

# SOUNDINGS

REAL BOATS, REAL BOATERS

## Fish Hard Cruise Easy

Design teams are rethinking everything from hull forms to seating plans as anglers demand boats that can run offshore, hit the sandbar and keep the whole family comfortable.

By Kim Kavin

And yet that's the reality with today's center- and dual-console boats. Whether you call these models hybrid, crossover or multipurpose, the trend is the same: Designers are aiming to make fishing boats more cruiser-friendly, and cruising boats more fishing-friendly, with whatever special touches they think will grab the attention of people who want a single ride for the whole family to enjoy.

"Depending on what brand you are, that affects how you're trying to achieve that goal," says Grady-White senior product designer Christian Carraway, who worked on the builder's new 321 Coastal Explorer. "If you look at a Tiara, they were always a great cruising boat, and they now offer a fishing package. Or if you look at a Regal, it's the same sort of thing. They always made fantastic cruising boats, but now they're starting to build center consoles with outriggers and live wells. You're seeing these extremely luxurious, extremely comfortable boats that are also capable. And in many cases, there's also fishability. It's unique to see companies that have never been in the category before trying to get their foot in the door."

At the same time, Carraway says, teams like his own at Grady-White are working toward the same do-it-all goal from the opposite angle of approach. "Back in the '80s and '90s, we were the hard-core, well-built fishing machine," he says. "And what we realized back then is that to continue to be the top-tier premium brand that people thought of us as, we had to incorporate more comfort and versatility. We also had to build boats that you could take to the sandbar or out to dinner."

## Grady-White 321 Coastal Explorer



*The Grady White 321 is a hybrid design to be used inshore and offshore. Courtesy Grady-White*

Carraway says a focus on what boaters want shaped the design of the 321 Coastal Explorer, which debuted in February. And these days, more owners want a boat that can be flexible in terms of where it can be used for fishing and cruising.

Grady-White uses the descriptor “all-shore” when talking about the 321 CE. Essentially, it’s a hybrid design that can be used for inshore or offshore fishing and cruising. The key to that versatility is the deadrise aft: Coastal Explorers have less of it than other Grady-White models. On the 321, for instance, transom deadrise is just 16 degrees.

“You get a lot of the same running characteristics that people like on our boats—the stability at slow speeds, getting on plane with less bow rise, the wave-cutting ability—and in addition to that, you can go into shallower water,” Carraway says. “That gives you the versatility to go into skinnier fishing holes or to the sandbar.”



Creature comforts, too, are part of the 321's brief. "We have comfortable, adult-size seats for 15," he says. "If you look at other brands' seats, they'll sculpt them to look like a three-seater, but it's maybe three kids. Our seats are all big enough for adult males."

Such details are differentiators, he adds. "Our seats are at the right height with thick, plush cushions and backrests that are inclined appropriately. Fishability might be tit-for-tat, but our competitors aren't at the level of comfort that we've been able to achieve."



**GRADY-WHITE 321**

**Centerline length: 31'7"**

**Beam: 10'6"**

**Draft: 1'10"**

**Weight (dry): 9,800 lbs.**

**Power (max): 700 hp**

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