Fleming Yachts 55 (2018-)

Brief Summary

The Fleming 55 is now well over 30 years old and shows no sign of aging — that’s longer than the venerable Bertram 31 was in production! Why does this vessel have so much longevity and show no signs of getting tired? The big reason is that many boaters consider her to be as drop-dead gorgeous today as when she was first launched in 1986. Then, she can do most anything, from sailing across the Atlantic to hosting a large cocktail party, or coastal cruising with friends in comfort. Her interior is lavished in teak and her layout is as practical as they come. But there is much more to the secret of this motoryacht’s success.

We recently tested the Fleming 55 off Sydney, Australia, and following is a full Captain’s Report on what we discovered.

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

- Cockpit with teak decks
- Engine room air intakes behind skirt and inside bulwarks
- Ritchie Compass with light & dimmer
- Flybridge table starboard side with drink holders
- FRP Radar arch with LED lighting
- Two Mastervolt 24v to 12v DC-DC converters with 12v battery back-up system
- Salon entertainment center, teak cabinetry, and full length lockers from galley to aft bulkhead
- Forward stateroom tapered queen-sized bed with hydraulic lift and manual slide mechanism

Test Results

RPM	MPH	Knots	GPH	MPG	NMPG	STAT. MILE	NM	dBa
700	6.1	5.3	1.5	4.1	3.5	3660	3182.6	60

RPM	MPH	Knots	GPH	MPG	NMPG	STAT. MILE	NM	dBa
1000	8.6	7.4	2.4	3.6	3.1	3206	2788	59
1233	10	8.7	5.3	1.9	1.6	1690	1469.2	60
1250	10.1	8.7	5.3	1.9	1.6	1707	1484	61
1460	11.2	9.7	7.9	1.4	1.2	1270	1104.6	62
1500	11.5	10	8.5	1.3	1.2	1212	1054.2	65
1550	11.7	10.1	10.6	1.1	1	989	860.1	66
1750	12.6	10.9	15.6	0.8	0.7	724	629.6	64
2000	14	12.2	25.4	0.6	0.5	497	432.2	69
2250	16	13.9	34	0.5	0.4	424	368.8	71
2500	19.3	16.8	44.4	0.4	0.4	392	340.6	71
2640	20.9	18.2	49.9	0.4	0.4	377	327.8	71

View the test results in metric units

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Specifications

Length Overall	60' 9" | 18.5 m
BEAM	16' | 4.88 m
Dry Weight	67,801 lbs. | 30,754 kg

Tested Weight	
Draft	5' | 1.52 m
Draft Up	
Draft Down	
Air Draft	
Deadrise/Transom	
Max Headroom	6' 6" | 1.97 m
Bridge Clearance	
Weight Capacity	
Person Capacity	
Fuel Capacity	1,000 gal. | 3,785 L
Water Capacity	300 gal. | 1,135 L
Length on Trailer	
Height on Trailer	
Trailer Weight	
Total Weight	
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	
0 to 20	
Ratio	
Props	31d x 30p 4 blades
Load	5 persons, 1/4 fuel, 5/8 water, 50 lbs. of gear
Climate	73.8 deg., seas: calm

Contents of Report

Fleming 55 running

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At displacement speeds, she has over a 2,000-mile range but around home she can cruise in the high teens. And at 10 knots she gets nearly one mile per gallon, something that's hard to beat in a boat this large.

The Mission of the Fleming 55

The Fleming 55 is designed for a cruising couple, or two couples, or even a family to make long offshore and coastal passages in comfort and safety. And that means to be able to travel to the Caribbean, or to the Pacific at trawler speeds. At 7.4 knots, we found that she has a range of 2,788 nautical miles. That means she can make it from Bermuda to the Azores on a transatlantic trip, or from Southern California to the Hawaiian Islands, then go south into French Polynesia.

But there is another side to the Fleming 55: because she is powered by twin 500-hp diesels she can get on plane and hit 18 knots or so in a pinch, when outrunning a storm, or getting to a tricky anchorage by nightfall. And because she has such large spaces in her salon, aft deck, and on her flying bridge, she is an able motoryacht for entertaining a large party. In all ways, the Fleming 55 is a purposeful motoryacht and one that has the look that launched a dozen imitations.

The Fleming 55 is the original. But little about her is like she was 31 years ago, except her exterior and her lavish use of teak inside.

