



Readers' Boats

1987 Bertram 33 Sportfish "Island Time"



I've owned boats of various kinds and conditions since I was 12 years old. Over the past few years, we have steadily upgraded in boat size and condition and recently had a jet boat and a 23' (7m) Pro-Line. We caught the offshore cruising and fishing bug with the Pro-Line. Once we'd finished our many upgrades to the Pro-Line, we decided that it was too small and wanted a boat that we could pour our hearts (and wallets) into and that would be large enough to keep us happy for many years.

We had settled on Bertram as the brand of choice because of a good friend who has a classic Bertram 31 and from whom we had heard many times (and then later from many others) about the superior construction and sea-keeping

abilities of these boats. With that settled, we zoomed in on the 33 Sportfish, with diesel engines and, after months on an Internet search, we found our baby, a 1987 33' (10m) Sportfisherman with 3208T Caterpillar diesel engines.

We finalized the purchase of our Bertram in October 2004, following a hurricane season that destroyed many boats and marinas throughout Florida. The purchase settlement was delayed for months because no insurance company would underwrite the boat while a "named storm" was approaching Florida. (Hurricanes marched toward Florida relentlessly in 2004). We brought the boat from Fort Lauderdale to Melbourne in October, hugging the coastline on a five-hour trip that was also a tour of coastal hurricane

devastation. That day, the winds picked up and I was very happy to learn that the 5' (1.5m) choppy seas were no challenge for our Bertram. It plowed right through them at 21 knots in confidence and relative comfort.

From our course about 5 miles offshore and parallel to the coast, we could see wrecked boats and buildings everywhere. The last leg of our trip from Sebastian Inlet to Melbourne, via the Intercoastal Waterway, was a nautical minefield of sand bars, sunken boats and floating dock debris. I felt guilty pulling into the marina that evening in Melbourne, proud owner of a new (to me) boat that still floats, while so many other boat owners were busy trying to raise their sunken vessels in the various states of devastation all around us. We



A surprisingly large and well-equipped interior for this size boat.



This model has a large cockpit, a must for fishing and cruising in Florida, where boaters spend most of their time outside.

managed to get through it all unscathed and tied up in our slip, right next to a submerged 40' (12m) Carver.

The previous owner of our boat had kept it in good cosmetic condition but he wasn't as vigilant with mechanical issues as I would have liked. Every time I stuck my head in a hatch or bilge space to plan an upgrade, I was distracted by many other newly discovered problems. Unfortunately, our surveyor, who had no trouble identifying the obviously rusted rattletrap, albeit still functioning generator, missed many of these conditions so we were left with unpleasant surprises.