

## ON BOARD

# The Vicem 54 Bahama Bay marries old-school Down East style with new-school design and propulsion.

By Pete McDonald

My “a-ha” moment for understanding what the Vicem 54 Bahama Bay is all about didn’t come while I admired its beautiful Down East lines from the dock, nor when I executed the well-controlled hairpin turns that the Volvo IPS system permitted. The moment came in the master stateroom, while I checked out the TV. The flatscreen is inset inside mahogany cabinetry, with a perfectly placed hand insert for accessing the control buttons and the remote sensor. I imagined the hours it took to sand and shape this one little part so that it looks seamless and flawless. If you extrapolate that craftsmanship and attention to detail and apply it to the entire boat, you get the 54.

“Our forte is our woodwork,” said Dirk Boehmer, president of Vicem USA. “We have master craftsmen with the ability to make two pieces of wood look like one.”

Turkey has a rich boatbuilding history and is a place where people pass down their skills over generations. Vicem (pronounced Veechem) started building in 1991, and its workforce follows in that tradition. The 54 is part of the Bahama Bay series, a line of boats designed and built specifically to run with the Volvo Penta IPS system. Vicem also builds a 52, a 56 and a 58 Bahama Bay. Bahama



**ROOM TO SPARE:** The IPS drives allow for a lot of useable interior volume.

Bays are similar in appearance to Vicem’s Classic line, but with less curve in the sheer line, no varnished-teak hand and toe rails above deck, and a hardtop that extends all the way aft to cover the teak-laden cockpit.

“The Bahama Bay line is made for more southern and tropical climates,” Boehmer explained. The idea is to present a classic look and profile without all the classic maintenance, and to make it stand up better to the harsher effects of the sun.

We had a bright and beautiful Florida day during our sea trial in Sarasota, and as we pulled out of the marina into the bay, we could see that the 54 was turning heads at the docks. Boehmer said these folks are Vicem’s demographic. Almost all its customers in the United States are experienced boat owners who come to Vicem already knowing what they like and want. Every boat is customizable per the owner’s desires, and this 54 was no exception. Take the galley; Vicem normally uses granite, but for this particular build the company installed marble countertops at the owner’s request. The owner also requested a steamer, so Vicem installed a top-of-the-line Wolf unit, along with a matching cooktop, a Bosch oven and Sub-Zero refrigerators and freezers that roll out from beneath the countertops. The whole interior glowed from the rich mahogany paneling.

The modern look of the interior design stands apart from traditional Down East styling, and from

**LOA:** 59’6”  
**LWL:** 51’0”  
**BEAM:** 16’7”  
**DRAFT:** 4’6”  
**DISPL.:** 60,627 lb.  
**FUEL:** 635 gal.  
**WATER:** 265 gal.  
**DEADRISE:** 12 degrees  
**POWER:** 2 x 700 hp Volvo Penta IPS 900 diesels  
**PRICE:** \$2,271,250



RPM	KNOTS	GPH	dB(A)
600	5.2	1.1	67
900	8.4	7.0	82
1200	9.5	16.0	73
1500	12.9	31.0	80
1800	20.4	37.0	81
2100	25.7	54.0	82
2350	30.2	69.0	86

#### TEST CONDITIONS:

Speeds were measured by GPS off Sarasota, Florida, with calm seas and 6-knot winds, with a ¼ load of fuel, a ½ load of water and three people on board. Fuel consumption was calculated by the electronic engine-monitoring system. Sound levels were measured at the helm.

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Vicem's Classic line, thanks to the inspired work of Hakki Koroglu, a noted architect based in Miami. Koroglu also designed the exterior look of the 54 Bahama Bay. While bold, his work perfectly complements the traditional lines of the 54 rather than clashing with them. There are subtle touches, like the smoked-glass windows in the bulkhead between the galley and the master stateroom amidships. The smoked glass allows in natural light, giving it a roomier feel, but also protects the privacy of those inside.

In his interior arrangements, Koroglu benefited from the extra space afforded by the IPS installation. The master stateroom sits amidships on the port side, across from the galley. Forward, the VIP stateroom and the over/under guest room can be closed off to create a private suite, with an en suite head. The guest head features the same marble countertops, large shower and mahogany cabinetry as the master.

In the engine compartment, the room gained from IPS is readily apparent. The bright Awlgrip is illuminated by LED lights, with a lot of space to move around the engines and the pod units. Vicem worked with Volvo Penta to match the pod system with this boat, so everything is engineered to precise detail. The engine blocks are mounted directly to the stringers, built to bear their specific load. Moving forward in the engine compartment, I poked my head through a fire door and eyeballed space gained up front, the separate section for ship systems, as well as extra space for stowage belowdecks.

When we cleared the no-wake zones and had nothing but open water in front of us,



**FIT AND FINISH:** The rich mahogany paneling in the 54 Bahama Bay's salon is top-notch, as it is in the master stateroom (below), which features an en suite head with marble countertops and a shower.

Boehmer and I put those twin diesels to the test. Glass-calm conditions meant we had to make our own rough seas with sharp turns back into our wake. The increased maneuverability gained from pod-drives is well documented, and I found that proved true at the helm of this 54-footer as we carved turns like those of a slalom skier. I grew particularly fond of the Humphrey auto trim tabs, which adjusted according to need as we climbed onto plane, banked into turns and encountered whatever small chop we could muster, though I wish we could have had some real seas to put the 54 Bahama Bay's hull to the test.

For all the beautifully crafted mahogany joinery in the salon and belowdecks, to me the wood you can't see is what's most impressive. Vicem constructs its hulls via the cold-molding process, cross-planking mahogany veneers, impregnating them

with West System epoxy and covering it all with layers of E-glass. The result is a hull with a superior strength-to-weight ratio compared with conventional fiberglass molding techniques, and with the solid feel of wood moving through the water. In our calm seas, the 54 moved effortlessly as we accelerated to 30 knots at wide-open throttle. At 20 knots we settled into a pleasant cruising speed and enjoyed watching other boaters watch us.

People kept staring as we returned to the marina, and a crowd awaited us on the pier as we lined up our slip. Nothing adds pressure to a tight docking situation like an audience, but of course the IPS joystick controls make it all go away. Our test boat had an additional feature, a remote joystick control hidden in the armrest of the after settee in the cockpit. Once we had the boat lined up, we could walk back to the cockpit and bring her home from there, keeping an eye on the swim platform and the concrete bulkhead while working the joystick. The after controls are a popular feature in Europe and one that American captains might consider. I'd hate to see someone scuff up the teak swim platform, the only exposed wood on the Bahama Bay series besides the mahogany doors leading to the salon. Like the paneling around the flatscreen, it's all seamless and beautiful.

If there's one thing to remember about the Vicem 54 Bahama Bay, it's the wood that makes it good. □

*Vicem Yachts USA, 954-462-8828; [www.vicemyacht.com](http://www.vicemyacht.com)*



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