

Big Sea

THE **SEA RAY L650 FLY** PROVES THAT SEA RAY CAN DO BIG BOATS
THE RIGHT WAY. **BY KEVIN KOENIG**



LOA: 65'1"
BEAM: 17'3"
DRAFT: 5'1"
DISPL.: 73,500 lb.
FUEL: 1,030 gal.
WATER: 140 gal.
TEST POWER: 2/1,100-hp
Caterpillar C18 ACERTs
OPTIONAL POWER: N/A
PROPELLERS: Veem 34 x 37
GENERATOR: 27.5-kW Cummins Onan
WARRANTY: 3 years, bow to stern
PRICE AS TESTED: Upon request



When I tested the Sea Ray L650 Fly recently in the Hudson River, I wasn't sure what to expect. Great views of course, it felt like you could reach out and touch the Empire State Building at points. But the Sea Ray marketing department had been trumpeting this boat as something new, a departure from the smaller, less ambitious builds the company is best known for. Indeed, the first boat I ever drove was my dad's 23-foot Sea Ray, on the placid waters of Barnegat Bay. With a single convertible berth in the bow, and just enough room for a young family and some friends in the cockpit, she was the perfect aspirational build. Your first boat; the one that gets you hooked.

But this is not that. And not just because of her hefty LOA. The L line represents a renewed commitment by Sea Ray to the requisite level of attention to detail—the fit and finish, the interior décor, and more, to bust down the door and enter the rarefied air of the true-yacht class.

The L650 Fly is the full realization of good old American ambition. A big boat that can take you just about anywhere you want to go in comfort and style, and also make your neighbors at the dock a bit envious. And that's quite a big task to handle for any builder, regardless of past experience.

The boat's lower deck was certainly up to snuff. Handsomely dressed in distressed hickory throughout, it's both roomy and light. A forepeak VIP features a sizable en suite head, while matching guest staterooms amidships have a full 7 feet of headroom and convertible twins. The option is available to convert one of these rooms into an office, which Sea Ray believes will be a popular choice considering many of its owners still work. The guests are serviced by a dayhead in a passageway that leads aft to the full-beam, master. That stateroom is packed with amenities that will be enticing to any owner. It's en suite, of course, with his-and-hers sinks and a huge shower with a rainmaker shower head, which is very nice indeed. But what I appreciated the most about the master's head is that it's situated between the engine room and the berth, which helps dampen engine noise and keep the stateroom suitable for getting some rest. A mini-fridge means you don't have to head to the galley if you feel like champagne and strawberries, and a pullout make-up stand to port should be enticing to members of the fairer sex, or you I guess, if that's what you're into. No judgments here.

That aforementioned engine room is another highlight. On my test boat it housed twin 1,100-horsepower Caterpillar C18 ACERTs as well as two Seakeeper 8000 gyrostabilizers, the sound from which was all but gobbled up by thick sound insulation encasing the room. (Note that the decibel level never cracked 80, even at WOT.) Two duplex Racor fuel-water separators provided excellent redundancy, while a 27.5-kW Cummins Onan genset takes care of the auxiliary power duties. Headroom here required a slight crouch out of my 6-foot frame, but accessibility was a high point. Everything, and in particular that generator, would be easy to work on when the time comes.

Perhaps the defining part of the L650 Fly is her namesake flying bridge. She also comes in an express version, but for my money, with a boat this size, why not, well, go big. Especially when Sea Ray has done such a fine job designing such a low-profile bridgedeck. Take a good look at this boat. Without the T-top you could be forgiven if you missed the bridge altogether. But then of course, you'd be missing a real treat, because it's got everything you could pos-



LED accent lighting on the dark woods and leather of the saloon gives the L650 Fly a sophisticated aesthetic.



More previously unseen photos of the Sea Ray L650 Fly @ www.pmymag.com.





