

Grady-White 251 CE (2015-)

Brief Summary

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The Grady-White 251 CE.

The Grady-White 251 CE is the first model in the Coastal Explorer series that is specifically designed for the millions of people who live near large bodies of water and want to go boating both in protected water and along the coast as well. Further, the 251 CE has been carefully designed to incorporate all of the best features that have proved to be popular with families who enjoy watersports activities such as swimming, beaching, and towing sports. Our test boat was powered by a single 300-hp outboard that gave her a top speed of 49.2 mph and a range of 211 statute miles at best cruise.

Price

Base Price

Prices, features, designs, and equipment are subject to change. Please see your local dealer or visit the builder's website for the latest information available on this boat model.

Key Features

- 74-quart forward port & starboard insulated fish box w/ob drain
- Aft bench seat with port and starboard folding backrests
- Opening console portlight with screen
- Hydraulic trim tabs with indicator and retractor
- Aft swim ladder
- 4 rod holders aft and 6 vertical rod holders storage forward
- Helm leaning post with removable backrest

Test Results

RPM	MPH	Knots	GPH	MPG	NMPG	STAT. MILE	NM	dBa
600	2.9	2.5	0.6	4.8	4.1	333	290	60
1000	5.3	4.6	1.2	4.4	3.8	307	267.1	67
1500	7.5	6.5	2.2	3.5	3	245	212.9	71
2000	9.5	8.2	3.8	2.5	2.2	177	153.8	77

RPM	MPH	Knots	GPH	MPG	NMPG	STAT. MILE	NM	dBa
2500	13.4	11.6	5.4	2.5	2.2	175	152.3	80
3000	19.9	17.3	6.6	3	2.6	211	183.6	84
3500	28	24.3	9.4	3	2.6	210	182.5	90
4000	32.7	28.4	11.9	2.7	2.4	193	167.7	90
4500	37.7	32.7	16.7	2.3	2	159	138	92
5000	41.6	36.1	20.3	2.1	1.8	144	125.3	93
5500	44.9	39	26.6	1.7	1.5	118	103	96
5700	49.2	42.8	26.9	1.8	1.6	128	111.6	97

[View the test results in metric units](#)

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Specifications

Length Overall	24' 7" / 7.49 m
BEAM	8' 6" 2.59 m
Dry Weight	3,715 lbs. 1,685 kg
Tested Weight	5,013 lbs. 2,274 kg
Draft	14" .36 m
Draft Up	

Draft Down	
Air Draft	
Deadrise/Transom	16 degrees (SeaV2® progression)
Max Headroom	N/a
Bridge Clearance	8'1" 2.46 m
Weight Capacity	
Person Capacity	
Fuel Capacity	78 gal. 295 L
Water Capacity	10 gal. 38 L
Length on Trailer	
Height on Trailer	
Trailer Weight	
Total Weight	5,013 lbs. 2,274 kg
Aft Deck	
Salon Inside Width	
Salon Fore & Aft	
Salon Height	

Salon Volume	
Galley Volume	
Master SR Width	
Master SR fore & Aft	
Master SR Overhead	
Master SR Volume	
Eng. Room Volume	

Acceleration Times & Conditions

Time to Plane	2.5 sec.
0 to 20	
Ratio	1.75:1
Props	Yamaha Saltwater Series 2 18T-15 1/4
Load	2 persons, full fuel, no water, 50 lbs. of gear
Climate	48 deg., 45 humid.; wind: 5-10 mph; seas: light

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The Grady-White 251 CE combines remarkable fishability with sportboat features that create a versatile boat that can be used for most anything by the whole family.

Mission Statement

The mission of the 251 CE is to serve the boating needs of the whole family that live near large bodies of water, such as the Atlantic Ocean or the Great Lakes, but who also go boating in protected water, such as the ICW, estuaries, or rivers. Further, she is designed to be a coastal fishing machine -- or, a watersports cruiser with all of the functions and utility of a deckboat. By providing a versatile platform that can be optioned with equipment to take her in one direction -- or in several directions -- the 251 CE can actually perform virtually all of the functions needed for 80% of coastal boaters.

