

Sea Ray 55 Sundancer

AS SEEN IN
BOATINGCELEBRATING 50 YEARS AS
The World's Largest
Powerboat Magazine

NEWPORT NEWS

Red jacket, blue blood. **BY KEVIN FALVEY**

If you're like me, you're wearing shredded deck shoes and a boat show T-shirt and think you're all that—and a bag of chips. Well, that's only if your boat looks good. Stand at the helm of Sea Ray's new 55 Sundancer, and no one will question your attire. Beneath its arctic white gel coat and vinylester resin, the 55 Sundancer is built and equipped to make even serious wrench-heads smile. Of course, a couple of things earned a frown. The mast light should be hinged, which would let it fold down and decrease bridge clearance by nearly a foot. And Sea Ray needs to work on fairing in the leading edge of the swim platform: At a cruise, some water jets up between it and the transom. Nonetheless, this boat is a wow-inducing cruiser. Imagine pulling in amid the megayachts at some posh resort, kicking back in the rotating helm lounge, flipping on the cockpit air conditioning, and popping open a \$6 bottle of water. You'll feel right at home next to the guy with the blue hull and tan deck in the next slip. Great stuff. And it only gets better.

HEAR NO EVIL. Fire up the twin 800-bhp MAN R6-800 diesels and the noise is barely audible from the helm. Idling out of the harbor at 7.6 mph and 65 decibels, you barely disturb the water. It's hot, but you're cool, thanks to

40,000 Btus of external air conditioning and a three-sided hard glass enclosure. Get past the "No Wake" sign and hammer the throttles—the 55 Sundancer surges, its bow rising slightly and the turbos spooling up. Hit the switch and open the skylights. Yeah, baby. Smell the salt but don't wear any. At 2100 rpm, you're making 30 mph. You haven't had to tighten your cap, the Cheetos haven't blown off the solid-wood cockpit table, and it's quiet enough for conversation.

Much of the hush can be attributed to a robust engine installation, including substantial bearers and heavy-duty mounts that limit the transmission of vibration. Plus, Sea Ray generously applies acoustic insulation. But the MAN R6s also deserve credit. Instead of a separate pump hammering away at each injector, these common-rail mills deliver pre-pressurized fuel to all the injectors. That allows for the same sound levels using a through-hull exhaust as you'd get from an older diesel with underwater exhaust. The through-hull exhaust also eliminates the rumble that used to emanate from standpipes and does so without blacking your transom or choking your guests when idling downwind, as was common with an underwater exhaust. Common-rail diesels are cleaner, more efficient, and quieter.

Now, quiet is as quiet does. And there's more than one



WHAT A PROFILE! IT'S SURE TO
TURN HEADS. TOP END: 36.0 MPH.

BOATING

Certified Test Results

Sea Ray 55 Sundancer

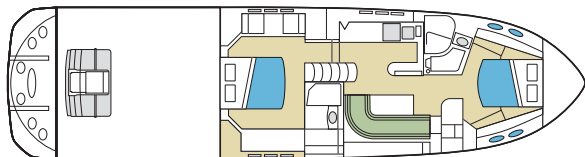


THE HIGHS Engine room? It's a ballroom! Inside and out, this boat smacks of style. Quiet and smooth underway, thanks to good design, robust construction, and common-rail technology.

THE LOWS Hinge the mast light to reduce bridge clearance. Check that the engine controls are a comfortable fit. Platform shoots up some water when underway.

SPEED			EFFICIENCY				OPERATION		
rpm	knots	mph	gph	naut. mpg	stat. mpg	n. mi. range	s. mi. range	run angle	sound level
900	8.6	9.9	8.0	1.1	1.2	798	919	2	70
1200	9.0	10.4	18.9	0.5	0.6	355	409	3	79
1500	15.2	17.5	31.0	0.5	0.6	364	419	3	77
1800	21.0	24.2	45.1	0.5	0.5	346	398	4	78
2100	27.0	31.1	62.0	0.4	0.5	324	372	5	83
2350	31.3	36.0	80.2	0.4	0.4	290	333	4	84

Advertised fuel capacity 825 gallons. Range based on 90 percent of that figure. Performance measured with two persons aboard, full fuel, three-fifths water. Sound levels taken at helm, in dB-A.



Monthly Payment \$9,398

(6.75% interest with 20% down on test boat power, tax not included; 20-year loan to qualified buyers estimated by Excel Credit)

LOA	60'0"
Beam	15'11"
Draft	4'8"
Displacement (lbs., approx.)	53,500
Transom deadrise	17°
Bridge clearance	17'9"
Max. cabin headroom	7'7"
Fuel capacity (gal.)	825
Water capacity (gal.)	200
Price (w/standard power)	\$1,545,000
Price (w/test power)	\$1,545,000

NMMA Yacht Certified

STANDARD POWER Twin 800-bhp MAN R6-800 CRM in-line-6 diesel V-drive inboards.

