



M a i n e S t r e a m

Sabre raises a new standard with its 52 Salon Express, where traditional craftsmanship meets contemporary design

By John Wooldridge

Photography by Billy Black

As daylight illuminates

the Shoji screen double pocket doors that make my stateroom a private retreat for its lucky owners, I find myself fascinated. From my perch on the edge of the queen-size island berth in the master stateroom, I can watch faint geometric shadows cast by the screen's frame glide across the hand-laid teak and holly sole. It's the Far East meeting the Downeast, and I'm pleased to see that the twain do meet—at least on board the new Sabre 52 Salon Express.

Outside it's a crisp 28 degrees F. and about to get colder across the decks as we prepare to cast off and move the Sabre 52 out of Portland Harbor and into Casco Bay for our sea trials. The wind is a steady 17 mph with gusts to 25 mph. Inside the master stateroom, however, I can still be oblivious to the weather outside, thanks to being centered in a quiet amidships location.

But twin Caterpillar C15 diesels coming to life in a muffled rumble are my cue to slide apart the Shoji doors, lock them in place and step through the four-foot-wide opening. Turning my head to the right, I look forward along the companionway, through the door into the guest stateroom. To my left, a short flight of teak and holly stairs leads up to the helm deck and, straight across, an extra-spacious contemporary kitchen running along the port side.

The length, breadth and depth of this interior are extraordinary, because light and space are such key components in the success of Sabre's newest and largest express yacht—the first with a fully enclosed saloon at the helm deck level. Like every Sabre motoryacht design stretching back to the first Sabreline 36 Trawler in 1989, the Sabre 52 is a distinctive design with a heritage of quality construction, comfortable cruising accommodations and satisfying performance. When the company launched its first express, the 36 Express Motor Yacht, in 1996, it found a waiting audience that appreciated a commitment to craftsmanship and reliability, especially when those virtues came in pleasing and emblematic designs. Since that time, Sabre has debuted a trend-setting 42 Express, a 38 and now a new 34 in concert with the new 52 Express. That they have accomplished this in less than a decade without straying from their now well-known philosophy is noteworthy.

“Our goal has been for almost ten years to develop a range of boats from the mid-30s to the mid-50s with similar styling and consistent details,” says Bentley Collins, Sabre's vice-president of sales and marketing, “making it easy and desirable for customers to feel comfortable moving from one to another. Inevitably, customers wanted to know when the larger version would be available.”

Collins points to small refinements on the 52 Salon Express that set it apart slightly from its peers. By fully enclosing the back of the deckhouse, adding a sunroof and doing a little bit of Italian contemporary styling (those curved aft windows, the interior valances, the sunpad for the foredeck), it's just as easy to imagine this yacht at home in the Med as anywhere along the coast of Maine. In both places, owners will appreciate the comfort and season-extending protection of a fully enclosed salon, though for different reasons.

This design, a collaboration of the Sabre Design Team, began with a critical examination of yachting trends both national and international, filtered in healthy doses of large-yacht systems know-how through their in-house engineering team, and paid plenty of attention to customer input about layout and feature preferences.

Case in point: Recognizing the international trend to bring more light into boats, even to the extent of creating fixed windows in hull sides, the interior of the 52 is bathed in abundant natural light, with the intention of bringing the outside in, transforming the interior into what feels like an outdoor space (without the negative impacts of less than perfect cruising weather). Light on the water reflecting in windows and extra-large port lights plays beautifully on the American Cherry furniture, teak and holly floors and cherry latticed ceilings. The deckhouse is positioned so that light illuminates the galley as well as the saloon, with a structure that is strengthened to withstand the rigors of cruising offshore while supporting large strong windows. And it is shaped aesthetically not only to resemble the rest of the Sabre yacht family, but also to afford guests and the helmsman unobstructed views of their surroundings.

Building a yacht of this size posed no problems for the craftsmen at Sabre's two Maine plants. What challenges existed lay more in systems than actual structure. “We've built boats of this and much larger dimensions in our Rockland facility,” says Collins. “However,