Overview

The 251 CE has a hull that draws just 14" (.36 m), making her ideal for inshore fishing both with rod and reel and for net casting. To that end, she has bow and stern casting platforms and everything in between that veteran anglers need.

With just 20" (.51 m) of cockpit depth, the 251 Coastal Explorer becomes a functional deckboat. The addition of a bow, beach re-boarding ladder (the only one we have ever seen on a center console), chaise, plenty of seating in the bow, transom seating and a head with a standard Porta-Potti prove the 251 CE is more than just a fishing boat. With the addition of an optional tow pylon, the 251 CE can perform virtually all of the utility normally found in a conventional sportboat or deckboat -- plus a lot more.

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With sweeping curves and pin striping that follows the sheer line contours, the 251 CE has classic lines. Her 16-degree deadrise at the transom gives her a high top speed and good mid-range fuel economy.

Major Features

- Hull design by C. Raymond Hunt & Associates
- Stainless steel thru-hull fittings
- All 316-grade stainless steel
- 100% hand-laid hull and deck
- Dual 74-quart (70 L) fish boxes under the port and starboard bow seats
- Bow and stern reboarding ladders
- 10 flush-mounted rod holders
- Standard Porta-Potti
- Standard hydraulic tilt steering
- 47 sq. ft. (4.4 sq. m) cockpit area
- All drink holders, rod holders and pull up cleats are connected to tubes that allow water and condensation to drain onto the deck, rather than into the bilge.

Performance

The 251 CE has an LOA of 24'7" (7.49 m), a beam of 8'6" (2.59 m) and a hull draft of 14" (.36 m). With an empty weight of 3,715 lbs. (1,685 kg), full fuel and two people on board, we had an estimated test weight of 5,013 lbs. (2,274 kg). Tested with a single Yamaha F300 4-stroke outboard turning a Saltwater Series 2 - 18T-15 ¼ prop, we reached a top speed of 49.2 mph at 5700 rpm. At that speed, we were burning 26.9 gph, which translated into a range of 128 miles.

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Our test boat was powered with a Yamaha F300 outboard.

Best economic cruise was measured at 3000 rpm and 19.9 mph. That speed reduced the fuel burn to 6.6 gph, which increased the range to 211 statute miles. That said, we did find a close comparison to that speed with regards to the range and mpg with the throttle advanced to 3500 rpm. That increased the speed to 28 mph, raised the fuel burn to 9.4 gph while only dropping 1 mile off the range. For that reason, we'd label 3500 rpm as "best cruise". She's also a quick boat with a 2.5 second time to plane, 5.1 seconds to 20 mph, and a 7.8 second time to 30 mph.

Sea V2 Hull

Any talk of the 251 CE's performance has to start with a discussion of the Sea V2 hull design. The C. Raymond Hunt & Associates-designed hull has a continually changing deadrise as the hull transitions forward. In this case, it starts at 16-degrees at the transom and increases from there as one moves forward.

A Key Design Factor.

This deadrise at the transom is somewhat less than we usually see on many deep-V center consoles which might be intended for blue water fishing work. That is precisely the difference that makes this design ideal for boating in protected and coastal locations. By foregoing a deep-V hull (which is not needed because the boat won't be taking 3' waves offshore), the 251 CE can be both far more stable at rest and at trolling speeds -- and, be faster and more fuel-efficient at the same time.

Family-Friendly.

By making the boat more stable, she is automatically going to be more comfortable for the whole family who may not be ready for deep-V rock and roll. Her low deadrise gives her shoal draft making her easy to beach, and ideal for anglers in skinny water.

Fast Hole Shot Times.

Because the deadrise is 16-degrees, rather than, 19 or 20-degrees, the boat is easier to push, which maximizes both top speed, fuel efficiency and lowers the rpm necessary to keep the boat on plane when throttling back. Skiers and wake boarders will like the boat's 2.5 seconds from zero to planing speed to get them up out of the water fast. Anglers involved with Le Mons starts in fishing tournaments can also benefit from this jackrabbit-like starting.

