

# GRAND BANKS EASTBAY 44

With renewed focus on weight saving and efficiency, the Eastbay 44 is the first of a new breed of Grand Banks motor yachts

Words Jack Haines

**G**rand Banks is emerging from a period of change that has seen around \$4 million invested in its Malaysian facility and a refocus that leaves the yard currently building two models: the Grand Banks 60 and the Eastbay 44. It is the latter that sits before me, lashed to a cobbled quayside in the port of Harlingen in northern Holland on a biting cold day in mid March. The Mini Beast from the East is galloping through Europe and its icy hoofs are trampling the Netherlands at the time of our test. With its stylistic roots buried in the pleasant lobster-filled waters of New England, if the Eastbay were able to shiver, it would be doing so.

Against the bleak grey-on-grey backdrop, the Eastbay is a delight, its light-blue hull popping against the steely hue of the water it sits in, the lines an effortless mix of retro hints and modern architecture. Highly varnished teak tops the chunky bulwarks and if you look closely, you'll note that the head of every single screw that attaches the guardrails to the deck is facing the same way.

The combination of traditional and modern continues below the waterline where a hand-laid hull is built with a cross-linked PVC foam core and laminated in Vinylester resin to ensure it is tough but relatively lightweight. Weight reduction is a major focus for Grand Banks these days. The yard describes the Eastbay's structure as being like a monocoque chassis, with the structural pieces of the boat fused together and no void between the internal liner and the hull to maximise living space below decks. For a similar reason, the yard has chosen IPS pods, specifically twin 435hp IPS600, as the sole engine option. Of course, the performance and efficiency benefits of IPS play a significant part in its selection but the location of the engines so far back in the hull allows Grand Banks to fit two and a half cabins on the lower deck and still include a spacious and extremely practical engine room.

The weather on the day of our test gave the warm, inviting saloon extra allure but in balmy conditions, the 44's cockpit is a lovely space. Even without the optional (€5,600) canopy overhead, the cockpit feels safe and well protected. The deck is low and the bulwarks high, so you

instantly feel cocooned and the guardrails align perfectly with the side decks to help you guide you forward along either of the 30cm-wide side decks (45cm forward).

The cockpit bench, covered in robust yet stylish water-resistant upholstery, is plush and comfortable with a smaller couple's seat opposite backed up against the doors. Upright units either side of this bench house an icemaker and fridge with an option to add a grill so you can cook here too. As standard, there is no table in the cockpit, which is partly why there is such a fantastic feeling of space, the idea being that you lift the saloon table and use that outside. The saloon table is heavy though, and with a narrow doorway between cockpit and saloon, this solution won't appeal to everyone, hence the option to fit a fixed table outside as well.

The saloon is brimming with warmth and home-from-home appeal. Teak sprawls liberally throughout the interior from the saloon floor to the window frames and even the beautiful central handhold affixed down the centre of the wheelhouse ceiling. It's an incredibly inviting space, even without a bitter wind urging you



*The aft and side windows slide down electronically to open up the saloon on warm days and there's an unshakable air of quality in the cabins*

inside. Though there is a galley-down version, it's hard to see who would opt for it when the galley-up configuration works so well, placing the kitchen opposite the main dining area and mere steps away from the cockpit.

There isn't the space to fit a full-height fridge-freezer without it dominating the space so a pair of chiller drawers are neatly integrated into the galley unit with their own teak fascias. In a boat that is generally very practical, it's odd that there is such a lack of fiddled edges in the saloon. The galley countertop is completely flat and there's a small ledge behind the helm seat that would be an ideal place to store phones and wallets if it had a small lip to stop items falling off. Some waist-high handholds would be useful too, and there's a perfect spot for a pair of handles either side of the aft door to help as you step between saloon and cockpit. Seemingly small omissions like this, the cheap-looking finish of the galley drawers and lack of auto-illuminating wardrobes in the cabins can be forgiven on boats that don't carry the cachet of the Grand Banks badge, but they aren't so easy to ignore on a boat with a starting price of \$1.25 million.

There is still plenty to admire on the 44, though. The aft and side windows slide down electronically to open up the saloon on warm days and there's an unshakable air of quality in the cabins. Both bathrooms are beautifully finished and enjoy separate shower cubicles, and the floorplan of the master cabin forward allows for a short lobby that leads to the ensuite, enhancing the feeling of space. Space in general is not an issue in this cabin thanks to plentiful room to change

