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Outer Reef 63

MAKES GETTING THERE *MORE THAN HALF THE FUN*

BY MIKE WERLING

Photos by Neil Rabinowitz

WE MOTORED PAST THE HOMES fronting Lake Washington at an easy 10 knots on one of those idyllic Seattle summer days the locals wait for all year. Summer doesn't begin until July 4 in the upper Northwest, say the locals, and I was there shortly after that. We went past the new-money mansions. Past the few remaining old-school cabins that are holdouts from an earlier era of weekend homes. Past the house of Bill Gates — the world's second-richest man — and its not-so-subtle reminder of how good life can be when you basically invent the future.

We saw the University of Washington and its football stadium. We got within a Bubba Watson drive of downtown Bellevue on Meydenbauer Bay. And we eyed Kirkland before we tucked into the glass-like surface of Cozy Cove at Hunt's Point. Two times we crossed under the Evergreen Point Floating Bridge — officially the Governor Albert D. Rosellini Bridge — the longest such

structure in the world.

I mention all this because before he had even fired up the engines, Outer Reef's Seattle-based director of sales, Dick Sproul, told me the experience offered by the Outer Reef 63 is about the journey. "This boat is not built for speed," Sproul told me. "It's great at 11 knots." Getting there, in Outer Reef's estimation, is more than half the fun. Company president

Jeff Drucek wanted to build a boat that people would buy for the enjoyment of yachting. After a pleasant day aboard the 63, I'd have to agree he succeeded.

THE BOAT

Access to the boat is from the swim step, through a watertight door to the enclosed cockpit and up three steps to the covered aft deck. The cockpit is labeled as a fishing cockpit, but it works just as well for a sunset glass of wine and alfresco dining. There are also transom access doors to the aft deck, reachable from a set of steps or an elevated dock. Ample sidedecks make forward access easy and provide room to pull in and throw out fenders and lines.



One of the changes people familiar with previous incarnations of the 63 will notice is in the pilothouse. Gone is the bulkhead that used to separate the pilothouse from the galley, and really from the rest of the main deck. Drucek and crew discovered that not a lot of their owners were under way at night — the captain doesn't need to be sequestered in a small pilothouse, a bulkhead keeping the light from disturbing the passengers.

The pilothouse was stretched slightly and brought into the action on the advice of Outer Reef owners — probably lonely captains. To facilitate the loss of the bulkhead, the five-person settee was moved to port of the captain's chair (it used to sit behind the chair), and the watertight port-side door was removed (the door to starboard remains). Opening things up also makes the main deck flow nicely from salon to pilothouse.

Directly aft of the pilothouse is the fully equipped galley, loaded with GE appliances — stainless refrigerator, electric range, dishwasher, microwave — and lots of Corian-topped counter space. A teak and holly sole runs through the galley and the pilothouse. Down a short set of steps from the galley is the salon, a cozy, comfortable setting with seating for eight on a port-side settee and two chairs to starboard. A 37-inch flat-screen HD TV and optional Bose entertainment system provide distraction when needed.

Belowdecks — accessible via a staircase to starboard of the helm — is a three-stateroom, two-head configuration. The forward VIP stateroom and port-side third stateroom share a head with a shower stall. The midships master stateroom

An Inside Look



TESTER'S OPINION
"All in all, the Outer Reef 63 fulfills the goals the company had in mind for the vessel. It's a long-range cruiser meant to get you there in comfort and style, and it does so with solid fuel economy at cruising speed and maximum safety."



The main deck of the boat is meant to flow from one area to the next and be a communal gathering space.



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Outer Reef

63



SPECIFICATIONS

LOA	63 ft., 1 in.
Beam	17 ft., 2 in.
Draft	4 ft., 10 in.
Displacement	73,000 lbs.
Fuel	1,000 gals.
Water	300 gals.
Engines	Twin Cat C9 Acert, 503 hp

CONSTRUCTION

Hand-laid FRP hull with PVC core sandwich construction above the waterline. Full-length longitudinal engine stringers and athwartship stringers. Vinylester barrier lamination for osmosis protection.