OPTIONAL POWER Twin MAN diesel inboards to 1,800 bhp total.

TEST BOAT POWER Twin 800-bhp MAN R6-800 CRM in-line-6 diesel V-drive inboards with 781 cid, swinging 30" x 33" four-bladed Nibral props through 1.7:1 reductions.

STANDARD EQUIPMENT (major items) Windlass; cockpit grill, ice-maker, refrigerator; 3 AM/FM/CD/satellite-ready stereos; 3 flat-screen TVs; wetbar; undercounter refrigerator; undercounter freezer w/ice-maker; 3-burner stove; microwave/convection oven; washer/dryer; 2 heads w/vacuum-flush commodes and shower stalls; bow thruster; radar; GPS; touchscreen chartplotter; autopilot; VHF radio; 50a battery charger; 65a battery equalizer; C-phone; shorepower; isolation transformer; 38,000/40,000-Btu a/cs; 20-gal. water heater.

CONTACT Sea Ray Boats, Dept. B, 2600 Sea Ray Blvd., Knoxville, TN 37914, 800/772-6287, www.searay.com.

way to make a big cruiser hush. Tiara's 58 Sovran (\$1,542,500), for instance, is equipped with triple 435-bhp Volvo Penta IPS diesel tractor drives. I haven't tested that boat yet—no one has—but I have found the IPS system to be quiet by virtue of common-rail injection, integral underwater exhaust, a vibe-absorbing circular drive mount, and loads of clearance between props and hull (eliminating the hammer of water as it pulses off the blade tips). Take a look at this boat if you're considering the 55 Sundancer.

Servicing the 55 Sundancer's equipment isn't a problem. There's 360-degree engine access, thanks in part to the elimination of the underwater exhaust system plumbing. Extra seal kits are affixed to the propshafts. Spare props are secured out of the way. Internal sea strainers allow you to clear a clogged intake without having to haul the boat. Seacocks, batteries, genset, fuel tank senders, and more are all easy to lay your hands on. My only complaint about the 55 Sundancer's propulsion is the tight clearance for your hands at the helm controls, a glitch Sea Ray says it's rectifying to comply with ABYC recommendations.

OH, MAN! No fix is needed for the accommodations. The helm deck, within the enclosure, is soled in teak. A high-gloss, inlaid wood table serves the rotational lounge abaft the helm seating. This lounge is in two sections that can each be slid around on circular tracks. A grill and refrigerator are here, as is a wetbar with a sink and trash bin. A flat-screen TV hangs above. Aft, the cockpit lounge seats 10 in plush, padded style. Cruisers Yachts' 560 Express (\$1,355,460 with twin 775-bhp Volvo Penta D12 V-drive inboards) sports a circular lounge—but it's aft, outside the hardtop's shade. It also doesn't rotate. Instead, hit a switch and it converts to a sunlounge. You'll find a grill, too, and bow and stern thrusters are standard.

Now, head through the 55 Sundancer's sliding companionway and down the teak-treaded steps into the maple-soled salon. Directly ahead is the U-shaped galley, with its acre of bull-nosed, faux-stone countertop. A big-screen TV rises at the touch of a switch from this counter, and beneath it are separate undercounter stainless-steel Sub-Zero refrigerator and freezer units. Cabinetry and stateroom doors are available as light or dark raised-panel cherry.

To starboard is the salon with a plush convertible/sleeper lounge and table. Head aft into the master stateroom. Soft light gleams through opaque panels, and miniblinds striate the sunlight as it pours through the huge, 5'-by-2' hullside windows. I measured 6'4" of headroom here and walked all around the home-height, queen-size berth. Full beam, there's space here for a pair of upholstered chairs with a booth-style table. I'd return to this spot with the day's paper and a coffee each morning to enjoy the view. The master also boasts a private head with a wood sole and a tiled shower stall.

Your guests enjoy an island berth in the forward stateroom. Four portholes and more miniblinds regulate natural light. Guests will be pleased to find the walk-in hanging locker, as well as private access to the day head. As in the master, there's a tiled shower. Add a potpourri dish and some designer soaps and your friends will never want to leave. And neither will you. ⚓

EXTRA POINT

Electronic power distribution saves weight and makes the electrical systems easy to manage. Plus, you don't have to sniff the bilge and open the seacock before firing up the genset. Safety first.