

# Natural Progression

By Richard Thiel

Viking kept what worked, improved what needed it, and came up with a hot new 52-footer.

Bet you a PMY cap you can't answer this question: Between 1964 and today, what production yard built more boats larger than 40 feet than any other? If you guessed Sea Ray, Bayliner, or Carver, you'll have to find another way to keep your noggin warm this winter. Give up? It's Viking Yachts.

Surprised? You should be, for two reasons. One, Viking builds only high-end boats typically delivered with a lot of optional equipment, yet despite these vessels' relatively high prices, buyers are drawn to them like fish to a chum slick. Two, the company builds only one kind of boat, convertibles, so its line should appeal to a relatively small audience—theoretically. (Viking Sport Cruisers, a separate company, sells cruising 't\* yachts.) Obviously not all Viking owners are hard-core anglers.

One could easily speculate on the reasons for such success, but you don't have to be a marketing guru to figure out that a big one is a constantly evolving product line. Year after year, Viking introduces more new models than many full-line builders. Not known for reinventing itself, Viking hews to a gradual approach that maintains a clear identity and thereby maximizes resale value. If you look down a line of Vikings from the last 10 years, you're struck as much by their familial







A totally new U-shape galley (inset), now with standard Sub-Zero refrigerator/freezer drawers, puts a new face on the 52's saloon.

little rpm as you crank the wheel ever harder over. Spin it the four and a half turns from lock to lock as energetically as you wish, and she never loses her poise.

Of course, there are interior changes as well. The basic plan is unchanged, but the elongated stem and 1'1" more beam provide enough room for a queen-size berth in the forepeak, if you select the standard layout. Our test boat had the optional layout—the only one on the 50—with bunks to starboard. Aft on this level the master with en suite head is now to port and the third stateroom is now to starboard, separated from the forepeak stateroom by a head. One feature here bears mention by virtue of its spatial sleight of hand. That head has three doors—one to each stateroom and a third to the hallway so it can function as a day head—yet still somehow manages to accommodate all the accoutrements (including a big stall shower). The standard washer and dryer also moves across the hall and against the aft bulkhead, where there's more space.

Up on the saloon deck, the galley seems to enjoy the lion's share of the additional 2'3" (52'10" versus 50'7"). It's now U-shape instead of the angled-1 configuration of the old boat. A U-shape is considered the optimum configuration not only because it maximizes space, but for its added security underway. Viking enhanced the design by eliminating the refrigerator/freezer that stood in the forward port corner and replacing it with four standard Sub-Zero drawers, two refrigerator and two



freezer, a \$5,320 option on the 50. I'd guess counterspace is doubled, and there's still enough undercounter real estate to accommodate a dishwasher or trash compactor. Another nifty space trick: The forward cabinets extend some three feet deep under the windshield—well beyond arm's reach—so Viking fits them with roll-out racks to make them really useful.

Being an evolutionary design, much is unchanged on the 52. All hatches are still built using a resin-transfer process that makes them light and fully finished on both sides. The cockpit is devoid of cabinet pulls, lending a clean, custom look and minimizing the potential for line snags. Both heads have clearly labeled switch panels so your guests won't be confused. The engines are still mounted to steel 1-beams that bolt to fore and aft bulkheads to ensure unchanging engine alignment.



Top: The 52's secret weapons, six-sided rudders. Middle: The ultimate in a clean helm—everything is visible but protected. Above: There are no latches or hinges to snag a line in the cockpit.

End-grain balsa is used in the hull sides, cabin top, and decks. Viking still offers a list of standard equipment composed as if every owner were a hard-core angler: transom door, fresh- and raw-water washdowns, four rod holders, fishbox, and tackle center with bait-prep station and freezer. And the engine room still looks more like an OR than a mechanical space.

One of the advantages of an evolutionary approach to boat-building is it allows you to keep what works and eliminate what doesn't. I couldn't find much in that latter category on the 52, although I do have a problem with the near-vertical athwartship bridge ladder. Yes, I know it saves space, but it can be tough to negotiate in a seaway—and especially when the guy at the

## PMY TESTED: VIKING 52 CONVERTIBLE

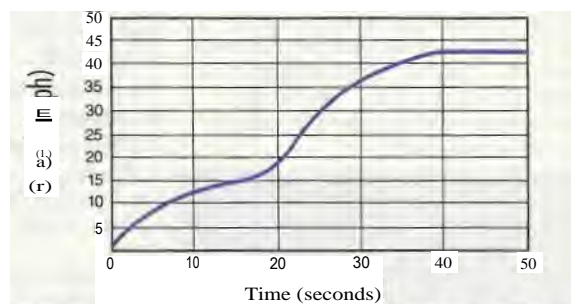


Base price: \$1,239,000 with 2/1,050-hp MAN 028401403 diesel inboards  
 Optional power: 2/1,300-hp NH D784211404 diesel inboards  
 Standard equipment: 51,000-BTU Cruisair A/C; 6/bilge pumps; engine room gauges; oil change system; eternal sea strainers; fire protection system; 21 kW Onan genset; power-assisted hydraulic steering; SEA 1 57 VHF; 4/rod holders; fishbox; transom door; tackle cabinet w/freezer and bait center; 2/15ls; AM/FM stereo/CD player; central vacuum; washer, dryer, refrigerator and freezer drawers

### SPECIFICATIONS

LOA: 52'10"  
 Beam: 17'5"  
 Draft: 5'1"  
 Weight: 62,000 lbs.  
 Fuel capacity: 1,200 gal.  
 Water capacity: 205 gal.  
 Test engines: 2/1,300-hp MAN 0284211404 diesel inboards  
 Transmissions: Of  
 Ratio: 1.97:1  
 Props: 32 x 471/r  
 Steering: Teletex hydraulic w/power assist  
 Controls: Glendinning electronic  
 Optional equipment on test boat: livewell; Pipewelders tower; Rupp outriggers; custom helm pod; electronic single-lever controls and trolling valves; hardtop; 4-side bridge enclosure; 6-rod rocket launcher; 15" color flat-screen TV; 600-gpd Sea Recovery watermaker

ACCELERATION (mk)



Acceleration based on average of 4 reciprocal runs using Stalker ATS radar gun and Oront<sup>®</sup>C laptop.

RPM	MPH (KNOTS)	GPH	MPG (MPG)	SM RANGE	SM RANGE	DECIBELS
1000	11.3 (9.8)	25.4	0.44 (0.39)	480	418	83
1250	20.1 (17.4)	41.0	0.49 (0.43)	528	459	86
1500	26.2 (22.7)	55.6	0.47 (0.41)	508	442	85
1750	33.2 (28.8)	69.0	0.48 (0.42)	519	451	17
2000	39.4 (34.2)	92.6	0.42 (0.37)	459	399	87
2250	42.1 (37.1)	112.6	0.38 (0.33)	410	356	89
2350	45.0 (39.1)	136.4	0.33 (0.29)	356	310	91

Conditions: temperature: 82°; humidity: 55%; wind: S mph; seas: flat; land: 900 gal. fuel, 50 gal. water, 4 persons, mod. gem. Speeds are two-way averages measured w/Stalker radar gun. GPH measured with DIL fuelflow gear. Range: 90% of advertised fuel capacity. Decibels measured on A scale. 65 dB is the level of normal conversation.

wheel is having as much fun as I did.

**Viking Yachts W** (609) 296-6000. Fax: (609) 296-3956. [www.vikingyachts.com](http://www.vikingyachts.com).

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