Fleming 55 salon

Photo: Fleming Yachts collection, unknown

The salon of the Fleming 55 is surrounded in teak, one of the hallmarks of the Fleming brand. The teak table is a hi-lo design that can be used as a cocktail table or as a formal dining table. Casual dining is done in the pilothouse at the dinette there.

Is She a Trawler or a Motoryacht?

Most boaters immediately categorized her as a "trawler" because of the shape of her bow, faux planks, and Portuguese bridge. Further, she does not have the trappings of most modern motoryachts that we see – things like a table on the bow, a low-raked windshield like that of a Lamborghini, or large windows which have been cut into her hull sides with unusual shapes.

But on the other hand, she has virtually every modern convenience as a multi-million-dollar gin palace, and a number that they don’t have.

Classic Look

To a great degree, motoryachts inside are very much the same in layout. They may be a pilothouse version or a flushdeck, but the layouts of virtually all are the same in any given size range. Where the Fleming 55 sets herself apart becomes immediately obvious when looking inside — she is practical with radiused corners on the joinery, large windows, and a salon for living in as well as for entertaining.

Her lavish use of teak is somehow both unpretentious yet sophisticated, and it certainly harkens back to the halcyon days of yachting at its finest in the early part of the 20th century. Her interior décor can only be

described as traditional, classic, and tasteful.

Fleming 55

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Here’s a rendering of the Fleming 55 shown in profile. Note that her keel has an 8’ (2.44 m) stainless steel shoe and extends 12” (30 cm) below the props. Her rubrail protects her topsides and caprail when docking and adds strength to her hullsides.

Her Profile

Undoubtedly her most distinguishing feature is her profile, with high flared bow, raked stem, molded-in faux planking, her raised pilothouse and Portuguese bridge. This look makes the heart race among serious cruising folk. Maybe that is why it has been so widely copied — but rarely matched. We are told by the builder that her exterior is the single most important reason why owners are attracted to her, but during our inspection we found some other reasons, as well.

Large Lower Helm

In her raised pilothouse, the helm stretches all the way from the door on the port side to the chart table by the starboard door. In between is enough room for as many screens, gauges, electronics, and instruments as any electronics buff could want. (We have actually been on commercial vessels with far fewer instruments than can be put on this boat and often are.) But, that is an owners’ preference. Fleming prefers to keep things simple and on our test boat, there were only two navigation screens, both of which could display all manner of electronic input.

Fleming 55 lower helm

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The lower helm of the Fleming 55 has a seamanlike layout with plenty of panel real estate for added systems.

Böning/Fleming Monitoring System

The centerpiece of the Fleming 55 helm is its remarkable system of boat monitoring. It is the most sophisticated and all-encompassing monitoring system we have seen on a recreational motoryacht of this size, and it is used mainly on megayachts in addition to commercial vessels.

More than 10 years ago Fleming worked with the engineers at Böning to create a system that was specially adapted to its boats and the kind of boating, and information, its owners needed.

Fleming 55 boning system

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The Böning system allows for all onboard systems to be monitored from the helm with ease, thanks to touchscreen control with an intuitive user interface.

Essentially, the Böning system monitors all of the vital signs of the boat, her engines, and her critical equipment. It monitors everything that dozens of conventional gauges, readouts and dials do on many motoryachts — and many things that are not generally monitored. It has all of the information displayed on one of two 15” screens below, and on an 8.8” (22 cm) screen at the upper helm.

The software devotes different screen pages to various aspects of the boat. All data points are recorded on a hard drive and can be viewed, or sent via the Internet to an outside location, and can be helpful for service professionals to view and diagnose problems.

One of the most useful features is a checklist of things that must be ready for the vessel to go to sea, much like the checklist used by commercial pilots.

Early Warning

We think of the Böning system as a sort of early warning system for detecting potential trouble on the dozens of systems on the boat, *before* it gets out of hand. For example, it can sense problems such as dropping raw-water-intake pressure before engine temperatures start to spike. Owners can set alarms for fuel and water tank levels as well as oil level and pressure to notify them when certain programmed levels are reached.