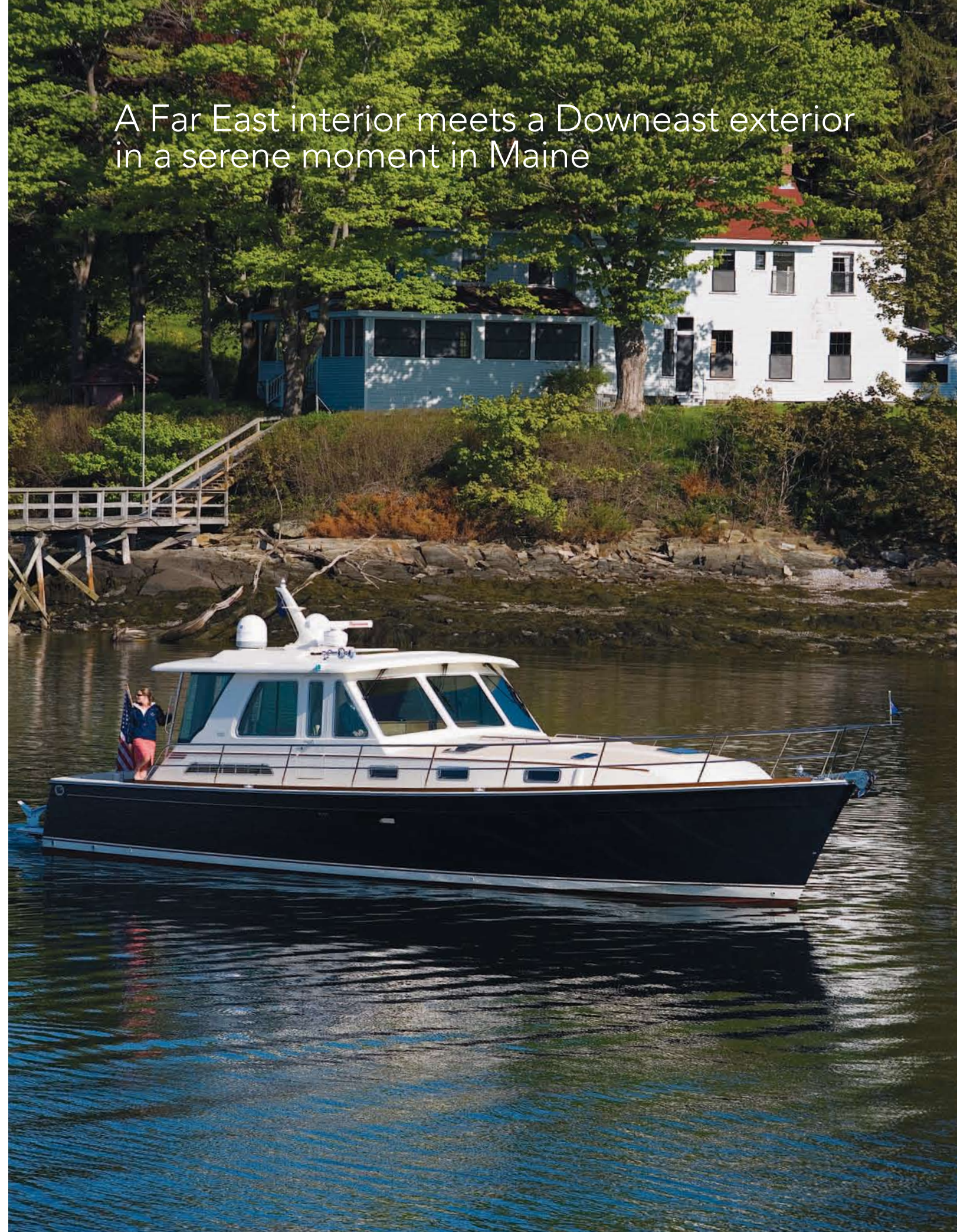


AMERICAN CHERRY AND SUMPTUOUS UPHOLSTERY GIVE THE SABRE 52 SALON EXPRESS THAT OWNER-SATISFYING GLOSS (LEFT). AN ISLAND IN MAINE MAKES A PERFECT BACKDROP TO A CLASSIC DESIGN (RIGHT).

RPM	KNOTS	dB(A)	GPH
600	6.2	61	3.4
900	9.7	65	14.2
1200	11.6	69	24.0
1500	17.3	71	40.0
1800	22.3	74	56.0
2100	27.7	78	76.0
2300	31.0	79	90.0

Speeds measured by GPS on Casco Bay w/four adults aboard, 200 gal. water and 600 gal. fuel. Sound levels measured at the helm in dB(A). Fuel consumption measured by the Caterpillar electronic engine management system.

A Far East interior meets a Downeast exterior in a serene moment in Maine



for our engineering staff, this was a dream project, moving from simpler systems found in most forty-footers to the more sophisticated and costly systems found in larger yachts.”

For example, the LED lighting system in the Sabre 52 Salon Express has an extremely low consumption rate. If you turned on every overhead light on the boat and left them on, it would take 65 days to bring down the house battery system. The electrical system is 24-volt DC, with 12-volt DC available for helm electronics, saving about 1,000 pounds of electrical wiring per yacht, and cre-

ating an electrical system that is inherently more durable. Having been aboard well after dark, I can attest that there is more than enough lighting for pleasant entertaining and cruising.

Currently offered in only one interior layout, the Sabre 52 Salon Express is nevertheless a well-thought-out design for living afloat. The helm deck is furnished with an oversized U-shaped lounge to port aft, upholstered with a choice of custom fabrics; it converts to a double. The high-low, fixed pedestal table serving it is a masterpiece of wood-working, and has a removable center leaf for dining or entertaining options. Directly opposite, Sabre craftsmen have created a beautifully joined entertainment cabinet housing an LCD-TV on a lift, a supporting surround-sound stereo system and bottle storage.