Grady-White 251 CE deadrise

The 16-degree deadrise at the transom and her wide chine flats make the 251 CE fast out of the hole, fuel-efficient at best cruise and fast at the top end. In addition, these two attributes dampen roll, making the 251 CE more comfortable than deep-V designs.

Grady-White 251 CE chines

With both extra-wide chines and extra-wide strakes, the 251 CE gets lots of lift for better performance and remains more stable at rest. This is a key difference with the 251 CE.

But a Soft Ride, Too.

Forward the hull has a sharp, deep-V entry that easily cuts through chop and short waves providing a smooth ride and little or no pounding, depending on speed and conditions. The wide bow flare keeps spray out and away from the boat providing a dry ride. The strakes also contribute to that dry ride acting as deflectors once the boat is on top.

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No deep-V means this boat easily slides up onto the beach.

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The 251 CE's sharp entry cuts through waves rather than bouncing over them. Here we can see how the spray is thrown wide and low contributing to the dry ride. New windshield configuration not shown.

So Does it Work?

In a word, yes. During our test, we sadly didn't have any noteworthy sea conditions but we did do our share of experimenting with self-generated waves and found several things that are worth sharing. But remember, this boat is intended for protected and coastal waters, so we were actually able to replicate her intended environment.

First, There's Good Tracking.

This hull design is touted as being able to allow the boat to track better in quartering seas. So we rode up to the wake of the camera boat and let it hit the quarter in a well-controlled manner and sure enough, we remained straight with hands off the wheel, when we should have been sent off in another direction. Check.

Second, Dry and Comfortable.

Crossing wakes at varying angles showed that the hard chine and strakes, combined with the generous bow flare, served quite well towards producing a dry ride. We also noticed a softer ride than expected in a boat with a 16-degree deadrise at the transom. That is because of the sharp sections forward cushion the ride when running through chop.

Third, is Stability.

She's stable at rest so working either of the two elevated casting platforms will be a comfortable experience. Drift fishermen will certainly love this boat as she has a natural tendency to present her beam to the wind.

Helm

The helm is mounted to the port side of the console and accommodates two-across seating quite well. There's plenty of open space for mounting a navigation display but Grady-White isn't in the electronics business so that option is left up to the buyer to choose and install. We think that's good news, as all too often a builder only offers one choice and that may not be the best for the consumer. Here, choose from all the manufacturers and the features desired.

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Grady-White created a good looking helm for the 251 CE and we also appreciated the ergonomics. Note that the supports for the optional T-top are affixed to the side of the console and not mounted to the deck where they will stub toes and take up space.

The wraparound windshield is made of thick, sturdy acrylic, has little to no distortion at the curves, and is quite durable. A storage area located at the top of the console, is divided into two sections and padded at the bases. The switch panel is separated from the dash and the horn is instantly identifiable in red. Located in the center of the console is the Yamaha multi-function display.

Below, the wheel is mounted to a tilt base. The engine controls are state-of-the-art digital so they are easy to move and precise. Two drink holders are to starboard with the stereo and a grab handle just above.

Features Inspection

Fishing

Being, first of all, a center console, it's hard to start anywhere other than with the fishing features. (The family amenities run a close second.) Be that as it may, the fishing category needs to start with a mention of the 47-sq. ft. (4.37 sq. m) cockpit area. This provides plenty of room to move about on deck without any feeling of being constricted by seating or the leaning post. As noted above, the supports for the optional T-top are bolted to the console and not the deck, making moving around the console non-problematical for even portly anglers.