A short list of just some of the things that it senses and reports on include: the engines, the generator, bilge and sump pumps, Seatorque shaft oil temperature, freshwater pressure and flow, doors and hatches open or closed, main engine seawater flow, and watermaker (if installed), among many other things, including the following list:

- Engine data
- Gear oil data
- Navigation lights
- Bilge pumps
- Pilothouse defoggers
- Fuel tank levels
- Water tank levels
- Engine raw water flow
- Generator monitoring
- Shore power
- Exterior lighting
- Engine room blowers
- High water alarms

Most important, it can monitor virtually everything in the engine room, and it, along with a TV camera and FLIR infrared camera, can give peace of mind to a captain who is short-handed. While the system does not make trips to the engine room superfluous, it can certainly reduce the frequency of visits. Since the headroom in the engine room is just 4’4” (1.32 m), it makes fewer trips there welcome.

Construction Details

The Fleming 55 is built to CE Classification A standards, which means she should be able to handle anything short of a named storm.

Bow Shape

The bow of the Fleming 55 has a sharp entry which enables her to slice through waves comfortably rather than pound into them. There is no chine forward, which eliminates that sleep-hindering slap when at anchor. Of course, the lack of the forward chine means there’s no spray knocker, and the boat can be a bit wet at higher speeds.

Fleming 55 forefoot

The Fleming 55 has a sharp forefoot to cut through waves and reduce pounding.

5 Coats of Epoxy Barrier Coat

Most builders apply a coat of vinylester resin below the waterline to stop osmotic blistering and warranty against the problem, typically, from 2 to 5 years. Fleming goes further and applies five coats of epoxy to the 55's surface below the waterline and warrantees it for 10 years. Her solid fiberglass hull is made with vinylester resin and, below the waterline is thick, strong, and puncture resistant.

Cored Superstructure

Her superstructure is cored with Corecell and is covered with vinylester resin, something that is rarely done. Overall, her build makes no compromises for the sake of saving weight or money.

Heavy-Duty Keel for Protection

The 5' (1.52 m) deep keel of the Fleming 55 is an important part of the boat’s overall design. First, it extends 12” (30 cm) below the props. Second, it is solid and is sealed across the top where it meets the bilge. Finally, there is an 8' (2.43 m) long stainless steel shoe on the bottom of the keel to protect the fiberglass in case of a hard grounding.

Engine Room

The main engines are twin 500-hp Cummins QSC 8.3 L diesels driving through Twin Disc marine gears with a 2.51:1 reduction. They sit on robust mounts that are bolted to steel rails on the stringers. Fleming has made basic systems for running the boat as simple – and foolproof – as possible. For example, in the engine room there are four fuel tanks, port and starboard, fore and aft. This simple manifold takes the confusion out of switching between tanks. Fleming has placed shutoff valves front and center on the Racor fuel filters, so they can be changed out on the fly. There are well-marked shutoffs for the bow and stern thruster hydraulics. The raw water intake sea strainer bowls are clear for quick inspection and they are in easily accessible places. Thru-hull seacocks are also close at hand. Hot and cold water lines are color coded. And Reverso oil changing manifolds are on each engine making short work of that task.

Fleming 55 engine room, color or type unknown

The fuel manifold is easy to use and takes the guesswork out of managing the array of four fuel tanks.

Fiberglass Fuel Tanks

Fiberglass fuel tanks are difficult and expensive to build and that is why most boats have welded aluminum tanks. But welds can break and aluminum can corrode. Fleming eliminates these worries by installing fiberglass tanks, and goes one step further by putting a sump in the bottom of each tank into which contaminants can settle.

Large Cockpit

The Fleming 55 has a cockpit that is 130 sq. ft. (12.08 sq. m) which is one of the largest in class, if not the largest. That puts her on a par with the size of a cockpit we see in convertibles and sportfishermen in her size range.

Fleming 55 running, color or type unknown

This Fleming 55 has a fighting chair and is rigged for big-game fishing…or for meat fishing when on a long cruise. This was made possible both because of her large cockpit and minimal boat-deck overhang that does not interfere with the rods.

Lavish Use of Teak

Teak is more expensive than ever and that is why its use has been curtailed by many builders to one degree or another. Fleming buys teak logs, ages the wood, and does all of its own mill work. That is why on the Fleming 55 there is lots of hand-rubbed, satin-varnished teak in its interior. The tables, valances, entertainment center, and cabinetry are all teak. There are teak bulkheads. All interior decks are teak and holly, both on the main deck and in the accommodations.

