

BOAT REVIEW

Grady-White Fisherman 257

BEST OF BOTH WORLDS

The latest Grady-White is an outstanding combination of a hard core fishing boat, meticulous attention to detail and exhilarating handling. Mike Rose went to Tairua to check it out.

The 257 Fisherman is available with single or twin Yamaha outboards.

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Grady-White Fisherman 257



Below left:
Absolutely nothing
seems to faze this
hull.

Below right: The
helm seat features
twin individual
bolsters.

Above: Right to Left

If the cockpit is all about the fishing, the bow is all about the crew.

At the rear of the cockpit is a hinge-up seat against the transom and a washdown hose in the port side locker.

The 120-litre live bait tank has a blue interior, to reduce stress on the fish.

Each year, the US's National Marine Manufacturers Association presents its Customer Satisfaction Index (CSI) awards. In order to enter these awards, manufacturers must survey all buyers of their new boats, independently measure their levels of satisfaction and have those results compiled by a third party. In order to actually win a CSI award, those surveys need to show a customer satisfaction standard of at least 90 percent.

Grady-White has won a CSI Award every one of the 16 years the awards have been running. After spending a few hours on the latest Grady-White to reach these shores, the Fisherman 257, it is abundantly clear that the company's strap-line: 'Exceptional attention to detail' is no mere puffery. Even though this is most definitely a fishing boat, the standard of finishing and the amount of thought that has gone into every single aspect is incredibly impressive.

Case in point: the catch that opens the small door to platform. Because it is low down and a little awkward to use, Grady-White worked out that it would be a lot easier if owners could operate it with just one hand. So they changed it and now it can.

FISHING FOCUS

As one would expect from a centre console with Fisherman in its name, the 257's cockpit is very fishing focused. The transom consists of a bait board mounted into a hatch cover in a way that does not require it to be removed when opened. Underneath is a 175-litre fish bin (one of three on board, the other two are under forward seats). Alongside, the 120-litre live bait tank has a blue interior (to reduce stress on the fish) and a full height water distribution column for aeration.

To make things as comfortable as possible for those fighting fish, the entire cockpit is decked out with thigh-high bolsters and deep toe kicks under the side lockers.

There is also no shortage of places to store the armoury. The bait board has four rod holders, there are two in each of the side decks, two in each of the side lockers, four more in the rocket launcher and another four on the back of the helm seat.

This helm seat back is also home to a large tackle locker and a special space for the Yeti chilly bin (described by New Zealand Grady-White distributor, Stuart Arnold, as "easily the best cooler in the world").

The helm seat is a real beauty, too. Big enough to

comfortably seat two, it features twin bolsters that allow the skipper and the crew to individually decide if they want to sit or stand. In the latter case, the bolster turns into a supportive backrest.

Completing the cockpit is a hinge-up seat against the transom and a washdown hose in the port side locker. The battery isolating switches are in their own locker in the transom and there is also a shore power connection.

DELIGHTFULLY SIMPLE

The helm station is one of those delightfully simple affairs, dominated by twin Garmin MFD screens. Accompanying them is a Garmin VHF, the dual binnacle control for the twin Yamaha 150hp 4-strokes, the control panel and LED display for the Bennett trim tabs, the control panel for the Fusion stereo, twin stainless steel drink holders and a stainless steel grab rail. (As with all the stainless on board, these are top quality 316.)

The Yamaha digital panel, a Ritchie compass and the DC toggle controls are inset into a black carbon fascia at the top of the dash. In yet another sign of the company's attention to detail, the DC switches have been deliberately positioned according to which are the most important and most often used. Above the helm is a clever touch-activated light that operates both a red light above the station for night running and the bright LED spotlight that illuminates the cockpit.

For a centre console the Fisherman 257's helm station is remarkably well protected. This is due to the combination of a scratch-resistant one-piece curved windscreen, the fibreglass T-Top that extends quite a way fore and aft and a set of clear rollway plastic panels. Specially ordered by Stuart for New Zealand, these sit between the T-Top and the side decks and offer great shelter from cold winds, sea spray and passing showers.

CREW COMFORT

If the cockpit is all about the fishing, the bow is all about the crew. Although we have come to appreciate Grady-White's fishing boats, the company's biggest sellers are actually bow riders. With the Fisherman 257, one could be forgiven for thinking that the

designers had simply taken the bow from the latter and transported it onto the former.

This is a great place to relax when not trying to catch dinner, with three good-sized seats, one on each side over the fish bins and one immediately in front of the console. There is thick two-level padding around the whole bow area, a stand-alone backrest for the front-of-helm seat and clever swivel backrests for the two side seats.