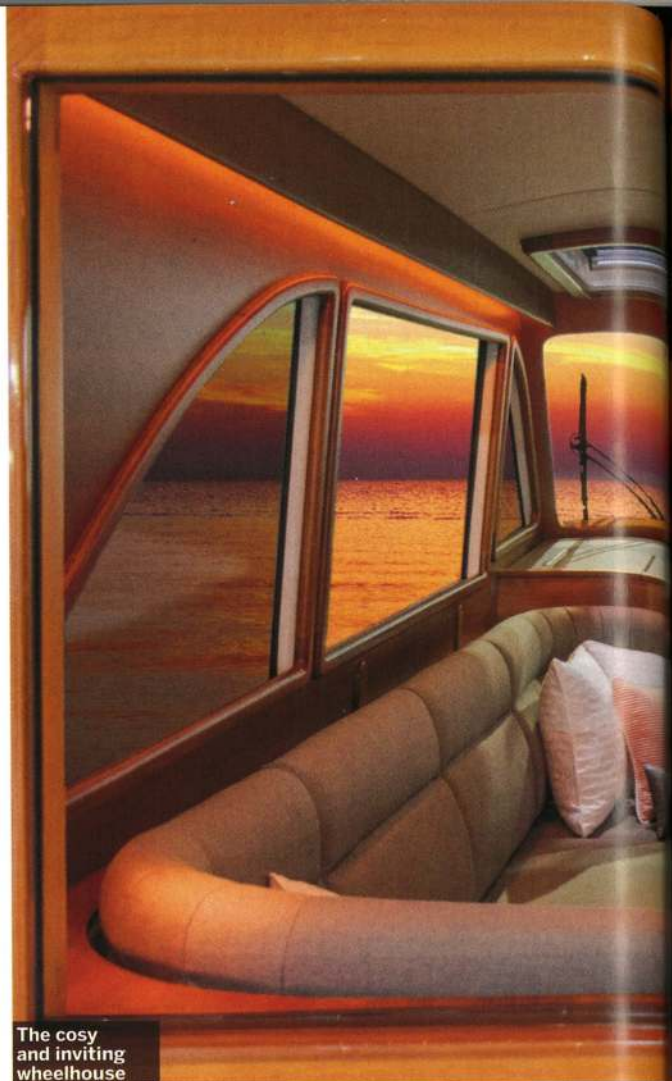
at the end of the bed and enough beam carried forward that you can walk down both sides of the double berth so you don't have the ungainly clamber up into bed.

Headroom is a little tight in the twin guest cabin but the berths are comfortable and there is access to a bathroom the equal of the master ensuite in terms of size. There is the option to have a double bed mounted athwartships in the guest cabin but the pair of twins on our test boat is the more versatile layout. The third cabin is tight with a single berth that will prove useful on occasion, but this area is more of a utility space for the owner to use. It has room for a washing machine and some extra storage space too.

### THE RIDE

The Wadden Sea, which separates Harlingen from the picturesque Frisian Islands, is an unpredictable beast. Its muddy waters are shallow and ravaged by tide so when the wind picks up, conditions can often get nasty, though that wasn't the case on the day of our test, sadly. Passing ferry wake proved the only way of challenging the Eastbay's hull and it dealt with all that was thrown at it with nonchalant ease. From the helm, it is a boat that feels of apiece, solidly constructed and utterly reliable. On a boat so quiet, you would detect every squeak and rattle emanating from the interior if there were any, but you don't hear a thing. The engines melt into the background, reassuringly thrumming away but never speaking out of turn.

At speed, you begin to realise what this boat is about and that is fast, comfortable cruising. At 25 knots, the range is over



The cosy and inviting wheelhouse

400nm and you can cover 344nm, even at its top speed of 33 knots. A 2,200-litre fuel capacity is partly responsible for this impressive range and if you drop back to 10 knots, you can eke out just shy of 900 miles between fills. It's versatile and silky smooth in all situations; at slow speeds, the boat is alert to the joystick and easy to manoeuvre in tight spaces but up the speed and the light steering means you can have some fun throwing it about.

It's a bit of a shame that the broad diameter of the steering wheel, lovely as it looks and feels, makes lock-to-lock turns so cumbersome. With a smaller wheel and a sportier setting for the electronically governed steering, the 44 could be a real hoot.

As is, it's destined to swallow long cruises and the driving position reflects that. You sit high with a broad dash before you so it's easy to survey both the path in front of you and the navigation instruments. The bench is fixed so you have to lean forward to interact with the helm but if you set the speed and relax with a hand draped over the wheel, you soon get into the swing of things and let the boat do the work.

Offering one pod drive engine option on a boat with the heritage of a Grand Banks is a calculated risk, but it has paid off. The 44's dynamics are superb and it harnesses the full efficiency, performance and refinement benefits that IPS can offer when it is installed properly on a boat that was designed from the off to use pod drives.



The version with the galley below decks

## A CLOSER LOOK AT THE EASTBAY 44

### AFT WINDOW

The standard-fit sliding aft window makes communication with those in the cockpit much easier and improves ventilation.