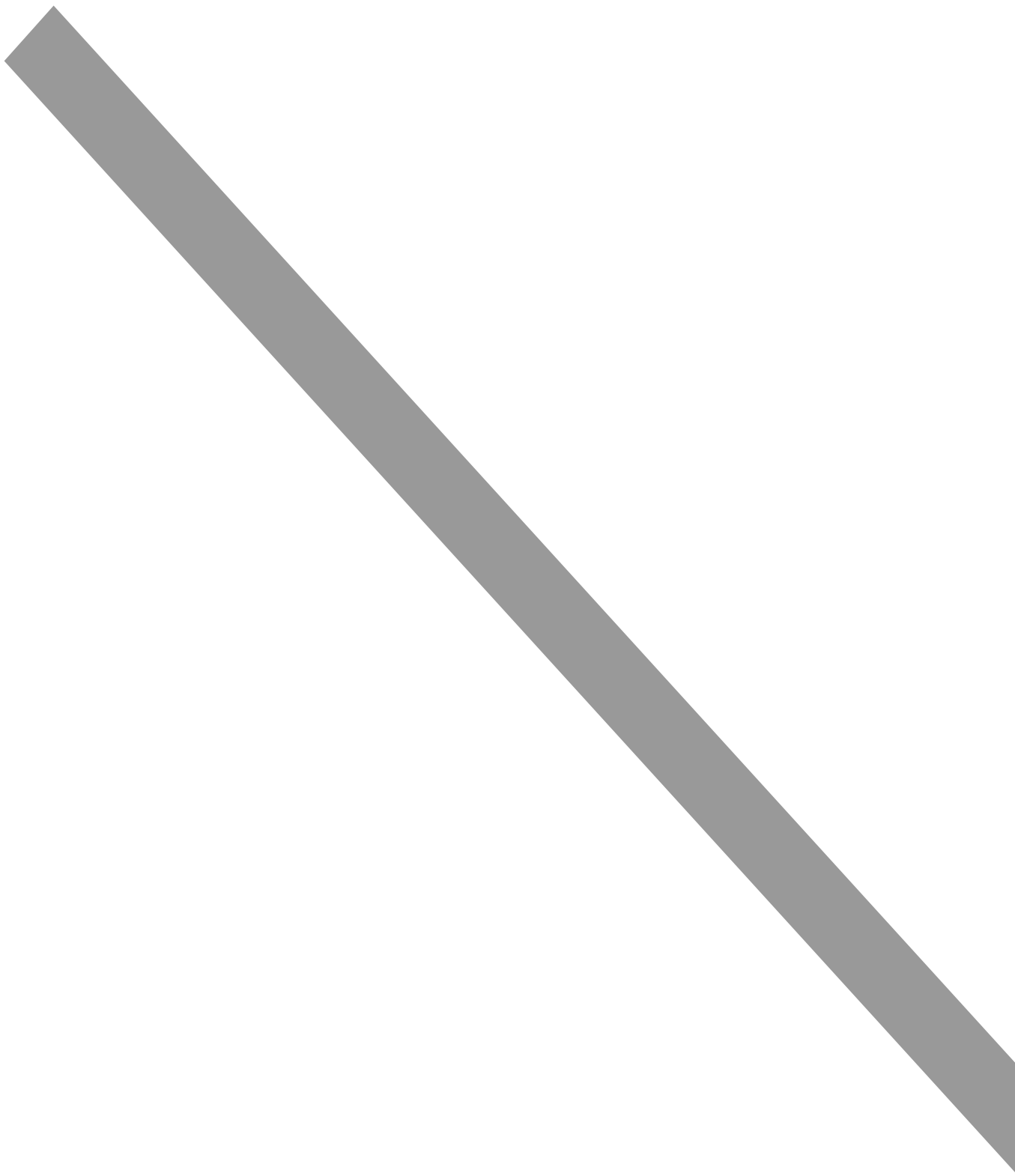
Grady-White 251 CE room

There's 47-sq. ft. (4.37 sq. m) cockpit area plus a large casting deck at the stern (another at the bow).

The aft casting deck

is U-shaped and provides its own measure of freedom to move about. All hardware is flush-mounted, eliminating any tripping hazards. There is storage to both sides, and a 12.75-gallon (48.3 L) insulated raw water livewell w/light & ob drain in the middle.