Full Teak Deck

The cockpit, side decks, foredeck, stairs, and treads on the ladder going to the flying bridge, are all teak – as standard equipment. There are not many boats that offer that as standard. All teak decking is 5/8" thick, not the thinner option some builders use. The caprail around the boat's gunwales and Portuguese bridge are all varnished teak, though a low-maintenance caprail finished to look like teak is a popular choice.

Is that caprail teak or a fiberglass lookalike? While a teak caprail is standard on the Fleming 55, many boaters choose the low-maintenance fiberglass option.

12V Battery on Flying Bridge

Most boats have house batteries in the engine room or a lazarette to keep weight low and so does Fleming. However, she also has a 12V “back-up” battery on the helm along with two Mastervolt 24V-to-12V DC/DC converters to provide emergency power for the radios in case the vessel is shipping water. This is rarely seen on any boat and is much appreciated.

Fleming 55 – Functionality and Seakeeping Details

Much of the spacious cockpit is not covered by the boat-deck overhang in the standard design, which allows sun chairs to be used in the cockpit for sunning or providing free movement for rods when fishing. A Bimini can be installed for those wanting shade. For those who want to change the profile of the yacht, an optional fiberglass extension to the boat deck above can be added to shelter the cockpit and allow for a canvas enclosure.

The extended boat deck provides additional shade to the extended cockpit and can be fitted with a canvas enclosure.

There are five hawsepipes on each side of the boat, plus two in the transom. In addition there are two 14” (35 cm) cleats on the bow and two in the stern on the bulwarks to make it easier to secure the boat in a variety of docking situations.

Beefy cleats plus Herreshoff-style hawsepipes with built-in cleats mean there’s always a handy place to secure a line.

The hull of the Fleming 55 has an 8.5-degree deadrise at the transom. This is one of the secrets to her fuel efficiency at planing speeds. She is not a deep-V at the transom, which serves no real purpose in a

displacement hull and makes the boat harder to push – and more prone to rolling at rest. A lower deadrise provides more lift when running and more stability when at rest or traveling at displacement speeds.

The hull shape features a rise of the vessel's buttocks from a deeper point amidships. This design provides less drag at the transom and reduces wetted surface.

The keel protects the props, since it reaches 12" (30 cm) below them, preventing damage during a soft grounding. The vertical surface on this keel is greater than on most other boats in class. This helps keep her on track in a following sea, giving her directional stability.

The boat deck can handle a 12' (3.96 m) tender, which is an adequate size for this boat, and a stainless steel cradle comes standard. The cradle can be removed when the dinghy is launched in order to use the boat deck for other purposes, such as placing sunlounges or an occasional table and chairs, so long as a guardrail is added. A Steelhead 1,000-pound (454 kg.) hydraulic davit comes standard, and uses a powered, telescoping boom.


Fleming 55 tender

The boat deck can ship a tender but also can be used as an additional deck space when the smallboat is deployed, provided a rail is placed around it for safety.
Side gates make for easy boarding from docks of varying heights, and are located both port and starboard. Most boats in class do not have them.


Fleming 55 gates

The boarding gates on either side deck are a useful touch, particularly when one looks at the details, such as the uninterrupted teak caprail, and the nonskid step on the threshold.
Fin stabilizers are optional on the Fleming 55 but provision has been made in the engine room for their installation. They are probably not needed unless long voyages are planned.

The fiberglass radar arch is standard, equipped with a stainless steel mast with navigation lights, anchor light, and aft-facing flood light. We like navigation lights positioned up high (instead of on the bow or even on the pilothouse) because they can be seen at a greater distance. There is LED lighting under the arch.


Fleming 55 hardtop

The fiberglass hardtop is a worthwhile addition, because it can be fitted with a canvas enclosure for added helm. Around 80% of buyers choose to add the hardtop.
The pilothouse has sliding aluminum doors both port and starboard. These allow for easy egress by the captain or crew for docking or anchoring chores, but stay out of the way for crew passing on either side of

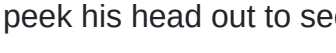
the house.

Fleming 55 Fleming 55 door

The port pilothouse door (top) and the one positioned to starboard (above) make it easy for a helmsman to peek his head out to see — and hear — when docking, and offer ventilation as well.

A comfortable L-shaped settee and teak table are located behind the helm and serve as an ideal place for guests to sit when running, or for light meals while underway. There are even built-in book shelves equipped with fiddles, something we see all over the boat.

Fleming 55 settee



Huge windows and a teak table make this pilothouse settee an obvious choice for cruising companions to share the voyage with the captain.