### ROOF HATCH

Some will be disappointed that there is no full-width sunroof but these manual sliding hatches above the dash are reliable and easy to use.



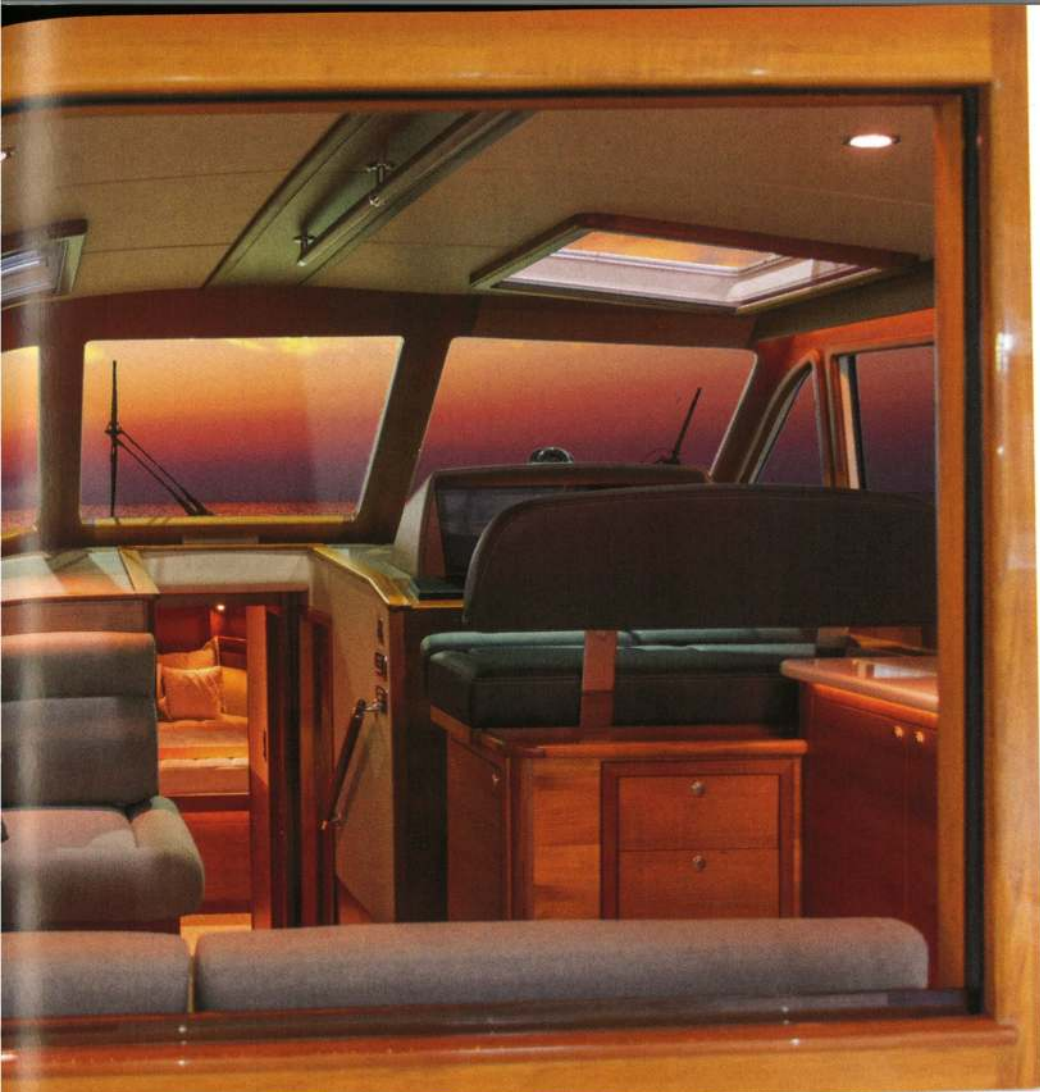
### SCREW HEADS

Trace your way around the boat and you will find that every screw head is facing in the same direction. Not all that important, but we love little details like this.



### ENGINE ROOM

The entire cockpit deck (slowly) rises on a hydraulic ram to reveal a machinery space that has more in common with a surgical theatre than an engine room. Its gleaming white liner makes any leaks very easy to spot and the installation is so neat, it borders on obsessive. Headroom is tight over the pod drives, however.