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At the stern is a casting deck 6'8" (2.0 m) across.

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The transom seats lift to reveal storage bins port and starboard and an insulated, self-draining 51 quart (48.3 L) compartment that can be used as a fish box, beverage cooler, or for more storage.

Just ahead is a leaning post with a grab handle. The absence of a work area behind the post is probably what adds to the feeling of roominess in the cockpit. However, there is storage at the bottom port side of the post and organizers are included.

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Storage drawers were located to the lower left of the leaning post in our test boat.

18 Rod Holders.

Four flush-mounted rod holders are in the caprails, two to each side. Forward, just abaft the bow seating, are six vertical rod holders, making a total of 10 as standard. Eight more were included from the back of the deluxe leaning post and up on the back of the T-top. That adds to 18 rod holders on our test boat.

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Rod holders are in the caprails, at the bow, behind the leaning post, and at the rear of the T-top.

Huge Bow Casting Deck.

Forward there's another casting deck and part of it can be made up of an insert that serves double duty as an optional bow table. Normally when we see that sort of combination we have a knee-jerk reaction of thinking that we need to limit weight, as tables aren't generally made to hold excessive loads. Not so here. This is a heavy-duty table that can take the proverbial 800-lb. gorilla. It is made specifically for both rod and net casting, as well as to be a table -- and, leg rest for a chaise lounge.

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At the bow, the table rests in place to form a forward casting deck. This is among the heaviest tables we've seen so there's no worry about it bouncing out of position.

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At the bow, there are two 74-quart fish boxes, port and starboard. Just behind are the lifting seat backs which create chaise seating.

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Tackle storage is to starboard and a storage drawer is to the port side of the bow seats.

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Fully forward is a dedicated locker for a Danforth-type anchor. Note the port and starboard running lights which are separate and larger than what we normally see on this type of boat.

The deluxe leaning post

Also includes an insulated 25-gallon (95 L) livewell located under the observer's seat. The catch can be deposited in one of the two standard 74-quart (81.5 L) fish boxes that make up the bow seats/casting deck.

Also, at the bow there's a raw water washdown spigot. All too often we see these at the stern, which requires a long hose to reach the bow. Since all decks are typically slanted towards the stern anyway, why not have the water connection at the bow? Here it is, making short work of the washdowns while underway.

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There's no shortage of stainless steel on the 251 CE, and that includes the raw water washdown spigot at the bow.

"Family" Features

What is a "family" feature? Basically, anything that makes the boat more comfortable and also adaptable to watersports. Our test boat was loaded with all of them and frankly taken together they create a remarkably versatile boat with high utility. It is safe to say that she could go head-to-head with virtually any sportboat or deckboat on the market as far as functionality goes.

Console Seat with Cooler.

It starts with the usual seat ahead of the console. A dedicated seatback cushion is mounted to the console and the whole seat is molded into the console as a single unit with back support contours. Further, this is something not found on sportboats.

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Ahead of the console is the usual seat but notice how the seatback is nestled into the contour.

4-in-1 Bow Table.

An optional table can be ordered and we highly recommend it. Not only does this table enhance the utility of the bow area for lunch or drinks, but it also comes with a cushion and a telescoping pedestal. That means it can be lowered to convert the forward console seat into a doublewide chaise lounge... a rare commodity on a boat of this size and class. With it placed forward in the casting deck position, it can be covered with cushions making a huge bow sun pad.

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The optional table adds lots of utility and becomes an ideal place for lunch and cocktails at anchor.

Bowrider Seating.

Both the side bow seats have aft sections that lift up to form a pair of chaise lounges. In this configuration, the seats are virtually the same as those found on a dual console or a bowrider sportboat. The difference is that we can't think of a bowrider that also has a third forward-facing seat just behind -- or a third chaise with the employ of the lowered table with cushion.

