same ownership, the same 30 years of boat-building experience and the same rock-solid reputation of service behind it."

I trucked over to Oxford, perhaps the quintessence of charm in villages on Maryland's Eastern Shore, to get a closer look at the new boat. There I met up with Jim Carr and Jim Reynolds of the Oxford Boat Yard Yacht Sales. It was one of those autumn days that meant to be better than it was, with geese flying low beneath the hovering clouds and loons buoyed low on the two-

foot waves out on the Tred Avon. The on-again-off-again drizzle drizzled off again and shards of sun-streaked blue began to tear through the cloud banks across the Bay as we left the docks.

Jim Reynolds took the helm at first, threading the boat out between a maze of pilings with the deft use of the standard bow thruster and the gentle manipulation of the controls to the single Yanmar 315 hp Diesel. As we opened up onto the river, the appeal of this boat became more and more apparent. Once behind the wheel, the word, "spry" immediately came to mind as the boat gracefully took to tight turns with just a little banking, and loped across the waves with no shuddering or banging. In fact, the whole ride was relatively quiet; the insulation is so well done, we were able to carry on a normal conversation throughout. Factory-supplied performance data showed a reading of only 88 decibels at the helm at top speed.

The single Yanmar 315 hp, 24-valve Diesel provided a comfortable cruising speed of 23 knots at 3300 rpm, and a top speed of 27.6 knots wide open at 3750 rpm going out against the current, and 28.5 coming back in the creek. Again, factory data shows a fuel consumption rate of 10.8 gallons per hour at 23 knots for a potential cruising range of 270 nautical miles, and 17 gph wide open.

Examine the hull at the docks, and you'll notice there's not much flare on that pretty spoon bow. This led me to the expectation that we were in for a wet ride. So I was surprised when the spray shot to the sides as we hit the waves, with only an occasional rogue spritz hitting the windshield. A closer look at the bow reveals hard chines coming up out of the water from either side of the hull and nearly meeting at the stem, and it's this design feature that serves as such an effective spray deflector.

Speaking of bows, you have to admire the foredeck, with its welded stainless-steel railing, anchor pulpit, and a vast, three-foot-deep chain locker. You get up there along the generous, 16-inch-wide side decks. These lead back to the 45-square-foot cockpit. A hatch in the sole reveals a large lazarette that spans the entire beam. A hot-and-cold hand-held shower lies neatly behind a hatch in the transom, which is decorated by a prettily casted stainless steel mount for the burgee. The swim platform adds about 20 inches to the overall length.

From the cockpit, it's a short step up onto the helm deck, a large portion of the sole of which lifts up with the help of gas-assisted pistons to reveal the engine compartment. This model had the optional hard top with handsome aluminum-framed sliding windows on either side and a three-paned windshield, the lower portion of the center of which opens for ventilation. Two small overhead hatches also help. There's an L-shaped settee to port, the center section of which lifts up to provide space to securely stow a carry-on cooler. The helm has a seat that's adjustable fore-and-aft and a simple pod-type helm that hinges out for access behind the dash. Visibility from the helm is quite splendid all around.

<b>Back Cove 29 Specifications</b>	
Length	29'6"
Beam	10'6"
Draft	2'8"
Fuel Capacity	150 gallons
Displacement (full load)	10,000 lbs.
Water Capacity	30 gallons
Base price (open boat with standard 260 hp diesel)	\$154,500
Price as reviewed (w/hard top, 315 hp diesel, AC & other options)	\$184,000
<b>Back Cove Yachts</b> 28 Gordon Drive Rockland, ME 04841 207-594-8844 <a href="http://www.backcoveyachts.com">www.backcoveyachts.com</a>	

The companionway leads down three steps to the cabin, where light cherry paneling, cabinetry and ceiling boards provide a welcoming tone. The galley station is immediately to port, with a five-foot long Corian counter, a deep stainless-steel sink and a single-burner electric/alcohol stove. A microwave fits neatly in to the cabinet above, and a small refrigerator is mounted underneath.

The enclosed head on the starboard side features a fresh-water marine toilet and a small vanity, the faucet of which pulls out to serve as a hand-held showerhead. The dinette in the bow converts to a generous-sized double berth. Headroom is adequate here as well as under the hard top.

"We've already begun work on a smaller boat that we'll have next year," Collins says. "Smaller and simpler, believe it or not. And within two years, we'll have a larger boat, something in the low to mid 30-foot range."