

Marlow 53E

*You won't believe
it's only 53 feet.*

Story and photos by Capt. Tom Serio

Although I'm not old enough yet to be mumbling incoherent statements under my breath on a regular basis, I am guilty of this action on a recent sea trial. Walking through the yacht at hand, I found myself thinking — and at times vocalizing — the virtues of size versus features, with various statements like “This is a 53-foot yacht?” and “How can this be only 53?”

as well as a few colorful words mixed in for good measure. What had me in mixed emotions was the newest delivery by Marlow Yachts, the Marlow 53E. Though not a new design for the Marlow team, it is a fresh look at what a semi-custom builder can offer a client in an easy-to-handle, cost effective, intelligently-designed and full-functioning yacht.



Clean look, low maintenance

The owner of the 53E I tested wanted a bright, clean look with low maintenance. Marlow delivered with an all-white hull and superstructure. Recognizable by the signature Marlow lapstrake hull style, the 53E comes with full walkaround decks, a Portuguese bridge and an extended flybridge deck. The lack of teak decking and steps makes this yacht more low maintenance. Walking surfaces have non-skid coating to prevent slippage. Even the custom aft deck table with rounded edges is fiberglass, omitting all exterior wood elements. For a traditional yacht, the look is contemporary and cleanup a breeze.

Having been on a number of Marlows over the years, I look at them a bit more intensely every time I get on-board. I want to see if the quality stands up to what David Marlow has professed over the years. Specifically, on a smaller model, there should be no shortcuts, lesser grade materials or cheapening of fit and finish. I can truly state that Marlow builds the 53E to the same uncompromising level as he builds his 80E.

Take a good look around. The interior walls, cabinets and even centerline ceiling grabrail are constructed of satin-finished teak, which is inviting and classy, warm but not stodgy. Light colored vinyl and leather offerings fit out the salon port sofa and starboard L-shaped sofa, as well as the ceiling panels. Add in large side windows with blinds, aft doors with windows and an unobstructed view from stem to stern for a wide-open feel and exceptional view from any location. Enhancing the comfort is a port counter with a fridge and icemaker underneath. Opt for a wetbar sink if you'd like.

Marlow constructs his yachts like an airplane fuselage: Allowing for the cabin to support itself without the use of main bulkheads internally, which impedes sightlines and create obstructions.

Step it up

Forward up a few steps is the starboard galley and port dining settee with flip-up table. Acres of Corian counterspace line the U-shaped galley, outfitted with a Franke stainless sink with Grohe faucet, three-burner Kenyon cooktop with pot holders, and a Dacor convection oven. Marlow opts for under-counter fridge and freezer drawers, and this 53E has four Sub-Zero pull-outs, alleviating the need for a full-height fridge while providing the same capacity. A Fisher & Paykel dishwasher fits well into the appliance scheme. There are so many drawers and overhead cabinets that you might be hard-pressed to fill them all.

For the owner/operator, the helm is center next to the table, keeping the operator near guests. Port and starboard side doors make loading provisions into the galley uncomplicated, as well as accessing the Portuguese bridge, foredeck seats and dock lines.

Command of the vessel is easy from the lower helm pod, with an angled console for twin multifunction displays and a dash sufficiently sized for other electronics, including CAT engine monitor, tabs, spotlight control, autopilot, thruster joystick, throttle shifters and more. Banks of rocker switches, breakers, Naiad stabilizer controller and a bilge/water alarm annunciator panel are overhead.

Size matters

Remember, this is a 53-foot yacht; however, the three staterooms below feel like you are on a larger yacht.

Teak and holly flooring carries from the main deck down the stairs to the lower areas. Forward is a VIP stateroom, with a raised queen centerline berth, under-berth storage, cedar locker and overhead lighting. A double berth stateroom is on the port side, with a cedar-lined hanging locker and opening rectangular porthole. The VIP and portside staterooms share a head, complete with separate

shower stall with opening porthole, teak floor grate and Lexan door. Corian counters, Grohe faucets and a vacuum flush toilet are included.

Situated midship with a walkaround, centerline king berth, the full-beam master stateroom is larger than some apartments in New York City. Finished in velvety satin teak wood, it's an oasis of comfort, from the plush bedding and padded headboard to the large, rectangular opening portholes that let in the afternoon breeze. Custom-built wooden privacy screens slide in tracks to cover the portholes and are translucent to allow ambient light in. Deep drawers on both port and starboard sides are perfectly sized for casual clothing. Dual cedar-lined closets handle the hanging wardrobe and smaller items on built-in shelving. A 26-inch flat panel TV is mounted across from the berth.

Between the master and engine room is the master his/her heads with center shower stalls, Corian counters, Grohe faucets, wood-framed beveled wall mirrors, lighted vanity mirrors, vacuum flush toilets and storage compartments.

In the hallway is a deck hatch to a machinery space, with access to the freshwater pumps, bow thruster motor and other ancillary systems. There's ample storage for provisions, storage containers and gear. An optional GE washer and dryer fit neatly into recessed openings right outside the master stateroom.

Max power, minimum size

What makes this boat move — and at impressive speeds — are a pair of Caterpillar 12.9 diesel engines. These powerplants, a collaboration between Cat and Fiat Powertrain Technologies, create higher horsepower in a lighter, smaller package. Marlow chose this 53E to be the first with this engine setup and it didn't disappoint.

Producing 850 hp each, the twin turbo and aftercooled diesels pushed our ride up to just shy of

25 knots at 2300 rpm, 86 gph combined. With tabs off, the 53E hull is on plane running about 16.8 knots at 1800 rpm, and 47 gph. Need more speed? Opt for the engine superchargers, which result in 1,000 hp but in the same footprint. They are a bolt-on addition to this model engine.

A true testament to exceptional space planning is the amount of room around the blocks in the engine room. Compact engines, ZF 360 IV reverse reduction V-drive transmissions, equipment racks and a smart layout add to the usability of the space. Heck, there's even workbenches behind the engines.

Great outdoors

You don't go boating to be indoors, and Marlow knows that, as evidenced by the exterior gathering places. On the aft deck there's a comfy bench seat nestled between the two boarding stairs from the swim platform. Two side gates make side docking access easy. Wing doors to the side decks allow for a full enclosure to be used around the aft deck, perfect for those cooler cruising months when you still want to sit out back. Covered side decks, forward Portuguese bridge walkaround and twin bench seats forward offer many options for chilling outside.

With twin helm seats and the same electronics found at the lower helm, underneath the flybridge hardtop is where you'll want to be. Accessible from the aft deck molded staircase or the staircase to the lower helm, moving about from deck to deck is seamless.

Well-padded L-settee seating to starboard and bench seating to port makes for great lounging. Casual dining is a breeze, thanks to the grilling station aft with fridge. A davit crane allows for water toys to be stored up top. Or use this space for lounge chairs.

When you see the Marlow 53E and give it a good once-over, you may find yourself mumbling "I can't believe this is 53 feet!" too! ★



Marlow 53E

SPECIFICATIONS

LOA: 61'

Beam: 17'3"

Draft: 4'5"

Weight (dry): 66,000 lbs.

Fuel Capacity: 1,200 gal.

Water Capacity: 300 gal.

Power (tested): Caterpillar 12.9 diesel engines

Base Price: \$1,500,000

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DEALER

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