

Sea Ray 48 Sundancer

SUN CITY

On the lighter side. BY ERIC COLBY

Ever been belowdecks on a boat and felt as if you were entombed? So often, this area is dark and foreboding, which was one of the few complaints customers had with Sea Ray's 460 Sundancer. An upgrade was in order, and when Sea Ray's designers set out to make the 48 Sundancer, one of their priorities was to lighten up the cabin.

They achieved this two ways. First, a skylight in the foredeck lets in twice as much sunshine as a typical hatch. Second, large windows in the hullsides (they're not portals because they don't open) measure about 1'8" tall and 1' wide. That's a lot bigger than the typical port, and the difference



TALKING TO CUSTOMERS HELPED SEA RAY SEE THE LIGHT. TOP END: 35.5 MPH.

is immediately noticeable. There's at least twice the light in the newer version. My one gripe is that because these windows don't open, there's no cross-ventilation.

Customers of the old 460 Sundancer also didn't like having to fill in the 1'- or 1'6"-tall gap between the top of

the windshield and the hardtop with Isenglass to close off the cockpit. On the new model, Sea Ray worked with TaylorMade products, which produced a windshield with a powder-coated aluminum frame that spans the deck to the hardtop, integrating cleanly into the boat's lines.

NEW AND IMPROVED. Of course, some features of the new version are just plain smart additions. Take the hydraulic swim platform, for example. If it's down on most boats, there's nowhere to stand while retrieving something from the transom trunk. On the new 48 Sundancer, there's nearly 1'6" of space where you can stand directly abaft the locker. My favorite highlight in the cockpit is the two-person helm seat that swings aft to starboard so the skipper and a friend can join in the party when you're at the docks.

Finally, although Sea Ray engineers wouldn't reveal details (you'd think it's a raceboat or something), the boat's bottom design has a steeper deadrise. The 460 DA's bottom was 4 degrees flatter at the aft end, which made it pound a bit in rough seas. The 48 Sundancer rides on a sharper V-bottom that has a steep entry and 19 degrees of deadrise aft, resulting in a hull that slices through waves more cleanly.

But the deeper V might not be as fast. That's where Cummins' new 517-bhp 540 QSC diesels come in. With these electronically controlled engines, smoke is no longer a factor. When you push forward, the levers hang on. At 2400 rpm, the 48 Sundancer dropped its bow, then it charged to a top speed of 35.5 mph at 2670 rpm.

Comparison shopping? I checked out one American boat and another from across the pond. Formula's 48 Yacht has the same LOA as the 48 Sundancer but comes packaged with more potent 660-bhp Cummins QSM 660s for \$932,210. It should hit close to 40 mph. Sunseeker's 46 Portofino with twin 490-bhp Yanmar 6CXM GTE 2s retails for \$838,250 and hits a top end of about 35 mph.

NEAT AND TIDY. When it comes to rigging, Sea Ray more than holds its own. The motors in my test boat were secured to the bearers with four-point mounts, but what impressed me even more was that the bearers were notched underneath to give better access to the propshafts coming out of the V-drive transmissions and the oil pans on the motors.

Other maintenance access is excellent with sea strainers and water intakes in a wide open section of the compartment, and the fuel/water separators—including one for the



BOATING

Certified Test Results

Sea Ray 48

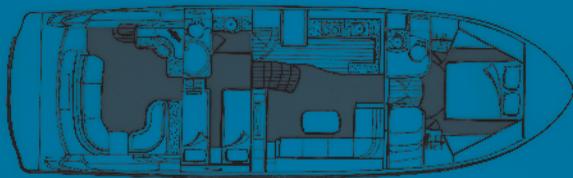


THE HIGHS Much improved interior lighting belowdecks. Good stowage in galley and salon. Swing-away helm seat cleverly adds two seats for party time. Brushed-aluminum-style dash panel looks cool and refreshingly different.

THE LOWS Windows in hullsides don't open, meaning less fresh air can be let into the cabin. Trim tab switches are in the wrong place. All lockers throughout the cabin need fiddles to help retain contents.

| rpm | SPEED | | | EFFICIENCY | | | | OPERATION | |
|------|-------|------|------|------------|-----------|--------------|--------------|-----------|-------------|
| | knots | mph | gph | naut. mpg | stat. mpg | n. mi. range | s. mi. range | run angle | sound level |
| 900 | 7.7 | 8.9 | 3.4 | 2.3 | 2.6 | 819 | 942 | 0 | 69 |
| 1200 | 9.1 | 10.5 | 8.4 | 1.1 | 1.3 | 391 | 450 | 2 | 72 |
| 1500 | 9.5 | 10.9 | 18.3 | 0.5 | 0.6 | 186 | 214 | 5 | 78 |
| 1800 | 16.3 | 18.7 | 25.6 | 0.6 | 0.7 | 229 | 263 | 4 | 83 |
| 2100 | 22.2 | 25.5 | 33.2 | 0.7 | 0.8 | 240 | 277 | 4 | 80 |
| 2400 | 27.3 | 31.4 | 43.7 | 0.6 | 0.7 | 225 | 259 | 3 | 82 |
| 2670 | 30.8 | 35.5 | 56.1 | 0.5 | 0.6 | 198 | 228 | 3 | 83 |

