

# The All-New Grand Banks 41

With Zeus drives, joystick docking  
and a slippery hull, Grand Banks has  
reinvented a cruising classic.

STORY BY PETER A. JANSSEN  
PHOTOGRAPHY BY  
GARY JOHN NORMAN





**W**e were only three or four miles from Bimini when I decided to have some fun. Running at about 20 knots, I looked around from the flying bridge to make sure no other boats were in the way (not likely, in any event), and then I put the wheel of the Grand Banks Heritage 41EU all the way over, as far as it would go. The boat heeled a bit and simply carved a tight turn. As I kept the wheel over, it carved a tighter turn, and the boat made circles inside our wake.

It was as if I was driving a sport boat, not a full-blown, 42,000-pound Grand Banks, the latest entry from a company long known for making some of the best cruising boats in the world.

Indeed, for more than half a century Grand Banks has forged its reputation by producing classic, iconic cruising boats — overbuilding them, in fact, making them like little battleships. Each was elegant, a cruising traditionalist's dream, full of teak and space and promises of life over the horizon. Stately would be the best description. Whatever else you could say about Grand Banks' attributes (which are many), high-speed turns weren't part of the equation. But now, on the new 41EU, things are different. If it wasn't exactly akin to driving a Porsche, then maybe it was like a Lexus. This definitely is not your grandfather's Grand Banks.

Full disclosure: It wasn't like driving my Grand Banks, either. I owned a Grand Banks 36 Classic for many years, and I loved that boat. I lived on it year-round at Norwalk Cove in Connecticut; I cruised the East Coast from the Florida Keys to Nantucket, Massachusetts. But, if truth be told, it never went faster than 8 knots (a full-displacement hull, that's what it was built for). If I ever



**CRUISING LIFE.** The Grand Banks 41EU in Bimini (top) and the appealing entrance to the traditional master stateroom (above).

JONATHAN COOPER (BOTTOM)

felt in the mood to put the wheel all the way over (I was never crazy enough to do that) it would have taken quite a while for it to make its turn. All of that was fine; if I wanted a sport boat, I would have bought a sport boat. But stately was the operative word, not sporty. It was a boat for long-range cruising, not setting speed records. (Although, I have to admit, it occasionally was dispiriting, to say the least, when sailboats passed us, their crews waving merrily.)

So here we were (a crew of nine, including David Hensel, Grand Banks' Marketing Director) on a beautiful, blue-sky Thursday morning, carving doughnuts at the edge of the Gulf Stream on a Grand Banks, approaching the fabled Bahamian island of Bimini (think Ernest Hemingway's *Islands in the Stream*) less than two and a half hours after we left Fort Lauderdale, Florida. To say this is a new breed of Grand Banks is a considerable understatement. The main difference, of course, is the revolutionary Cummins MerCruiser Diesel Zeus pod drive system, where the twin independently articulating drive legs — each with counter-rotating, aft-facing propellers — means that in the docking mode, you could actually walk the boat sideways if you wanted to. In the cruising mode, meanwhile, you could carve circles in the ocean within your wake.

At this late date, it's not news that Zeus (or Volvo Penta's IPS system, which does pretty much the same thing, except the props face forward) provides maneuverability and ease of handling (at the touch of a joystick, no less) that would be unimaginable in a conventional inboard-shaft-prop drive train. Plus, there is less noise and exhaust fumes, since the exhaust is now underwater. It is also more efficient, since the drive leg is built so the props are parallel to the hull, pushing the boat forward instead of pushing at an upward angle, as in a shaft system. And it provides better speed and greater range. Finally, since the entire compact system is mounted well aft, it opens up what used to be the engine room in the middle of the boat for other uses —

in this case, for a utility room with an extra fridge, washer/dryer and tons of storage. This boat has another plus: It was the first built with Zeus at dual stations, on the bridge and the lower helm forward of the salon.

The other major distinction is that this was the first resin-infused, fully cored Grand Banks — not just the

## GRAND BANKS 41EU

### SPECIFICATIONS

<b>LOA:</b> 41'4"
<b>Beam:</b> 15'8"
<b>Draft:</b> 3'9"
<b>Disp.:</b> 42,552 lbs.
<b>Fuel:</b> 500 gals.
<b>Water:</b> 195 gals.
<b>Contact:</b> Grand Banks Yachts, <a href="http://grandbanks.com">grandbanks.com</a>
<b>Base Price:</b> On request

### PERFORMANCE

**TEST POWER:** (2) 425 hp Cummins QSB5.9 diesels. Speeds measured by GPS in the Atlantic Ocean off Bimini in calm conditions with seven people on board, one-quarter fuel and half water. Sound levels measured at the lower helm in dB-A.