To port forward is a bench for a mate or guests, but for those

who want to take part in and enjoy the navigation and operation of the yacht, Sabre includes two Stidd helm seats on pedestals at the starboard command console. The helm dash is tall and wide enough to accept dual displays for networked electronics, with room left over for dedicated engine monitoring displays and more. There's an area for paper charts to port of the custom teak and stainless wheel, with controls for trim tabs, engines and bow thruster all within easy reach. I particularly liked the stout watertight door to the starboard side deck that opens out and folds flat against the house side.

There's no want of light in the galley, with two oversized opening port lights and a fixed port light above the counter. You'll find acres of solid-surface laminate counter for meal preparation, with two

vide fair leads to substantial cleats, with cast hawse pipes in the hull sides and transom for a variety of stern-tie configurations. Teak sole options include a complete weather decks package, or a cockpit-only selection, plus teak coaming caps and teak inlay on the swim platform. The Freedom Lift, a popular hydraulic dinghy lift system, is available to make launching and retrieving a RIB or PWC more convenient.

It wasn't exactly dinghy weather the day we put the Sabre 52 Salon Express through her handling and performance paces on Casco Bay, but it was comfortable inside at the helm. There are three zones of air conditioning/reverse cycle heating available to keep cruisers satisfied no matter what the conditions outside. The big Caterpillar C15 diesels provided a steady, powerful output, while



LOA: 53'2"
Beam: 16'0"
Draft: 4'3"
Transom Deadrise: 15 degrees
Displ. (dry, approx.): 46,000 lb.
Fuel: 800 gal.
Water: 200 gal.
Black Water: 80 gal.
Naval Architect: Sabre Yachts Design Group
Exterior Styling: Sabre Yachts Design Group
Interior Design: Sabre Yachts Design Group
Engines: 2x 865 hp Caterpillar C15 ACERT
Transmission: Twin Disc, QuickShift MGX5114A
Gear Reduction: 2.04:1
Props: 32" x 36.5", ZF-FPS 4-blade, NiBrAl
Generator: 1x 17kW Onan
Steering: Hydraulic, power-assisted
Engine Controls: Twin Disc EC300 electronic
Price: \$1,300,000 (base w/engines tested)



EVEN BATHED IN ARTIFICIAL LIGHTS, THE GORGEOUS GALLEY BECKONS ALL WHO WOULD PREPARE A SIMPLE MEAL OR AN EXTRAVAGANT FEAST (ABOVE). A TOUCH OF THE BUTTON SLIDES THE INTEGRATED ELECTRIC SUNROOF AFT ON PLEASANT CRUISING DAYS, BRINGING PLENTY OF NATURAL LIGHT AND VENTILATION INTO THE SALOON (BELOW).



WITH ITS DINGHY LAUNCHED AND ITS FREEDOM LIFT IN THE RAISED POSITION, THE SABRE 52 SALON EXPRESS IS FREE TO EXPLORE NEARBY COVES.



Sub-Zero stainless steel fridge/freezer drawer units and a cherry-fronted Fischer & Paykel DishDrawer below. From the under-mount twin stainless steel sink to the three-burner electric stove top with galley exhaust and microwave/convection oven, everything is planned for efficient meal preparation in a spacious, storage-rich that feels more like a gourmet kitchen than galley.

The master stateroom is opposite, a testament to the cabinet-maker's skill with drawer storage beneath the berth, a pair of bureau/nightstands flanking the head of the bed, and a desk with file cabinet and book shelf for correspondence or business planning. His and hers cedar-lined lockers and a built-in LCD-TV are notable features in a stateroom that is spacious enough for a couple to enjoy for any length of cruise. The private head adjoining shows a designer's touch that is also practical—easy to keep ceramic tile, custom sink, solid-surface countertop and a separate shower stall with teak grate. Your guests will feel welcome in the stateroom forward, which duplicates many of the comfort features of the master, and has a private access to the portside head compartment, which also serves as the day head.

On deck, this Sabre's layout is drawn with wide side decks and tall hand rails to promote safe movement fore and aft. Custom-cast chocks integrated into the teak toe rail amidships and forward pro-

the Twin Disc QuickShift gearboxes made it possible to maneuver at slow speeds more precisely with these big engines.

Wind chop of two to three feet was not much of a match for the Sabre 52's modified deep-V hull, and the ride was predictably comfortable. The modest degree of deadrise at transom helped ensure that we had plenty of planing surface for cruising efficiently and excellent form stability for tight turns. Throughout a series of turns, the Sabre 52 handled predictably and evenly, with no bad habits at all.

As you can see from our sound numbers, it was a quiet ride, as well. "Our engineers paid lots of attention to sound attenuation," says Collins. "We wanted owners to be cruising at 25 knots, sitting on the helm deck and enjoying the experience with minimal impact from sound, the way they'd experience driving down the highway in a BMW Seven-Series or a Mercedes-Benz 500-series."

Sabre's new 52 Salon Express is a tour de force, a reaffirmation of the company's signature style and comfort enveloped in a contemporary Downeast design. Sabre's oft-quoted tagline is "Crafted In The Maine Tradition" and it still speaks volumes about this new yacht, as well as the dedicated employees who have created it. We're lucky to experience their talent at finding the peace and tranquility in an environment of wind and wave action. □

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