The Portuguese bridge provides security for crew and guests, and allows crew to cross the foredeck safely in sloppy conditions. It also protects the house if green water should be taken aboard. The side decks are 20” (50.8 cm) wide amidships and expand to 23” (58.4 cm) on the Portuguese bridge, which is three steps up. The bulwarks of the Portuguese bridge are 31 and 1/2” high on the centerline and double doors lead to the foredeck, with standard teak. This foredeck is both clean and unencumbered, making working here easy and safe. The large foredeck has bulwarks that are nearly 2’ (.61 m) high and rails that are 31” (.78 m) high. There are two 14” (.35 m) heavy-duty cleats on deck and four of the cleat/chocks combos in the bulwarks.

The Fleming 55’s engine room is accessed through a hatch in the cockpit just in front of the salon doors. Battery switches are right by the entrance of the engine room. Its overhead clearance is 4’4-1/2” (1.33 m) which sounds low, but our 5’11’ (1.80 m) 230-pound (104 kg) test captain reports that after moving around in it for a while, he got used to it. The key is in simply taking a seat when working on something.

The vessel can hook up to shore power anywhere in the world, thanks to an A/Sea frequency converter. This means the crew can connect the Fleming 55 to power without regard to voltage or Hertz frequency cycles, and it also protects the boat against power surges.

Fleming 55 converter

An A/Sea frequency converter offers peace of mind for intrepid cruisers looking to connect to shore power in far-flung locations.

A 15.5-hp Side-Power Bow Thruster Comes as Standard Equipment. The hydraulics for the stabilizers and bow and stern thrusters are energized by the power take offs on each of the marine gears.

Deck scuppers drain water through pipes to the boot stripe so that black streaks will not appear on the hull sides.

Fleming 55 bridge deck

Bird’s-eye view of the Fleming 55 flying bridge and deck. Note that there is seating for 11 people.

Fleming 55 main deck

The standard main deck layout. Note the household-size refrigerator/freezer with twin doors opposite the galley.

Fleming 55 accommodations

This is the accommodations and mechanical space layout. Note the huge size of the engine room and the clearances outboard between the engines and tanks. Headroom in the engine room is 5’ (1.59 m) forward and about 4’ (1.21 m) aft.

Major Equipment

After the design and the layout, the most important category which gives a boat its utility is its list of equipment. Here are a few items that caught our eye:

Onan Generator

A 17 kW Onan generator is standard. It is mounted on soft mounts to reduce vibration. Onan is a division of Cummins, the builder that provides the main engines, making one-stop service possible. Cummins has service shops all over the world.

Sidepower Bow Thruster

A 15.5-hp Sidepower bow thruster is standard along with controls at both helm stations.

Lofrans Anchor Windlass

A 24V, 1700 Watt Lofrans Falkon windlass is fitted to the bow and has a plug-in control feature as well as remotes at both helm stations. This is a dual horizontal electric windlass equipped with both a Danforth-style and a standard 77-pound (35 kg) stainless steel Ultra anchor with chain hook, bridle, and 300’ (91.4 m) of high-test 3/8” (.95 cm) chain, with swivels between the anchor stock and the chain. On the port side of the pulpit are both fresh- and raw-water washdown bibs, and behind is a large hatch giving access to the rode locker, which has separate bins for chain and line. A nearby compartment contains the windlass remote.

Fleming 55 windlass

The Lofrans Falkon windlass is in a handy position to serve both anchors.

Complete Ground Tackle

This includes a 77-pound (35 kg) stainless steel Ultra anchor with ss Ultra swivel and 300' (91.4 m) of 3/8" (.95 cm) chain along with hook and bridle.

Cruisair Reverse-Cycle A/C

This system uses remote compressors (in the lazarette) and zone controls.

Kahlenberg Air Horn

With twin trumpets, this is the Mercedes of boat horns.

Auto Fire Suppression

This system automatically shuts down the engine, generator, and blowers in addition to spraying the fire suppression foam.

Stidd 500 XL Helm Seat

This brand is the Mercedes of helm seats (and costs nearly as much) and is mounted at the lower helm. We only wish there was a second one for the captain's companion.

Fleming 55 helm chair

Fleming understands where its customers don’t want to skimp and the Stidd 500 XL helm chair is a top-flight addition.