Better Boat: Don't Rock the Boat

If you spend any amount of time at sea, and you don't have stabilizers on your boat—and in particular Seakeeper gyro stabilizers like the ones on my test boat—it's high time you tried them out. With all the ferry traffic when I tested the L650 Fly, the Hudson River felt a bit like an upset bathtub. And without the stabilizers the boat was really rocking. However once the two gyro stabilizers are engaged, it's like magic. It literally feels like a giant hand reached out of the sky and steadied you. Sounds nice, doesn't it?

sibly want. A large settee aft has a hydraulic table that turns it into a sunpad. That sunpad is shaded by a standard SureShade cover in the T-top. Another sunpad forward, as well as a Kenyon grill, a refrigerator/ice maker, and stereo system round out the amenities. Meanwhile the upper helm is situated farther aft than you might expect, so the captain can see the boat's transom as he docks.

For me, the upper helm is nearly always better in comparison with the lower helm. I just like the wind in my hair. So that's where I conducted the majority of my sea trial of the L650.

Now let me say this: the Hudson River is a very, very interesting place to test a boat, thanks to all the high-speed ferries whizzing between The City and New Jersey. Those ferries made me thankful for the Sea Ray's excellent sightlines, particularly from the bridgedeck. While seated in the Stidd helm chair at the lower helm you will have to lean over pretty good to see out the side windows in tight turns, but hey, what are you gonna do? With the hammer down the boat just crested 30 knots, no small feat for a vessel displacing 80,000 pounds. Cruise speeds are closer to 24 knots for maximum long-distance efficiency. All in all I'd say it's a pretty good showing from the propulsion system, which is highlighted by those bruising C18s. The boat was—again thank-

In the master, hullside-window views rival a Bose soundbar and 40-inch LED flatscreen (not shown) for entertainment value.



fully—very maneuverable. She's pleasingly responsive to the wheel, and slalomed around and through the boat traffic with confidence and ease at both cruise and WOT. At slower speeds the twin hydraulic thrusters work in concert with the CATs to spin her like a top. They are controlled by joysticks at both helms, and a third in the cockpit, which make her a snap to dock. There are no waves in the Hudson, but some of those ferry wakes provided enough turbulence for me to get an idea of the Sea Ray's build quality. She was very solid bashing through even the biggest ones, and her reentry was definitely soft enough.

The L650 comes with Sea Ray's Concierge Package, a nod to the high-end customer service the company knows it must supply if it is to succeed in this market. The main upshot from the Concierge Package is that if you break down anywhere in the world, Sea Ray will get a service professional to you in 24 hours. And that could be a huge plus if you can only find one week to sneak away to the islands each summer.

What you get with the Sea Ray L650 is a boat with a thoughtful layout, a sturdy build, and surprisingly sporty performance. She will definitely compete with the best of them in her class. There's a whole lot to like here—you just may be surprised. □

Sea Ray, 321-449-9073; www.searay.com

RPM	KNOTS	GPH	RANGE	DB(A)	
600	7.1	4.0	1,645	69	
900	9.0	10.0	834	66	
1200	11.2	28.0	371	69	
1500	13.6	52.0	242	72	
1800	19.4	82.0	219	71	
2100	25.6	98.0	242	74	
2330	30.4	120.0	235	78	

TEST CONDITIONS: Air temperature: 90°F; humidity 50%; seas: 1-3'; load: 800 gal. fuel, 164 gal. water, 3 persons, 500 lb. gear. Speeds are two-way averages measured w/ GPS display. GPH estimates taken via CAT display. Range is based on 90% of advertised fuel capacity. Sound levels measured at lower helm. 65 dB(A) is the level of normal conversation.

NOTEWORTHY OPTIONS: Raymarine i50 Depth Sounder; Raymarine T300 Thermal Night Vision Camera; air-conditioning upgrade in the saloon (8,000 Btu); joystick system for inboards; upgraded seating fabric in the bridge, cockpit, and foredeck. Desalinator (400 gal. per day); refrigerator, master stateroom; Prices upon request.