STANDARD EQUIPMENT

Northern Lights 16 kw generator w/sound shields, electric bow thruster, ABT stabilizers, 230v air-conditioning system, 24v vertical windlass, underwater exhaust system w/bypass and FRP mufflers, built-in swim platform w/stainless steel ladder and rails, converter (24v DC to 12v DC), Glendinning 50 amp cablemaster, automatic bilge pumps (4), manual bilge pump in engine room, Tecma electric toilets, water heater w/heat exchanger, removable foam-backed vinyl headliner, Stidd helm seat and much more.

OPTIONAL EQUIPMENT

Hydraulic bow and stern thrusters, second generator, additional fuel tanks, extended swim platform, central vacuum system, hardtop over flybridge, drop-down TV in VIP stateroom, entertainment package, aft deck bench seat w/storage, searchlight w/dual-station controls, 300 feet additional anchor chain, chilled-water air conditioning, water-maker, oil change system and much more.

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has a queen-size bed with storage underneath, twin nightstands and reading lights, two hanging lockers with automatic lighting, and its own head with a sizable vanity and shower stall.

On this most beautiful of Seattle days, the flybridge was the star of the show. We ate lunch at the table to port, sitting on the L-shaped settee, taking advantage of the 63's smooth ride and full hardtop. A complete helm station, grill, wash basin and refrigerator/ice-maker mean that the flybridge can be fully outfitted for the day. If it had a head, you'd never need to descend the stairs to the pilothouse and points below. The aft portion of the bridge holds the davit and dinghy.

PERFORMANCE

Cruising on the placid waters of Lake Washington, we didn't get a chance to test the boat's full open-water capability. But the yacht is built to Open Ocean Category A standards for safety and stability. Category A means the vessel can withstand wave heights of 18-20 feet and sustained winds of more than 40 knots. The shipyard is ISO 9001 certified and adheres to ABS guidelines.

A standard pair of Cat C9 Acert diesels, 503 hp, power the Outer Reef 63. Using the electronic engines' displays and GPS readings, we took our readings as we climbed up the rpm and speed ladder. At the 11 knots that Sproul calls the boat's sweet spot, the engines were turning at 1750 rpm and were burning 12 gph. Range at that speed, with a 10 percent reserve, is about 850 miles. Above that speed, Sproul pointed out, the 63 loses efficiency. At 16 knots — the boat's top speed — rpm is maxed out at about 2600 and fuel burn jumps to almost 50 gph. Back off to 1500 rpm, and the 63 travels at 10 knots while burning about 10 gph. At 1300 rpm, the boat goes 9 knots and burns 7 gph. Boaters out for a relaxing day can pull back to 1120 rpm, make 8 knots and burn just over 4 gph. Range at that barely-more-than-sailboat speed is about 1,800 miles (with a 10 percent reserve).

I took the opportunity for a self-guided tour of the vessel while we

were under way. My footing was solid everywhere. The door latches held firm, and the doors didn't rattle or squeak. Moving forward and aft on the wide and tall covered side decks was not an issue, even for my large frame. We didn't experience any bumping or lurching. In fact, Sproul's wife, Pam, joined us for the sea trial, and she sat on the swim step with her feet dangling in the water while we motored through Cozy Cove and watched speedboats pull children riding high-end inflatable toys.

Whether I was belowdecks, on the flybridge or sitting on the aft deck settee, I noticed the ride — smooth and quiet. The folks at Outer Reef attribute this to their Quiet Roll Spray System, a system designed to act like spray rails, only better. It deflects the water away from the hull and, according to the company, leads to a quieter ride. For those who like to tinker, the engine room is spacious and well-marked, with Edura coin dot flooring and room to maneuver around both engines, the generator and everything else.

Steering was never an issue, with the boat responding quickly to helm commands from the pilothouse and flybridge. By the time we headed for land, the wind had picked up and tried to give Sproul a difficult time at the dock, but with judicious use of the thrusters and a little patience he showed what the 63-footer was capable of during the docking process. It was simple for the three of us, though two would have been plenty.

All in all, the Outer Reef 63 fulfills the goals the company had in mind for the vessel. It's a long-range cruiser meant to get you there in comfort and style, and it does so with solid fuel economy at cruising speed and maximum safety. It provides multiple areas for dining, entertaining and relaxing, and it's easy to operate. Don't be afraid to set your sights afar, because the Outer Reef 63 can get you there. But make sure you plan to be gone for a while — with the 63, it's about the journey. Plus, if you go fast, even Bill Gates' house passes by too quickly. 🍷