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Both bow seats have lifting seatbacks that create these chaise lounges. With the table moved back to the console seat we have three forward facing chaises at the bow. The length of the back support will dictate the angle of the chaise back. We'd like ours at more of an angle.

Beach Re-Boarding Ladder.

One of the unique -- and important -- standard features on the 251 CE is her beach boarding ladder. At one time or another, virtually all boaters want to beach their vessel to get off and explore or have a picnic ashore. By selecting the right beaching site, raising the outboard a bit, this 14" (.36 m) draft vessel can be easily beached and the bow ladder can be deployed. If the angle of the bottom is right, the ladder can reach dry land. Otherwise, only feet and ankles need to get wet.

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The 251 CE is designed for heading to remote beaches. Here's a bow re-boarding ladder for when we tuck the bow against the shore. There's even a stainless grab handle alongside. This is the only center console that we have ever seen with a bow boarding ladder.

Transom Seating.

Virtually all sportboats have transom seating and so does the 251 CE. Here the seats are lying flat across the casting deck and we only have to reach back to lift the port and starboard seat backs up from their flush position. This leaves the space under the seats untouched and Grady-White was then able to hinge these to add storage underneath. This creates three-across seating with the two jump seats having seatbacks.

Storage Bins.

And still not to be outdone in the creative use of space department, the storage under these seats consists of removable bins that when lifted, allows access to the components underneath, such as the battery switch to starboard. Pretty clever.

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Behind the port side seat is a concealed re-boarding ladder.

Shower in the Stern.

In the port caprail there's a covered optional freshwater shower wand. Simply put a finger under the forward lip of the top, lift and pull out the sprayer. That's all there is to it and it is frankly a better design than we see on many sportboats. It is plumbed to a 10-gallon (38 L) freshwater tank.

The Head.

And of course no boat that touts its "family features" would be complete without the head. Grady-White includes a Porta-Potti as standard.

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Quality Details

Like all Grady-White boats, the 251 Coastal Explorer is well-built using the best materials and construction practices. Start with the cleats... all are made of 316 stainless and the pull-up type. But then all of the stainless on the 251 CE is 316 ss. Drink holders drain into the cockpit which drains overboard, not into the bilge. All electrical wiring is protected from the saltwater environment. Thru-hull fittings are bonded and the company rigorously follows ABYC standards. Probably the most important quality detail, however, has nothing to do with materials or build -- it is Grady-White's customer service. The company has long been known for keeping owners happy and fixing things that might go wrong. Back in the days when J.D. Powers surveyed boat owners, Grady-White won top ranking in its category every year.

Grady-White 251 CE cleats

All the cleats on the boat are stainless and pull-up. This leaves the surface free of snags for the fishermen and toes won't get stubbed for the families.

Grady-White 251 CE drink holder

See the drain hole at the bottom of this drink holder? A hose connects to it to allow condensation to run into the cockpit.

Grady-White 251 CE flush mounted rod holders

All the rod holders are flush mounted and stainless steel.