Fleming Monitoring System

The builder has made its own central monitoring system with color display screen. It Monitors navigation lights, tank levels, bilge water, engine room temperature, and engine room door, among other things.

Bosch Washer/Dryer

The dryer is vented and the unit is kept behind a sliding door in the passage by the guest stateroom where it is handy.

Fleming 55 washer and dryer

A stacked washer and dryer are located off the passageway behind pocket doors for easy access.

Headhunter Head

Many builders consider this brand of pressure jet toilet system to be the best in the industry.

Two Aluminum Helm Doors

One port and another starboard, both doors are sliders with weather stripping, and both allow the captain easy egress to the sidedecks for singlehanded sailing.

Steelhead Davit

All cruising boats need a tender and the Fleming 55 has room for a 13' (3.96 m) or larger one. The standard 1,000-pound (454 kg) Steelhead hydraulic davit has a telescoping neck.

Fleming 55 teak decks

The owner of this Fleming 55 decided to not have the standard teak decks but have beige-colored gel coat instead. Often owners with dogs choose to avoid teak decks for obvious reasons. We like the relatively high bulwarks for this size boat.

Fleming 55 teak

Here we see a standard teak and Thiokol deck. Note the fresh- and saltwater bibs for cleaning the ground tackle and deck.

Fleming 55 aft doors

The aft doors are fiberglass and have “seadog”-style latches. The console to starboard is optional and can contain most anything an owner wants. The teak deck and the teak treads on the stainless steel ladder are all standard. The hatches in the deck lead to the lazarette.

Fleming 55 gas assist

Gas-assist struts lift the hatches to the lazarette. Note the battery switches to the left and the weatherproof, custom-made door to the engine room on the centerline.

Comparing General Specs with Other Boats in Class

Criteria

We studied seven other cruising boats that came quickly to mind as falling into the same genre as the Fleming 55. We did not look at heavy-displacement, single-engine boats because they are in a class by themselves. But we did find two single-engine boats that met the genre criteria, from builders that claim that they can hit planing speeds. All were raised-pilothouse designs except one, which was flushdeck. Other criteria were a two- or three-stateroom layout and a fuel capacity of 800 gallon (3,028 L) or more.

LWL

When it comes to the crucial measurement of LWL, only two boats were longer, the others shorter by a foot. The foot is worth slightly over a knot in theoretical, easily-driven hull speed.

Displacement

In terms of displacement, the Fleming 55 falls in the middle at 74,000 lbs. (33,636 kg). Four were less, one was the same, and two were more.

Beam

The Fleming 55 has a 16’ (4.88 m) beam. Two of our comparison boats had a few inches less beam, a couple had a few inches more, and three had 21” (53 cm) or more.

Accommodations

Like the Fleming 55, most had three staterooms and two heads. A couple had two staterooms and two heads.

Main Deck

As noted above, the helm console and the aft deck of the Fleming are the largest. Most boats in class had only one helm side-deck egress door and a number had a larger table and seating area behind the helm. The galley and salon layouts are all about the same.

Fleming 55 companionway

This photo shows the companionway to the flying bridge from the pilothouse, and illustrates how easy it would be for the captain to pop up to the flying bridge from the lower helm and vice versa. Note the stainless steel rail positioned along the Lexan venturi windscreen.

Fleming 55 hard top

The hardtop is an option that we would recommend because it adds much more utility to the boat, in addition to providing UV protection. With the addition of a cruising canvas, the flying bridge can be turned into another large living space quite inexpensively.

Fleming 55 twin beds

This is the VIP stateroom on the port side. Note the wood bulkheads, drawers, and louvered doors. Instead of having a fold-down Pullman berth, which can be problematic to raise and make, Fleming prefers to use the sliding bunk seen above which tucks under the side deck.

Fleming 55 double bed

Alternatively Fleming can install a double berth in the VIP, which also has the sliding upper bunk.

Features We Like

The thing that we like most about the Fleming 55 is that the builder is not trying to get the base price down by leaving essential equipment and gear off the boat that will only have to be added later. Further, the builder has added useful features that will be appreciated by experienced cruising folks. Here are some of those features in no particular order:

A dumb waiter from the galley to the flying bridge. This is something we've dreamed about for years but never did it. The Fleming 55 has one.

Two self-launching anchors and two rode lockers below, one for chain and one for line.

A watertight collision bulkhead between the forepeak and the forward cabin.