Advertised fuel capacity 400 gallons. Range based on 90 percent of that figure. Performance measured with three persons aboard, one-half fuel, one-half water. Sound levels taken at helm, in dB-A.



| | |
|------------------------------|-----------|
| LOA | 51'0" |
| Beam | 14'8" |
| Draft | 4'0" |
| Displacement (lbs., approx.) | 33,600 |
| Transom deadrise | 19° |
| Bridge clearance | 13'4" |
| Minimum cockpit depth | 2'3" |
| Max. cabin headroom | 6'9" |
| Fuel capacity (gal.) | 400 |
| Water capacity (gal.) | 100 |
| Price (w/standard power) | \$776,666 |
| Price (w/test power) | \$792,633 |

1.73:1 reductions.

STANDARD EQUIPMENT (major items) 9.0kW Onan genset; SmartCraft instrumentation w/ SystemView; hydraulic swim platform w/boarding ladder; hardtop w/overhead lighting; 23" LCD flat-screen TV w/DVD; 50a/240v/60-cycle shorepower w/Glenninning cablemaster; Raymarine RayNav 300 GPS/WAAS w/VHF radio and GPS/chartplotter; bilge pumps w/alarm; windshield wipers and washer; Lofrans windlass w/foot controls; cockpit icemaker; wetbar w/sink; entertainment center w/XMD3 radio, AM/FM/CD stereo, 6-disc changer, 6 speakers; galley w/coffeemaker, microwave/convection oven, upright refrigerator/freezer, 2-burner stove; 17" flat-screen TV; 2 heads w/Vacu-Flush commodes and standup showers w/adjustable-height nozzles; hydraulic steering; trim tabs; batteries in boxes; battery charger; oil exchange system; freshwater washdowns; cockpit shower; 11-gal. water heater; 60-gal. pumpout.

STANDARD POWER Twin 446-bhp Cummins MerCruiser 480 CE in-line-6 diesel V-drive inboards.

OPTIONAL POWER Twin diesel V-drive inboards to 1,080 bhp total.

TEST BOAT POWER Twin 517-bhp Cummins QSC 8.3 in-line-6 diesel inboards with 505 cid, 4.49" bore x 5.31" stroke, swinging 24" x 29" four-bladed Nibral props through

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genset—on the aft bulkhead. Hydraulic lines for the tabs and swim platform are sealed from the inboard side of the transom. Batteries are located ahead of the motors for

easy replacement. Before leaving the engine compartment, take a peek at the underside of the hatch. A thick rubber gasket prevents rattles; there are twin stainless-steel gas struts for support; and the piano hinge is through-bolted with acorn nuts for a solid, well-finished appearance.

DOUBLE FEATURE. Another feature I liked on the 48 Sundancer is one experienced boaters will appreciate. You access the side passageways from inside the cockpit, not from aft on the transom as you would on the Formula 48. The steps up to the passageways are forward of the transom hatch. It's a simple thing, but I also like that the locker containing the fuel shutoffs is labeled properly. When you're looking for the shutoffs, the few seconds you save could make the difference between a minor mishap and a catastrophe. The wraparound cockpit lounge will seat at least eight, and to port, the wetbar will serve the needs of thirsty guests.

When the helm seat is in the "drive" position, skippers will find good ergonomics. The panel has a brushed-aluminum look that gives the 480 Sundancer a sporty feel—a refreshing change from the faux burl-wood that every boat in this class seems compelled to have. Cluster-style gauges include monitors for temperature, oil pressure, fuel, and volts in one 4" instrument, keeping the dash uncluttered. Unfortunately, the trim tab buttons are on the port side of the wheel near the shift levers. Maybe it's my go-fast background, but put the buttons near the throttles. Boaters drive with the left hand and trim and throttle with the right.

LOCKER ROOM. In addition to being well lit, the belowdecks areas on the 48 Sundancer have great flow. Immediately at the base of the stairs, the galley has the usual appliances and is highlighted by a pair of pantry-style drawers that have more than 150 cubic feet of stowage each. It's an excellent use of space. Overall stowage throughout the galley and dinette is abundant, but I noted one inconsistency—not all the lockers had fiddle rails.

The settee to starboard seats eight around a two-position table or sleeps a pair when it's converted to a berth. The entertainment center at the aft end not only offers a good view of the flat-screen TV for everyone, it puts all the rigging for the helm and the entertainment in one location, making it easier to service.

For more private accommodations, the aft stateroom features berths that convert to a queen facing athwartships, and the forward owner's quarters has a full island berth. Each cabin has ample stowage. The heads are similarly equipped and laid out with standup showers and sliding curtains to keep water off the doors. Some might carp about the master head also being the day head, but with the new skylight, larger side windows, and other improvements, I'm betting that most people will see the light and welcome the new 48 Sundancer. ↴



EXTRA POINT

One item on the old 460 that the Sea Ray staff thought would be well received was the power-extendable cockpit lounge that turned into a recessed sunpad. However, owners didn't like it, and Sea Ray now uses a conventional aft lounge.