

Grady-White Seafarer 228

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OUR RATING



4 STARS



MODEL DETAILS

MODEL

Grady-White Seafarer 228

DESIGNER

C. Raymond Hunt

BUILDER

Grady-White Boats

If there's one style of boat Americans do better than anyone else, it's the blue water sports fisher, whether a 25m flybridge Canyon Runner or trailerable, walk-around cabin boat like this 7m Grady-White.

The Grady-White Seafarer 228 is a modest-sized vessel by Grady-White standards, set up for a single outboard, in this case a 300hp Yamaha, and supplied ex-America on a dual-axle aluminium custom trailer specced to Australian standards, which are more stringent than New Zealand's.

SPECIFICATIONS

LOA

6.76M

BEAM

2.44M

DRAFT

0.41M

ENGINE

Yamaha 300hp V6 four-stroke O/B

HIGHLIGHTS

- Impressive performance
- Solidly constructed
- Excellent sea keeping
- Loaded with features and equipment

OBSERVATIONS

- Comfortable helm
- Great all round vision
- Fishing oriented
- Walk-around

FUEL CAPACITY
431L

WATER CAPACITY
38L

WEIGHT ON TRAILER
2410 kg

MAX HORSEPOWER
300hp

PASSENGER CAPACITY
6 people

DEADRISE
20 degrees



Stuart Arnold, the New Zealand agent for Grady-White, happily tows this boat behind an Isuzu DMAX utility. Stuart, an ex-Brit whose CV includes commercial and charter fishing in the UK and USA, became enamoured of the Grady-White brand while living in Florida.

As a Grady-White owner, he developed a relationship with the North Carolina boatbuilder which blossomed to the point where he was offered an exclusive Grady-White dealership a few years ago.

Now based in beautiful Tairua on the Coromandel Peninsula, with a nice office overlooking the marina, Stuart sells Grady-White sport fishers to customers all over New Zealand and the Pacific Islands.

The Seafarer 228 features the company's C. Raymond Hunt, 20° Sea V2 hull design, now with an integrated outboard pod that extends the waterline length along the boat's centreline. Called the 'Grady Drive' transom, it not only adds buoyancy aft, which is especially noticeable when backing up, it improves overall handling and performance.



With the engine outboard on a pod, there's room for a comprehensive transom station with a jumbo-sized plumbed live bait tank, seat, drink holders and a bait table with rod holders. Corner seats also provide dry stowage and the batteries are fully protected behind the transom bulkhead, with a hatch providing access to the pumps as well. All through-hull fittings have shut-off valves with easy-to-close extended levers and the battery isolation switches are mounted on the rear transom bulkhead where they're easy to reach.

The 228's full-width transom platform is big enough for a cage if that's what the owner would like. With New Zealanders' fondness for bait fishing at anchor, fishing from a cage has the advantage of keeping the messy stuff mostly outside the boat on the platform.



Not that this is a hard boat to keep clean, with both raw water and freshwater (38-litre tank) washdown facilities in the cockpit and self-draining decks. A freshwater shower/washdown in the cockpit is not just great for divers, but also for rinsing salt off fishing tackle at the end of the day.

It's also an easy boat to keep tidy, offering heaps of places to store gear, in lockers, shelves and various storage bins moulded into the cockpit liner. A zip-up fabric pocket under the hardtop roof stores PFDs out of the way but within easy reach.

It would be a great place to stow landing nets and other ready-use items. A moulded, lock-up console under the hardtop is the logical place for the VHF radio and stereo head unit, with plenty of space left over for general storage. The doors feature clever inertia hinges that stay open, regardless of how much the boat is bouncing up and down.

The cockpit is designed around sport fishing, from the king-size live well at

the transom to the non-slip cockpit sole, padded coamings, two-tier rod racks either side and plenty of rod storage around the cockpit and on the anodised aluminium bimini top frame (14 rod holders in all).

Large insulated storage lockers extend deep under the aft-facing cockpit seats, one of them divided to separate, say, or bait from food and drink. The undivided fish box/locker on the starboard side is large enough to accommodate the biggest kingfish or tuna. 'Grady Cockpit' toe-kicks give security when playing, landing or tagging large fish.

This is a walk-around cabin boat design, so access to the bow area is easy. Bow rails provide a bit of security and the foredeck is a good place to cast from, or enjoy the view seated on a removeable cushion on the cabin top hatch.

