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Voyage with Velocity

by Neil Rabinowitz



Stylish and sleek at all speeds, the Sabreline 43 defines true class

West Coast boaters who are serious about cruising may want to look closely at a new boat that bears traditional "Down East" styling, but adds get-there-fast performance.

While there are a lot of differences between East Coast and West Coast boats, the new Sabreline 43 has the stylish charm and solid dependability that long-range boaters in Monterey will appreciate as much as skippers from Maine.

Designers call this sort of boat -- which offers efficient cruising with plenty of room -- a trawler. When they build one that's designed for increased performance and additional speed, it is simply known as a "fast trawler."

But in the case of the finely crafted Sabreline 43, this plush motoryacht offers distinctive details that make it a true cruiser. Not only does it step up, move out and handle with the agility of a sporty motoryacht, it features interior comforts matched only by a select few custom vessels.

Whatever you call the Sabreline 43, it is definitely a stand-out that is certain to attract attention wherever you cruise.

A Solid Ride

We set out on a sea trial off Bellingham, Washington -- about 90 miles north of Seattle -- on a Sabreline 43 provided by Bellingham Yacht Sales.

The day was clear and sunny, and a strong northerly wind was piping through the nearby San Juan

Islands as we turned west toward Blakely Island. The breeze hovered at 20 knots, with gusts to 25 off our starboard bow, and built to a small 2-3 foot chop as we motored smoothly into the sunset.

We ran the boat from the flying bridge and blasted through the seas cleanly, protected from the spray. Thanks to the 43's seakindly hull and high-performance powerplants, we were making great time.

Our test boat came equipped with twin 350 hp Caterpillar 3116 diesels. With a full displacement load of 40,000 pounds, we cruised flawlessly at around 16 knots. Our top speed was 20 knots, when we stretched into the island's lee and flatter water.

The wind kept howling as we crossed the strait toward Blakely, cutting through an icy chop dotted with white caps. We swept into Blakely Harbor, in the shadow of Mount Baker, and through the narrow passage that leads to this island hideaway.

Throughout our sea trial, the 43 provided a comfortable, stable ride in rugged conditions that would have kept skippers in many other boats at the dock. It handled effortlessly and tracked smoothly through a variety of maneuvers.

Classic Cruiseability -- Plus Performance

The trawler concept has long been the answer for many cruisers who've needed an economical, comfortable vessel to go long distances.

The classic trawler style, with its flatter bottom, was built for less-demanding sea conditions, providing larger accommodations for longer passages. The sacrifice was mainly in speed and style.

Sabreline's new 43 offers the same ability to cruise seemingly forever at eight to 10 knots as traditional classic trawlers, but its cruiseworthy hull and increased power can get you there and back in no time, when time is of the essence.

Traditional trawler fuel economy is great, but having plenty of power is also a definite plus. Higher-horsepower engines help make shorter work of a roughwater passage or reaching a safe port in a storm, as well as allowing a weekend of voyaging to be just that.

In the process of extending the range, Sabreline engineers have vastly refined the 43's hull from the classic trawler shape, to perform in rough seas with safety and stability, without slapping or pounding. Small line changes include a softer chine aft, a hull pocket to slightly reduce draft, a keel to help track and protect the running gear, a simple lifting strake to inch it up onto a plane faster and a gentle radius to soften the ride.

These subtle changes make a big difference -- and they come from a company that has distinguished itself in a variety of diverse designs.

Sabre Yachts began producing sailboats in South Casco, Maine in 1970, then brought what it had learned building sailboats to the power boat world in 1989. Today, Sabre's power boat line not only includes the new Sabreline 43 -- which will make its West Coast debut at the Seattle International Boat Show, January 19-28 -- it also includes the popular Sabreline 36.

The endless grind of big engines has always been a big concern to Sabreline engineers. That's why the 43 has a composite-engineered sound/vibration-absorbing interior skin, which makes it one of the quietest-riding boats of its type.

Perhaps a sailboat builder's most developed sense is the aesthetics of their craft. Sabre avoided adding exposed exterior teak to the 43, to reduce maintenance -- but there's no skimping on the boat's elegant wood-trimmed interior.

Finished to Perfection

The interior of the Sabreline 43, like the exterior profile, is an example of what they mean when they say "crafted in the Maine tradition." The finish choices include varnished cherry, teak or mahogany.

The look of the interior finish is one of stately detailing, such as might be found in the rich paneling of an English library. Our test boat featured custom stain to match the owner's choice of a reddish mahogany, with ash sheathing details.

A combination of track and recessed lighting accents the rich woodwork. Large windows below add abundant natural light and offer excellent viewing while under way.

The lower steering station fits in well with the living accommodations. It accommodates a dazzling bank of controls, while at the same time having the gloss and stylish elegance of a timeless piece of furniture.

Our test boat's saloon featured a small, adjustable-height dining table for six and a desk/wide bar for two, which separated the galley from the saloon.

Two accommodation layouts are available, to fit differing cruising needs. One layout version offers the galley down, separating the cooking from the social activities in the saloon, yet with a counter low enough to keep the galley open for conversation.

The other version, with the galley up, gives the cook a more direct station by the saloon and provides a separate cabin for an office or extra stateroom.

Two roomy heads with separate showers make the 43-footer a pleasure to cruise aboard, with maximum space and plenty of privacy for extended periods. The forward cabin offers a choice of a centerline queen-size berth or a spacious traditional V-berth layout; while aft, the master stateroom has a full queen-size berth -- and the queen-size berths actually use standard-size sheets.

The Sabreline 43 has a broad foredeck, flat and nicely shaped for safe work in most conditions. It also features versatile deck space for lounging on sunny afternoons.

Other features include a tall, wrap-around stainless steel rail, a Muir windlass and a broad bowsprit that houses either one or two anchors. Wide sidedecks provide an added measure of safety and easy access for everyone aboard.

The boat has an almost tri-level deck layout, with a hinged mast for taking advantage of covered moorage.

On the flying bridge, there's a comfortable settee and table, a strong windscreen and a rimmed stainless steel rail, plus a full helm console with Hynautics controls, Teleflex steering and a handy spot for keeping charts dry under plexiglass -- ready to use.

Aft are large twin access hatches for the lazarette, fender stowage and a cleverly designed stair that folds out of the transom to the molded fiberglass swim step. With a desirable absence of exterior wood trim, the deck, superstructure and hull features recesses and fine molding details that give the boat added style.

The standard hull has a white, unpainted gelcoat finish; however, blue and several other colors are available options. The hull is exceptionally sturdy, built of hand-laid fiberglass with knitted roving, vinylester resin in the outer layer and four full-length foam and plywood cored stringers. It also has watertight engine room bulkheads.

The Sabreline 43 is far removed from the simple "slow and steady" trawler concept. It has just what every boat owner has been missing in a trawler yacht: speed, comfort, performance, stylish custom features and an interior that few other boats can match.