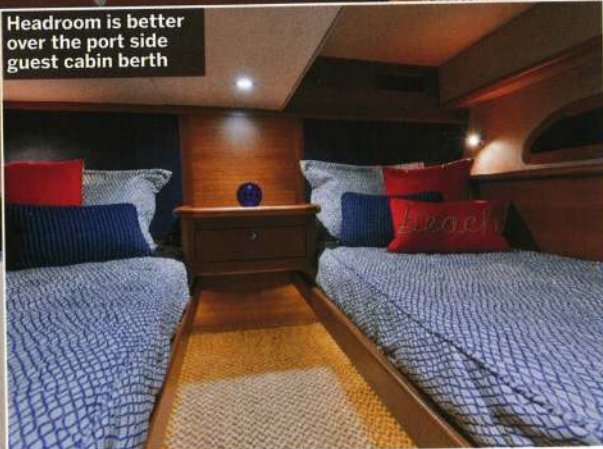
There is teak as far as the eye can see in the master



Warm, solid finishing extends into the bathrooms



Headroom is better over the port side guest cabin berth





✚ The third cabin houses the washing machine and more cold storage, plus an extra berth

*The light-blue hull pops against the steely hue of the water, the lines an effortless mix of retro hints and modern architecture*

✚ Though the door splits and folds, the doorway itself is quite narrow and not all that easy to walk through

✚ They will take some looking after, but the teak toerails look superb. It's a boat that's bursting with classy detailing



## THE DATA

LENGTH OVERALL 48ft 1in (14.65m)

BEAM  
14ft 7in  
(1.03m)



The location of the generator away from the cabins keeps noise levels to a minimum

This can be swapped for an athwartships double if preferred. This layout is versatile, though

This lobby area leading to the ensuite boosts the feeling of space in the forward cabin

**FUEL CAPACITY**  
484 imp gal (2,200 litres)  
**WATER CAPACITY**  
161 imp gal (734 litres)  
**DRAUGHT**  
3ft 5in (1.03m)  
**RCD CATEGORY**  
A for 16 people  
**DESIGNERS**  
C. Raymond Hunt  
& Grand Banks  
**DISPLACEMENT**  
13.5 tonnes

Let's talk money. This is a Grand Banks – if you're looking for a bargain then you'd have turned the page a few paragraphs ago, so you know what's coming. On the water, the boat we tested came in at \$1.38 million which, at the time of writing, translated to €1.12m excluding tax. It starts at \$1.25m (€1.01m). That's an awful lot of dough for a 48-footer with two and a half cabins, though it does have a hefty standard spec (see the data panel below), and take a look at what it's up against. Sabre's 45 Salon Express is a direct rival with a similar layout and IPS600 in the engine room and it has a starting price of \$940,000

(€761,259). Dale's gorgeous 45 is relatively good value in this company but it still comes in at €727,393.

## VERDICT

This style of boat is not built with value for money in mind. This style of boat is built to cocoon you from the elements and whisk you away to your destination in timber and leather-lined luxury. The Eastbay 44 is a Category A beach house. Small improvements are still possible, but it's unquestionably a class act.

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Web: [www.grandbanks.com](http://www.grandbanks.com)

## THE HELM VIEW



Some more storage for loose objects would be useful

The teak and leather finish of the helm station is attractive and of very high quality

These flat dials on the dashboard can be difficult to see when you sit back in the helm seat

The throttles and joystick are well placed so you can pop your head out the window when berthing

## PERFORMANCE

**TEST ENGINES** Volvo Penta IPS600. Twin 435hp @ 3,600rpm. 5.5-litre 6-cylinder diesels

### MBY FIGURES

	ECO					FAST		MAX
RPM	600	1000	1500	2000	2500	3,000	3,300	3,580
Speed	5.4	8.0	10.6	13.1	19.5	25.1	28.1	33.0
LPH	2.4	6.0	21.0	44.0	69.0	107	137	169
GPH	0.53	1.32	4.62	9.68	15.2	23.5	30.1	37.2
MPG	10.2	6.06	2.29	1.35	1.28	1.07	0.93	0.89
Range	3,960	2,347	888	524	497	413	361	344

Speed in knots. GPH & MPG figures use imperial gallons. Range in nautical miles and allows for 20% reserve. Calculated figures based on readings from on-board fuel gauges, your figures may vary considerably. All prices exclude VAT. 58% fuel, 50% water, 6 crew, no stores or tender, 3°C air temp, F4 + slight conditions for sea trials.

## THE COSTS & OPTIONS

Price from	€1.01m ex VAT
Price as tested	€1.2m ex VAT
Fischer Panda 15,000-i generator	STD
Air conditioning (36,000 BTU)	STD
Volvo Penta Dynamic Positioning System	STD
Powered saloon windows	STD
Solid teak cockpit decking	STD
Miele washer-dryer	€3,052
Three-cabin layout	€8,097
Bow thruster	€12,894
Teak toerail	€14,574
Garmin navigation suite	€24,280

— = Options on test boat

## RIVALS

### SABRE 45 SALON EXPRESS

Price from €761,259

Also runs IPS600 for a top speed of 32 knots. Not quite as polished but slightly cheaper.



### DALE CLASSIC 45 €727,393

Made in Britain with lines to die for. Shaftdrive performance up to 36 knots.