Fresh and saltwater washdown bibs on the foredeck and a hot and cold water shower in the cockpit.

A huge chart table at the helm with several drawers under for paper charts. This is the largest one in class.

The master berth lifts electrically with the touch of a button. Underneath is a good place to store items that are not used too often or only on special occasions.

The master berth also slides aft about a foot to simplify the process of making the berth, a smart touch that helps simplify keeping the master shipshape.

Shore power outlets in both the bow and stern means that extra cable is not needed when going into a slip either way. (We'd like to see a Cablemaster aboard as standard in the stern.)

Fleming 55

Image not found or type unknown

Here is a forward master stateroom done right. We like the cabinets in the bow and the louvered doors for the two hanging lockers. The decks in many of these photos are covered in carpet because the owners have pets and they don’t want the teak-and-holly sole to be scratched.

Galley and pantry windows slide open, bringing in fresh air.

All deck drains are piped to the boot stripe to prevent black streaks.

Stainless steel saddle for the yacht's tender cradle.

Fiberglass drip pans under the main engines.

LED lighting throughout the boat both in the interior, exterior, and for navigation lights.

Fleming 55 3rd stateroom

This is pretty typical of the third stateroom on boats of this size, if there is one at all. Some people turn this into an office. We like the use of the sliding upper bunk here rather than a fixed berth because it opens up the space.

Fleming 55 master head

This master head has a marble countertop and a matching marble sole in the shower stall. They are standard.

Fleming 55 guest head

This guest head has a different treatment, sans teak cabinets. It also has a separate shower stall.
An icemaker in the salon entertainment console. This is a handy location to both the cockpit and salon.

All heads have ventilator fans, and while it seems sensible, we regret to have to mention this, but some yachts omit this little detail.

Sight glasses on all fuel and water tanks.

Either freshwater or sea water can be used to flush Headhunter toilets.

Ball-type seacocks are used on all thru-hull fittings at or below the waterline.

The whole boat is prewired for speakers with coax cable, CAT 5 cable, and 8-core signal cable.

Fleming 55 galley

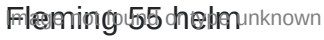
A U-shaped galley is a standard layout for this class of yacht but Fleming has done as good a job as any builder at execution – and it is all in teak. Note the opening window and the granite countertops.

The Galley

A lot of thought — and experience — has gone into fine-tuning the galley for the preparation of 3-star meals aboard the Fleming 55. Owners may select granite or Corian countertops and backsplashes. As standard there is a deep, composite double sink and an "Inskinkerator" in one of the sinks to dispose of garbage. A convection microwave oven and three-burner ceramic electric cooktop with searails are installed for the cooking chores. We like the slide-out pantry locker with three shelves, making it easy to find and reach goods even in the back. A trash compactor is standard, but a dishwasher is not, although a space has been wired and plumbed for one. (We can't imagine not having a dishwasher aboard.)

Home-Style Refrigeration

What we like most about this galley is what is not actually in the U-shaped galley itself. To starboard, across the passageway from the salon to the helm, is a full-size, standup, 20.5 cu. ft. (.58 cu. m) refrigerator/freezer combination with two vertical swinging doors. The freezer is on the left side and the refrigerator is on the right. This is a name-brand household unit. This means there are no undercounter drawers that have to be pulled out into the tight galley space. The second thing we like is the dedicated dish locker on the starboard side that can be accessed either from the top (when offshore) or from the side (when tied up).


Fleming 55 helm

Here is the helm of a new 55 that has everything a captain needs in terms of navigation electronics, and puts monitoring for ship's systems and the VHF radio within easy reach.


Fleming 55 helm

Here is a 55 helm that is loaded to the gills with electronics. We have to admit that all of the extra electronics such as AIS, wind indicators, TV cameras, thermal imaging, and redundancy on radar and chartplotters is compelling. This is the largest helm in class so the 55 can hold all of the electronic gadgets most anyone could want. Caution: All of these screens and information overload can be a terrible distraction, as many captains have discovered to their dismay.

The Lower Helm

Virtually everything has been installed on the Fleming 55 except electronics. Most boaters we know go nuts on electronics and as much as we like redundancy in systems, we urge restraint on the more exotic gear. Fleming has provided plenty of instrument console space for four screens plus other readouts, including the Cummins VesselView screens. There is an overhead electronics console for those who have an open checkbook, but we suggest only installing units there that will be used infrequently, lest they become a pain in the neck — literally.