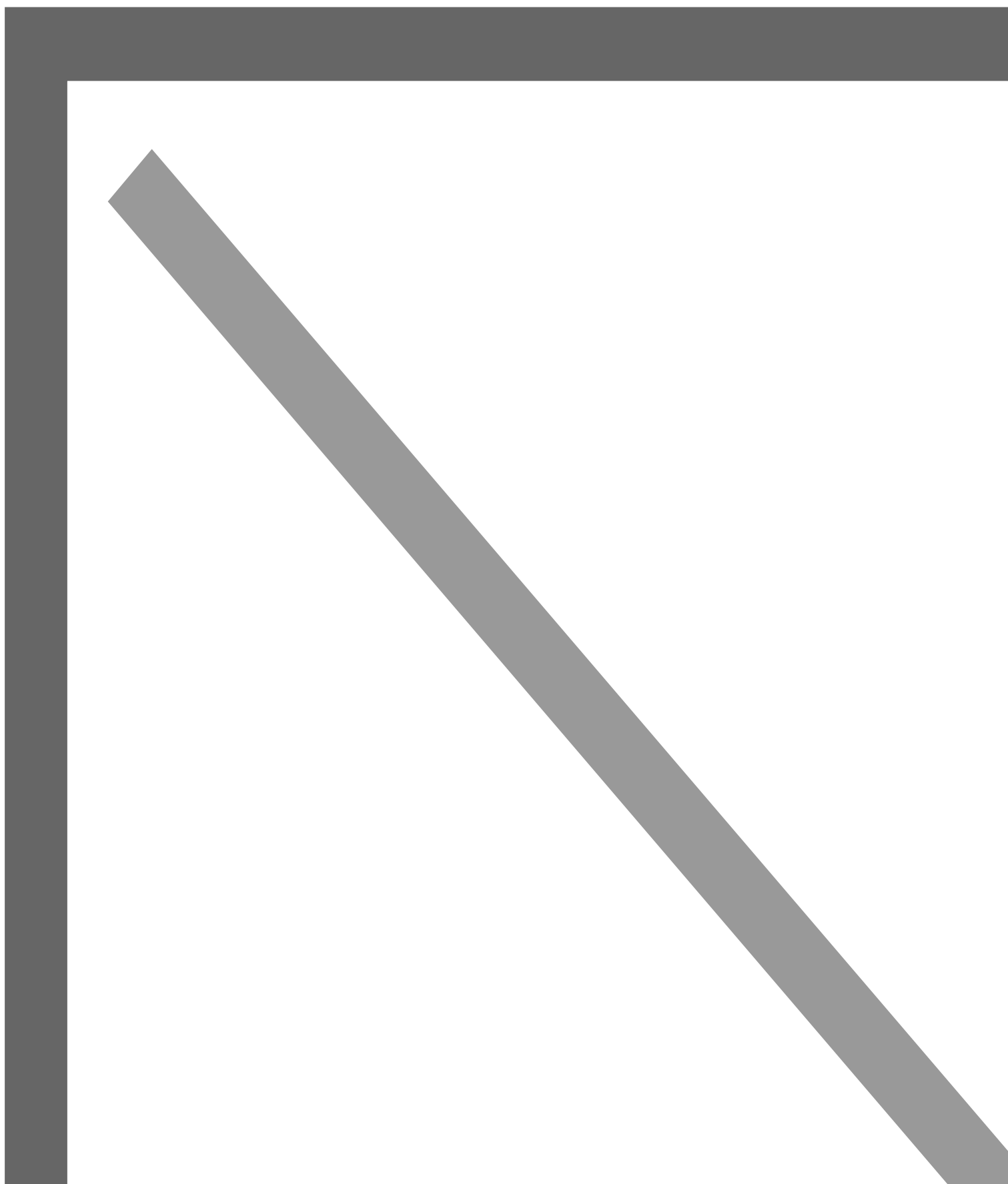
Grady-White 251 CE 316 grade stainless

The stainless steel is all 316-grade alloy which maintains a high level of nickel to better resist staining. It's double polished and double passivated making it unreactive by coating the surface with a thin inert layer. This is how the shine is maintained for a longer period.

