

BOAT REVIEWS

Grady-White Freedom 255 Review

This boat runs smoothly in a nasty chop, responds predictably and can cradle your loved ones in safety and comfort.

By Dean Travis Clarke | August 24, 2010

Heading out of North Carolina's Beaufort Inlet in a wind-against-tide maelstrom, I started rethinking the plan to fish offshore. Sixty-foot sport-fishermen were turning around once they experienced the eight to 10-foot seas outside the harbor. We joined them.



I understand that serious fishermen may scoff at a dual-console design. But those who want the multitasking abilities to keep their families happy may want to consider this marine utility vessel since you can fish it very comfortably.

Performance

The 350 hp Yamaha four-stroke really moved the 255 off the mark quickly, zooming to 30 mph in just more than 10 seconds. With a healthy load of people and gear, the Freedom hit a top speed of 47 mph, burning 34.5 gph. Most noteworthy, however, is the optimum cruise. At 29.2 mph (4,000 rpm), the 255 burned a modest 13.3 gph for a remarkable range of more than 300 miles! That equates to greater than 2 mpg.

Comparatively, a 300 hp outboard (without a hardtop and with a lighter load) sacrifices 312 mph of top end but claims the identical cruising speed of 29.2, turning 4,300 rpm while garnering better fuel economy at 12.6 gph. That's 2.32 mpg.

In a three-foot sea, the boat rose and fell with no pounding, cruising at 28 mph. With the standard hydraulic trim tabs, the Freedom displayed a remarkable range of trim possibilities, and the seas made me appreciate the excellent handholds everywhere.

Drifting beam-to in the ugly inlet, the 255 exhibited a moderate roll moment with very gentle transitions and mildly noticeable noise from chine slap. A turn to run down-sea offered handsoff control!

Wheel hard-over turns showed exactly the right amount of stern slide and speed bleed so that you need not worry about this boat biting you. In fact, the Freedom 255 had absolutely no untoward performance characteristics.

Fishing

Insulated fish boxes - one 20-gallon under the port bow seat and an additional 43 3/4-gallon under the starboard seat - create a total of 63 3/4 gallons of fish-box space, which drains directly overboard.

To offer this vessel as a family cruiser, Grady made some of the normally standard fishing options elective on the Freedom. For example, the 27-gallon livewell in the transom, complete with full-column intake and a 1,100 gph raw-water pump, is an option. But the padded gunwale bolsters still come standard.

Should you need to get out on the engine bracket area while fighting or gaffing a fish, you'll be surprised at how clean it is. You can walk across it without stumbling over anything.

Grady supplies three rod holders under each gunwale and two in each rail, plus two in the transom. You can of course put more across the outside transom.

Trolling between 5 and 7 mph, I saw only modest subsurface and virtually no surface white water.

Design and Construction

Grady offers lots of great options to make your cruising life more fulfilling: A pedestal table fits into a receiver in the bow seating area. Filler inserts and cushions also make a big sundeck. The optional grill on the backside of the helm seat (standard is just a pedestal seat) has its own battery and inverter/charger.



I loved the button controls for the optional electric helm seat. In fact, this represents one of the first dual consoles where excellent ergonomics let you drive just as comfortably whether seated or standing. Anchoring proved easy with the optional anchor windlass; Grady also provided a sizable locker for rode.

The Kenwood stereo with remote control allows you to push your MP3 player into the unit, close the face and play your own tunes. A very beefy optional hardtop with molded spaces for life jackets and safety gear also comes with your choice of canvas packages to enclose the helm area. Our boat also had Taco Grand Slam telescoping outriggers through the top.

Lest you think Grady appears headed toward long option lists, consider all the standard fare on the spec sheet: A well-designed folding door combines with the fold-open windshield to protect you in cold or rough weather. And even I could change clothes in the portside head. It's that roomy. Other standard features include the signature Grady-White transom seat, a freshwater shower hose by the swim ladder and a recessed ladder on the transom.

One design feature I liked and had never considered: You can open and close the windshield without disturbing the person on the bow seat but never open or close it under way!

Grady-White has never before offered optional hull colors. Now you can choose from sea-foam green, sky blue, slate blue or sunlight yellow.

Sure, the hard-core fishing fanatics will still turn their noses up at a dual console. But I can tell you that Grady's new Freedom 255 can be more things to more people than any dedicated fishing machine ever could.

SPECIFICATIONS

LOA.....24 ft. 9 in.

BEAM.....8 ft. 6 in.

DRAFT.....1 ft. 8 in.

DEADRISE.....20.8 deg.

WEIGHT.....4,459 lb.

FUEL.....150 gal.

MAX POWER.....350 hp OB

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