For any new boat we would recommend that boaters lay out the screens and instruments, and work with the boat dealer and electronics installer on where best to have everything placed. This is to say, we would not leave the layout of instruments, electronics and controls of all sorts to a third-party without very detailed consultation.

AC and DC panels are conveniently installed in the helm console down low. Plan on using a remote autopilot. Fleming has provided a defogging blower for the inside of the windshields and installed self-parking, heavy-duty multi-speed windshield wipers with freshwater wash.

Fleming 55 engine room

Because of the low profile of the Fleming 55 she does not have standup headroom in the engine room. There is 5' (1.52 m) at the forward end and a foot less aft. The diamond plate covers are positioned over the

driveshafts to make it safer to crawl outboard while underway.

Power and Performance

The top speed we recorded was at 2640 rpm, producing 18.3 knots and 49.92 gallons per hour. While the Fleming 55 was not designed to go this fast, she can do it, and that speed could come in handy when racing a storm to port, or trying to make a tricky anchorage before nightfall.

Powered by 2 x Cummins QSC 8.3 L 500-HP

Top Speed on Our Test

Fleming 55
Image not found or type unknown

Because this is a displacement vessel and not a planing one, there is no best cruise, per se, and the slower this boat goes the greater is its endurance. For the most part, people buying a Fleming 55 are not interested in how fast she goes, but how far she can go on a single load of fuel, and how much she burns per hour.

To calculate theoretical hull speed use this formula:

Square Root of LWL (50.83') = 7.12 x 1.1 = 7.8 knots

When we use the theoretical hull speed formula and apply it to the Fleming 55, we get an easily driven hull speed of 7.8 knots. At 1000 rpm during our tests, she went 7.4 knots burning just 2.4 gallons per hour – and she would be nearly 50% more fuel efficient than when going 8.7 knots at 1250 rpm, and 10% faster.

Powered by 2x Cummins QSC 8.3 L 500-HP

Fleming 55
Image not found or type unknown

In short, when she is in world-cruising mode, 7.4 knots might be a good speed to hold. More typically, however, 55 owners will want to go a little faster when doing coastal or near island work, when time is preferred over range. Then, they are likely to peg their total fuel consumption at 20, 30 or 40 liters per hour. In U.S. gallons, that equates to 5.3, 7.9, and 10.6 gallons per hour. At those fuel burns, our speed was 8.6, 9.7, and 10.1 knots, respectively. And, range – with a 10% fuel reserve – was 1,460 nm, 1,105 nm, and 858 nm.

Graphics--

Fleming 55
Image not found or type unknown

Fleming 55 running
Image not found or type unknown

While the boat looks high in this picture because of the camera angle and the isinglass on the flying bridge, she has a relatively low center of gravity for this type of boat, making her more stable and seaworthy. She

does not carry dedicated ballast other than for balance.

Price

The Fleming 55 is not cheap – her price in the U.S. is north of $2 million. As has been pointed out, the builder has simply put the best materials and equipment into the boat and has essentially let the chips fall where they may as far as price goes. The company has only four models and builds fewer than 20 yachts in total each year. The company’s owners are boatbuilders and not venture capitalists, so they have no interest in doubling or tripling the yard's production by having lower prices and skimping on quality to do it. In the words of one of the owners, “We want to build quality not quantity.” We believe him.


Fleming 55 running

One of the changes that have been made to the boat over the years is to add the seating forward of the Portuguese bridge. It is certainly a fun place to ride or to share a cocktail there at anchor while watching the sun go down.

Observations

We would not recommend the Fleming 55 for everyone. People who just want a boat to bang around in local waters, or just go from marina to marina, or who only use the boat a few times each year – these people would probably be just as happy with a boat that costs much less. It is easily possible to buy too much boat for the work at hand, and the Fleming 55 is a good example of that. This is a boat that is designed and built for a connoisseur of fine yachts. The depth of experience that went into her lines and concept 27 years ago and the fact that she is essentially the same today (even though she has been re-tooled and dozens of little things have been changed), proves that she is a very special boat, indeed. She is an able vessel well-suited for many missions, and she will look good doing all of them.


Fleming 55 running

To date in January 2018, 245 Fleming 55s have been delivered to owners all over the world. Note that this owner has extended the boat deck almost to the transom. We like this customization because it allows the aft deck to be enclosed for three-season operation.