Options to Consider

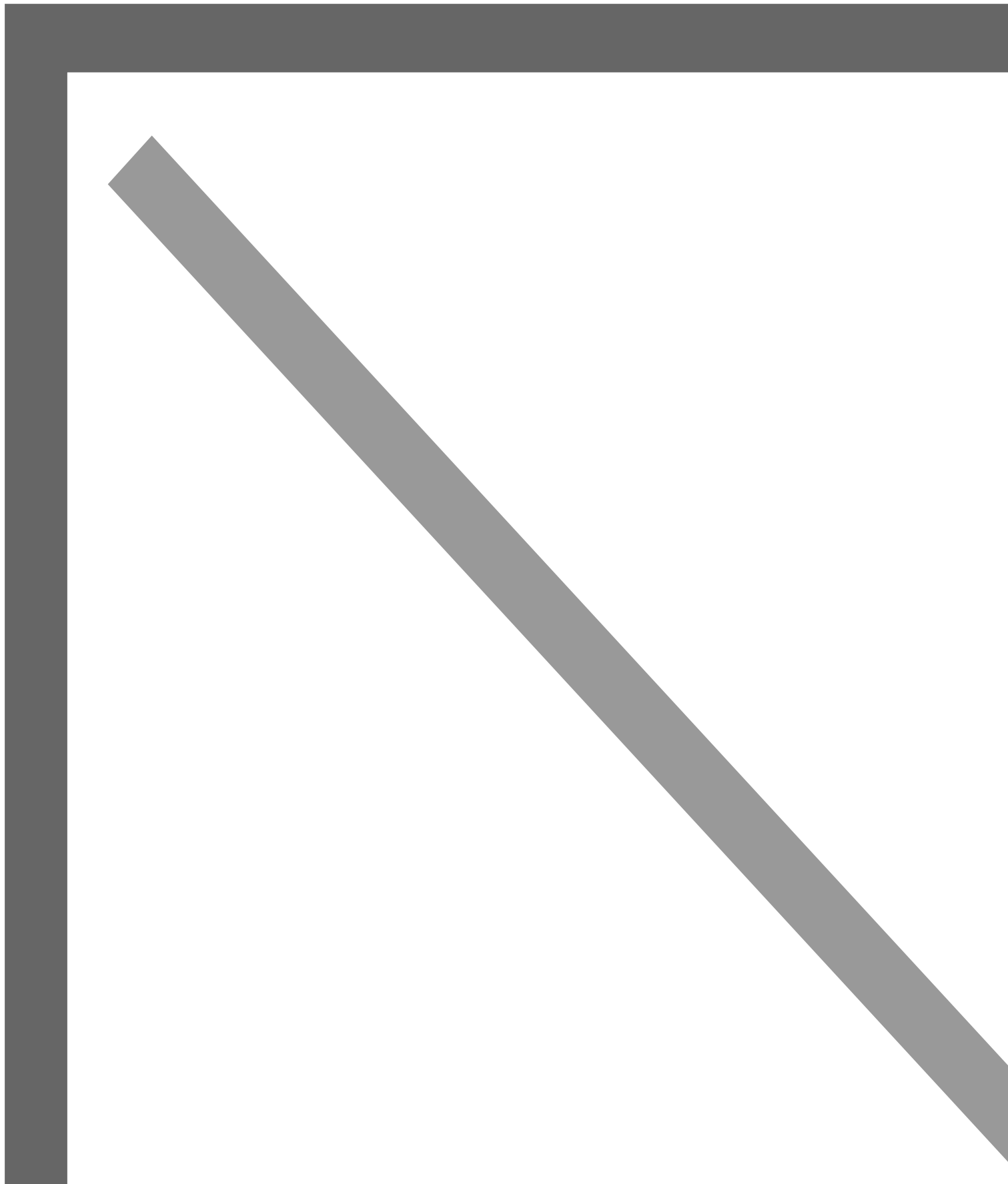
One of the strong points of the 251 CE is that the builder has created an excellent list of standard features. This allows families and fishermen to get all they could possible want out of a single vessel. Below are some additional options to consider:

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Boaters with small children might want to consider this option of high bow rails.

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The trolling motor set up is an added bonus for anglers.

Observations

When it comes to versatility, it seems that the 251 CE has both coastal fishing and coastal watersports boating covered hands down. She's also a comfortable boat to be on in these locales. Because she is not designed for offshore, bluewater work, her bottom does not have to be as deep, nor does her freeboard have to be as high, among other things. That means there can be a considerable savings in materials, labor, and therefore, cost. When we compare the 251 CE with three other 25-footers in Grady-White's other series offerings, we find that she is as much as 900-lbs. (408 kg) lighter. That, in a nutshell, goes a long way to explaining why she can also be less expensive than the other Grady-White boats this size. Because she is purpose-built, the wise consumer can take advantage of this cost savings if their application is a match.