RPM	KNOTS	GPH	DB-A
830	5.3	2.2	59
1,000	6.4	3.1	77
1,500	8.8	7.9	80
2,000	10.9	18.2	84
2,500	17.5	30.0	85
3,050	23.0	45.7	87



**INSIDE:** ① The E-Plex touch screen at the helm controls all the electrical systems on the boat. There is no traditional electrical panel; just two wires that control everything. ② The U-shaped galley opposite the helm has a sweeping countertop and lots of storage. It's a cruiser's delight. ③ A new utility room is where the engine room used to be. ④ The engine room, all the way aft because of the Zeus drives, is transformational; the stringer grid, overhead and bulkheads are all gelcoated.

#### PROS:

- It's a cruiser's cruising boat. It replaces the iconic 42, but offers so much more.
- Grand Banks quality in fit, finish, joiner work and in making sure everything is in the right place.
- Zeus maneuverability: This is excellent both for turning at speed and docking carefully.
- Skyhook for position-keeping, whether waiting for the bridge to open or hanging at the fuel dock.
- An extremely comfortable, open salon with great visibility all around.

#### CONS:

- The pullout steps leading down to the utility room need some improvement.
- The lower helm seat, while luxurious, is a bit cramped for two large adults.

hull or the topsides, but the entire boat. This process ensures quality in the build, but it also makes the boat lighter without giving up any of the legendary Grand Banks strength and integrity. Indeed, the 41EU has all the first-rate joiner work and teak and fit and finish that are part of Grand Banks' DNA.

After awhile we tired of going around in circles, so we headed in for Bimini. If you've been there, you know the entrance to the harbor, not unlike many other islands in the Bahamas, is not exactly well-marked. You kind of aim for halfway between the stretch of north and south Bimini and keep going (slowly) as if you're going to land on the beach. Then, when you pass a sandbar on the left — keeping clear of the shoaling on the right — you'll see the slightly darker water of the

channel running parallel to the beach, which eventually makes a dogleg to the right into the harbor itself.

The channel is wide enough for two boats to pass easily, but as we approached a small cargo ship was heading out, and we wanted to stay out of its way. Normally, I would have had to play the throttles to stay put in our position on the sidelines while we waited for the cargo ship to pass. But now all I had to do was hit the Skyhook button on the console and we were firmly set in place, rooted, as it were, to the spot.

A remarkable innovation, Skyhook works with the autopilot and the GPS to maintain your position within a matter of just a few feet. It's promoted as a big aid if you have to wait your turn at a busy fuel dock, for example, or for a bridge opening. In our case, it saved us a lot of



**CONTROL ROOM.** The classic Grand Banks helm (top left), but with the added joystick (top right). Zeus at work (above) shows maneuverability at speed.

JONATHAN COOPER (TOP)



**REVERSE VIEW.** Two views of the spacious, open salon, looking forward (above) and aft (left). Visibility is superb; there's light all around.

with spring lines to get the boat on or off the dock. Just up the dock we found a little village of boutique shops and the resort office. There, we checked into pastel-colored, Bahamas-themed condos.

That afternoon David Hensel walked me through the boat. You can enter through a large transom door via the swim platform or through large doors on either side. The cockpit, protected by an overhang, is large enough for several people to sit and enjoy cocktails. The salon is generous, straightforward and leads to the helm on the starboard side and a made-for-cruising galley to port. Windows are everywhere; visibility is superb. Down three teak steps, the master stateroom is forward with an island queen and lots of light. The guest stateroom is to port with two berths that can be made into one with a filler, and a large head is to starboard.

But it's what you don't see that counts. The new 41EU has a finer entry than previous Grand Banks, a three-quarter keel to protect the gear and a modified deep-V hull with a wider beam carried aft to support the engines. All this adds up to a 23-knot top speed and an easy 18- to 20-knot cruise. If you want to dial back to 8 or 10 knots, you could extend your range. If you're in a hurry, the elegant new-generation Grand Banks Heritage 41EU will get you where you want to go in style and comfort. It's your choice. That's the cruising life for me. ❖

**WATCH THE VIDEO.** For more on the Grand Banks 41EU, go to [motorboating.com](http://motorboating.com). We show Zeus in action, under way and at the dock, plus a walk-through of the boat with all its features.

JONATHAN COOPER