For those needing to heed the call of nature, there is also a reasonably spacious and private head, reached via a door in the starboard side, inside the console.

FUN TO DRIVE

Just under a year ago, I was lucky enough to drive one of the most fun boats I have ever been on. Surprisingly, at least to me, that was this boat's smaller sibling, the Fisherman 236.

I therefore thought I had a pretty good idea what was in store with the Fisherman 257 — more of the same. I was only partly right.

The first inkling of something special was during the photo session. Having accompanied the 257 out through Tairua Harbour's channel and over the relatively calm bar, I saw what most people would: a good-looking GRP centre console, sitting high in the water, with plenty of freeboard and topsides an attractive pastel Seaport Blue.

Ten minutes later, it was all I could do to keep focusing on the camera's view window and keep pushing the shutter. In what appeared as nothing less than a driving master class, Stuart had this sedate-looking centre console performing like a jetboat on steroids. Blasting across the deceptively slight-looking chop at speed, tight turning at pace, switching from lock to lock, it was like watching a stunt driver putting on an exhibition.

Having watched that and experienced something similar with the 236, I hopped on board for my turn with great expectations. Needless to say, I was not disappointed.

It was everything the 236 had delivered with the added advantage of that extra waterline. These Grady-White Fishermen come with stainless steel steering wheels fitted, like those old buses, with a



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SPECIFICATIONS

- Model & Mode:** Grady-White Fisherman 257
- Type:** Centre console
- Construction:** GRP
- LOA:** 8.2m
- Beam:** 2.59m
- Deadrise:** 20 Deg
- Height on trailer:** 3.3m
- Trailerable weight:** 2963kgs
- Test Power:** Twin Yamaha F150 outboards
- Propeller:** Reliance SDS 14¼ x 18
- Power options:** Outboard
- HP Range:** Yamaha F300 or 350V8hp or Twin F150 -200hp
- Fuel Capacity:** 511L
- Trailer:** Magic Tilt Aluminium
- Manufacturer:** Grady-White Boats USA, www.gradywhite.com

- NZ Dealer:** Marine Imports Limited, Grady-White Boats New Zealand, 12 The Marina, Tairua 3508, Coromandel, Ph: 0275-365346, marineimports@xtra.co.nz, www.gradywhite.co.nz

FUEL & PERFORMANCE DATA

Grady-White Fisherman 257
 Fuel capacity: 511 litres

RPM	Knots	km/L	L/h	L/NM
1000	5.2	1.9	5.07	.097
1500	7.0	1.1	11.79	1.68
2000	8.1	0.8	18.75	2.32
2500	11.2	0.8	25.93	2.32
3000	18.0	1.1	30.31	1.68
3500	23.2	1.0	42.97	1.85
4000	27.0	1.0	50.00	1.85
4500	31.1	0.9	64.00	2.06
5000	35.1	0.8	81.26	2.32
5500	38.2	0.7	101.07	2.65
6000	41.9	0.6	129.33	3.09

knob. It is a great idea and, combined with the power hydraulic steering, makes it just so easy and so enjoyable to throw this boat around with child-like abandon.

Absolutely nothing seems to faze this hull. It holds on in the tightest of high speed turns, it goes into, across and down the waves like it is on rails and, although the trim tabs are useful in a cross wind, they are hardly needed.

The twin Yamaha 150s, deservedly one of the company's most popular outboards, seem a perfect match for this model. Fitted with Reliance SDS 14¼ x 18 props, they deliver a cruising speed of 31 knots at 4500rpm and a top speed of 41.9 knots at 6000rpm. They get this almost 3 tonne boat up on the plane quickly, smoothly and effortlessly and require just minimal trimming to maintain an ideal drive angle. They bite hard in reverse and require very little extra juice to overcome any sea-cocking.

SUMMARY

Like the name says, the 257 is primarily a fishing boat. However, as the ad goes, one might come for the fishing but they stay for the quality, the attention to detail and sheer fun of being able to treat an 8.2-metre LOA boat like a 4m jetboat.

Grady-Whites are by no means the least expensive GRP boats on the market, yet that price is clearly no deterrent for many. At the recent Hutchwilco New Zealand Boat Show in Auckland, Stuart says he could easily have sold this, his demonstrator, at least twice. Since hanging out his Grady-White shingle in the small, pretty remote Coromandel village of Tairua just three short years ago, he has already sold over 30 boats, ranging in size from 7 m to 12 m. Obviously there is something very appealing to Kiwi fishing enthusiasts about this brand of boats from far-off North Carolina.