

BOATS

Grady-White 251 Coastal Explorer

By Jeff Hemmel | September 16, 2022



From flats to blue water, this boat has you covered. *Courtesy Grady-White*

Coastal anglers typically have a lot of variety when it comes to fishing grounds. Some love the flats and backwaters, skinny waters that often require a flats boat with less than 12 inches of draft to access. Others prefer the more open waters of bays, inlets and nearshore areas just off the beach or within a few miles of shore, the hunting grounds of the classic bay boat. And then there are those who want the coastal trifecta. Fish the flats on occasion, enjoy all that the bays and inlets have to offer, and confidently head to the blue water offshore when conditions are right. Enter the hybrid, a relatively new variation on the theme that attempts to do it all—like a bay boat on steroids.



The 251 can more than hold its own in sloppy offshore conditions yet is still capable of sneaking into skinny flats and backwaters. *Courtesy Grady-White*

Definitions of a hybrid can skew in one direction or the other, but the common denominator will always be that a hybrid is a bay boat that can, when conditions beckon, confidently venture offshore. That describes Grady-White's 251 Coastal Explorer pretty much to a T. As always, hull design makes it possible. Grady-White's SeaV2 hull features a continually variable deadrise, starting with a sharp forward entry before flaring to as much as 30 degrees amidships. But its secret sauce is that it softens to a mere 16 degrees at the transom. At rest or trolling speeds, minimum draft defies expectation at a mere 14 inches. It's a combination that, in conjunction with an abundance of bow flare and a 20-inch cockpit depth aft, lets the 251 more than hold its own in sloppy offshore conditions yet still sneak into skinny flats and backwaters.

Topside features likewise combine the best of both worlds while acknowledging that the boat will also likely see considerable family duty. Forward, a sizable casting deck includes port and starboard 74-quart fish boxes below flush-hinged hatches, as well as a trio of vertical rod holders on each side to keep go-to rods at the ready. Underneath the console seat awaits 74 quarts of insulated storage. Behind the console, a leaning post with a backrest includes more rod holders, with a 25-gallon livewell that conveniently opens from the side for easier access. An aft casting platform adds a 12.75-gallon livewell center, along with port and starboard fish boxes. Add cushions to both decks for family comfort. Unique

touches include the removable center insert in the bow platform that can be placed in front of the console seat to form a kick-your-feet-up recliner. Or raise it to create a table, all without impeding a passing angler's movement. Port and starboard fish-box cushions, both fore and aft, also pivot upward to form forward-facing backrests with a comfortable angle of recline. The bow and stern both feature boarding ladders, easing passengers on and off the bow when beached or out of the water.

Other features of note include a streamlined T-top that integrates into the console rather than impeding on deck space; full wraparound glass on the console for better visibility and wind protection; and a console compartment deep enough to stow plenty of gear or realistically use as a head. Lower gunwale heights (about 20 inches) also deserve mention. They're high enough to provide protection and security offshore, yet low enough to make it easier to get your catch in and out of the boat. And then, of course, there's Grady-White's quality. The 251 is completely self-bailing. Every livewell, fish box, and even cleat and cup holder ultimately drains overboard, not just to the bilge, meaning no mechanical pumps are relied upon to direct water overboard. Like Grady-White's larger offshore models, the 251 also features enough foam flotation to be unsinkable, comforting knowledge when you trade those skinny waters for what lies outside the inlet.

LOA:	24'7"
Beam:	8'6"
Draft (min.):	1'2"
Transom Deadrise:	16 degrees
Dry Weight:	3,715 lb. (without engine)
Seat/Weight Capacity:	10/2,800 lb.
Fuel Capacity:	78 gal.
Available Power:	Single outboard to 300 hp