

Trawler Talk

The Semi-Displacement Hull

This month's reflection will center on the semi-displacement hull including the advantages and shortcomings as well. Because we recognized the advantages some time ago we centered our choices of boat lines to sell on this type of hull. So you are right, we are pro-semi-displacement orientated!

We have done the Great Loop about one-and a half times (7,500 miles each) and about 1500 miles average per year on the Great Lakes which calculates to about 24,000 miles of cruising on semi-displacement hulls over the last 11 years.

Let's briefly look at what we think is a semi-displacement hull. The full keel and hard chines (the angular intersection of the sides and bottom of a vessel) seem to be the most defining characteristics. This allows the boat to get from the usual 8-knot cruise to about 20 knots or anywhere in between. Along with this scenario is the need for more horse power. In round numbers the engine needs to be about three times more horse power such as moving up from 100 hp to 300 hp. The new breed of diesel engines run very efficient and quiet even at higher speeds, especially when the boat is of high quality with good sound-deadening construction. When cruising at 8 knots the difference between a 100 hp and 300 hp engine is about one-half to two-thirds gallon of fuel more per hour, which will increase somewhat as speeds increase. Not a big price to pay for the following advantages.



The obvious would be to get into an unfamiliar port before dark. We never like to run at night so if we're cruising at 8 knots and we need to pick it up to 15 knots for an hour or two; it is worth the extra fuel consumed for that short time.

Beating a storm can be worth an arm and leg given the right situation. One memory comes to mind which happened about 5 years ago. We were taking a 37 foot semi-displacement trawler from Manitowoc, Wisconsin to Florida on the eastern route through the Great Lakes, Erie Canal, Hudson River and Intercoastal Waterway to Florida when a storm on Lake Erie began approaching from our stern. I noticed it on our radar, which at first seemed like a large black mass of land, but it was really a very intense lightning storm. It was eight miles to our stern and closing! We then kicked up the normal cruise to wide open at about 17.5 knots. The sky was totally black to our stern and lightning was constantly shooting toward the water behind us. Ahead, the visibility was clear so for two hours the race was on. The storm got within 4 miles of us but we made it into port about 30 minutes before the storm hit. By that time we were all tied up and secure. What a relief to be able to out-run that one!

Now, keep that in mind that no matter how much planning you do, there will be days the seas build bigger and faster than you anticipated. When the seas are rough and you are at 8 knots the boat will roll and move around some but when you kick it up to 10 to 13 knots the roll lessens and the ride becomes much more comfortable. This is one of the biggest advantages of the semi-displacement hull! No huge stopper floppers or mechanical stabilizers are needed which can save you a lot of hassle and expense. We have had all of the boats in our line-up in 10 to 12 foot seas, although like everyone else we like the seas to be flat. This type of hull is designed to safely take you and yours to your destination! Running a little faster also shortens the time spent in those kind of sea conditions.

Both mono-hulls and catamarans can be built in the semi-displacement design. We all have choices to make when selecting the right boat for our way of thinking.

At Trawlers Midwest, we believe that the choice of the semi-displacement hulls by many cruisers has added immeasurably to the comfort and safety of their experiences on the water!

Ken and Karen Schuler
Trawlers Midwest Inc

Please direct any questions or comments you may have to:
Phone: 920-894-2632
Email: trawlers@trawlersmidwest.com