The anchoring arrangement has been specified for New Zealand boating, so there's a moulded bowsprit with a decent fairlead that secures the anchor, in this case a Sarca, but Stuart can fit whichever anchor the client would like. A hundred metres of 10-strand nylon warp and plenty of chain fill the anchor locker while a helm-operated Lewmar capstan does the work raising and lowering the ground tackle.

All the boat's deck hardware is good-quality, heavy-duty American 316 stainless steel and the Seafarer 228 even comes with lifting points fore and aft: the whole vessel can be hoisted from the water by crane. Although this is a sport fishing boat, it's not without creature comforts. In fact, it's quite luxurious, with a plumbed toilet in the forward cabin, a food preparation area with sink and a generous double berth once the infill is deployed.

Strataglass clears fixed inside the aluminium frame fully enclose the bimini top, for comfortable all-weather boating, and a wiper keeps the windscreen clear of rain and spray which after more than four hours of us testing the boat, was totally clear of any spray.



Electronics were fitted here in New Zealand, the owner of this vessel choosing a Garmin GPSMap MFD, but the rest of the instruments, trim tab controls and comprehensive switch panel are fitted at the factory.

Swivelling Custom Pompanette Grady seats are extremely comfortable, adjustable every which way, with sturdy armrests to brace against and keep your backside in the right place. Swivel the seats through 180° to watch lures trolling in the wake.

The helm position is excellent, raised with superb vision in every direction. It's easy to drive the boat from a sitting or standing position, but the ride is so good, sitting would be preferred most of the time. The comfortable helm chairs address sturdy fold-down footrests and there are plenty of handholds for when the sea's rough.



This is a solidly-constructed boat, foam-filled between the liner and hull, and with this, the boat is USCG rated unsinkable. Grady-White employs robust longitudinal members and a drop-in framework for superior hull stiffness and support. No timber is used in the boat's construction and hull and decks are 100 percent hand-laid.

The solidity of the hull was noticeable during our sea trial, where we experienced a variety of sea conditions. The bar was benign, but there was quite a strong offshore breeze and a decent sort of chop offshore. The boat is quiet and there was no squeaking or banging. The couple of times I managed to bang down on a chine, there was no rattling and very little vibration.



The Grady-White impressed with its soft, dry ride and assured handling. Even in choppy conditions further out to sea, the Seafarer remained poised and well-balanced and we stayed comfortable. Throwing the raked stainless-steel wheel over at high speed poses no problems for the Seafarer 228 which goes where its pointed, its variable deadrise hull tracking perfectly. Hydraulic steering is effortless.

At no point did the boat feel like it might trip up or catch a chine, nor did the propeller break out in the sharpest turns. Trim tabs came in handy in the windy conditions, the hull attitude responding quickly to both tabs and engine trim inputs.

The combination of hull geometry, bow flare, spray rails and strakes keep the boat's occupants totally dry. The transition to planing happens around 2,700rpm, 10-11 knots achieved without excessive nose-up attitude, despite a pod-mounted engine, testament to the effectiveness of the Grady-Drive transom.



The boat is quick too, easily out-running the 8m Profile the photographer used as a chase boat. We had to slow for the drone, too. It's easy to travel quickly in this boat, even in quite sloppy conditions; a glance at the GPS revealed we were doing 30 knots without realising it. It didn't feel that fast.

Top speed with the 4.2-litre Yamaha 300hp four-stroke is almost 45 knots, but the optimum cruising speed is a more sedate 26 knots, the engine spinning the 15¼ by 19-inch stainless steel propeller at around 3,600rpm. An underfloor fuel tank holds a huge 431 litres, which gives a decent range at 3,000-4,000rpm.

The Grady-White Seafarer 228 is a luxurious walkaround cabin sport fisher, a style of boat Americans do exceedingly well. As a manufacturer, Grady-White is a cut above the general run of US boat builders, using only top-quality components and building nicely-finished, well-equipped boats in a modern, ultra-clean 95,000m2

facility. It has won every single marine award for excellence and customer satisfaction in the USA, including all eight JD Power & Associates awards.



Grady-White boats are hardly common in New Zealand, but models like the Seafarer 228 are well-suited to our sometimes-boisterous sea conditions, as well as being superb sport fishing boats. Best of all, they come with enough comfort and luxury to appeal to members of the fairer sex, for the best of both worlds.