

MAINE EVENT

The Back Cove 30 takes a proven design to a new level of comfort and performance.

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It's easy to like a boat when you are gunkholing around the midcoast of Maine in the prime of summer. But now, after a couple of days of leisurely cruising, it was time to truly test the mettle of the new Back Cove 30.





As we rounded Small Point at the mouth of the Kennebec River, we ran head-on into nasty 6- to 8-foot seas. “Now you’ll see how it performs,” says Kevin Burns, the Back Cove’s designer and my cruising companion. I started to work the throttle, tweaking the single 315 hp Yanmar to match the up-and-down rhythm as we powered along at 15 knots. I was braced for some serious slamming and banging, but I soon relaxed. The landings were soft and the boat was easy to control.

I boarded the 30 in Boothbay the previous day, just after Sabre Yachts’ 40th anniversary rendezvous. Burns and Back Cove vice president Bentley Collins walked me through the boat, which is a direct successor to the original 29-footer that launched the Back Cove brand. “We had a great run with the 29,” Collins says, “but we realized it was time to freshen it up a bit.” For more than a year, the Back Cove team polled dealers and owners for suggested improvements. The most common requests were for more social spaces. Burns says, “People wanted to have more room to sit and move around in the cockpit and on the helm deck, so that’s what we did.”

As compared to the 29, the first change I noticed on the 30 was the large, outward-opening transom door, which provides easy boarding access from the swim platform. The inviting L-shape seats built into the back of the cockpit can easily accommodate two couples and are comfortable both when anchored and when under way.

Within the confines of a 30-foot boat, Back Cove managed to create two separate social areas — the open-air cockpit and the weather-protected helm deck. The redesigned helm deck also features new and expanded seating areas. “We had eight couples on the boat during the rendezvous,” Burns says, “and everybody had room to move around.”



SOCIAL AREAS abound on the 30. The cabin provides dining space (top); the cockpit and helm deck offer two distinct seating areas (above).

The captain has the option of an adjustable Stidd helm chair on the starboard side; across to port is a raised seat that can hold two people easily or three if they’re friendly. “We wanted to create an area where three people can sit facing forward,” Burns says. This is indeed the prime spot to watch the world go by, but it’s the settee along the port side I consider the most significant addition. “People wanted a sleeping area on the helm deck,” Burns says, as he showed me how the settee pulls out to form a 36-inch-wide bed. On the starboard side of the helm deck is an additional L-shape settee mated to an attractive cherry wood table.

A sliding two-piece centerline hatch leads down two steps to the cabin. The upper hatch includes a window to add light to the cabin when it’s closed. Both the galley space and head area are generously proportioned for a

boat of this size and style. I had standing headroom throughout, and I’m almost 6 feet 2 inches tall. The single-burner Origo alcohol stove, front-opening refrigerator and microwave give the cook all the tools needed to deliver a hot meal, but given that lunch assembly is a more likely chore, the galley’s standout features are the 3-plus feet of linear counter space available for food prep and the ample storage areas above and below.

The forward section of the cabin features a flexible arrangement that allows the V-berth to convert into a three-sided dining area. Throughout, the cabin has a warm nautical feel with a teak and holly sole, a Herreshoff-type wood treatment on the cabin side and a white overhead with cherry strips to match the hardtop over the helm deck.

Back up top, the 30 provides the same wide side decks and sturdy handrails as its predecessor. But the hull has been redesigned with more tumblehome aft, while the corners of the transom repeat the camber of the hardtop. The spoon bow also has more flare to keep the boat dry, a quality I can attest to based on my time on board. In most conditions, the 30 is an easy-riding boat with 16-degree deadrise at the transom and a small prop pocket that gives a lower, more efficient angle to the drive shaft as well as reducing the draft.

“Running efficiency was a top priority,” Burns says. With bow and stern thrusters, the boat handled easily at the dock and made 16.7 knots and 3,000 rpm while burning only 9 gallons per hour. With the standard 315 hp Yanmar power plant, the boat tops out at more than 25 knots, and engine options up to 380 hp are available.

Engine access is excellent, as the helm deck lifts on two electric struts. Mechanical installations are clean and orderly, and the Racor fuel filter is easy to reach for inspection or cleaning. The battery bank sits in the spacious lazarette, which can accommodate a genset — though our boat was equipped with an inverter, which created additional storage space. A combination of standard and optional features provides all the amenities and comforts needed not only for short trips, but also for extended voyages.

“We meant this to be a social day boat or a cruiser for a couple,” Collins says.

I can easily imagine not only taking the Back Cove 30 around the protected coves and ocean waters of mid-coast Maine, as we did, but also down the waterway to Florida, to the Bahamas or running around the San Juan Islands or the Chesapeake Bay. You’d be comfortable on board, and you’d be happy admiring the lines of your Down East hull if you sat in your dink or stood on the dock. In short, in moving up from the original 29 to the new 30, Back Cove did a very nice job in updating — and improving — one of its classics. ❖

BACK COVE 30

SPECIFICATIONS

LOA: 33'6"
Beam: 11'2"
Draft: 2'6"
Disp.: 12,000 lbs.
Fuel: 160 gals.
Water: 40 gals.
Power: Single 315 to 380 hp
Contact: Back Cove Yachts, backcoveyachts.com
Base Price: \$198,000
Price (as tested): \$230,000

PERFORMANCE

TEST POWER: (1) Yanmar LP 315 hp diesel engine. Speeds measured by GPS as the average of two reciprocal runs on the Sheepscot River north of Goose Rock Passage in midcoast Maine with two people on board, three-quarters fuel and three-quarters water. Fuel flow figures are from the builder. Sound levels measured at the helm in dB-A.

RPM	KNOTS	GPH	DB-A
750	3.4	0.5	66
1,000	4.8	0.6	68
1,500	6.7	1.6	72
2,000	8.4	3.6	77
2,500	11.7	6.5	80
3,000	16.7	9.0	81
3,500	22.0	12.6	84
3,870	25.7	17.0	90



INSIDE: ① The V-berth converts to a sitting area by moving a seat back athwartship to create a bolster. ② The passenger seat is wide and comfortable and has a commanding view. ③ The settee behind it opens up to a bed; you can move the back support of the passenger seat forward to make the sleeping area larger. ④ The two back seats in the cockpit make it into a social area of its own. ⑤ The new outward-opening door in the cockpit gives easy access to the swim platform for using the dinghy or getting on and off the boat.