

THE REAL MCCOY

IN MANY WAYS, THE NORDIC TUG 40 IS
THE SAME AS THE BRAND EVER WAS.
AND THAT'S A GOOD THING.



PHOTO: CREED



IT WAS 1979

when a pair of Pacific Northwest marine executives decided the languishing powerboat market was ripe for innovation. This was not a good time to launch a new boat company: Americans were reeling from the decade's fuel crisis and faced steep prices at the gas dock. But entrepreneur and yard owner Jerry Husted saw an opportunity for a small, efficient powerboat. He tapped naval architect Lynn Senour to come up with the design.

The timing was fortuitous. Virtually no production builder had cracked the cruising-trawler formula when the first Nordic Tugs model, a 26-footer, splashed at the 1980 Seattle Boat Show. It was exactly what the power-cruising cognoscenti wanted. By the end of the show, 37 hulls were sold—one boat every three hours. Customers snapped up 54 boats in a month's time. The boat just made sense.

This success seems too easy, but it wasn't. Senour smartly merged a rugged tugboat's workaday lines, including a raised pilothouse and faux exhaust stack, atop a semi-displacement hull form with a full keel to protect the running gear. For the next four-plus decades, as the Nordic Tugs line expanded to include several pilothouse and flybridge models up to 54 feet, the ethos of that first boat became an integral part of every model's DNA.

Earlier this year, when I saw Hull No. 10 of the Nordic Tug 40 at the dock in Anacortes, Wash., I thought, "She's the same as the brand ever was." At her core, the 40 looks much like her predecessors, but with clever updates and modern refinements to suit today's buyers.

I boarded the 40 via her swim platform, through a wide transom door on centerline. The swim platform is now on the same level as the cockpit, a recent update. I have loaded many vessels with everything from sundries to cumbersome cases, and obviating the need to navigate stairs is a blessing.

Sliding windows to port and starboard, and the rear sliding door, illuminate the salon, which is handsomely offset with rich sapele wood and Amtico soles. Having 6 feet, 7 inches of headroom also helps to make the space feel open and inviting.

NORDIC TUGS



Entering her salon, I was heartened by a layout that stressed livability. Sliding windows to port and starboard, and the rear sliding door, illuminated the space, which was handsomely offset with rich sapele wood and Amtico soles. Having 6 feet, 7 inches of headroom also made the space feel open and inviting.

I also liked the amount of counter space: enough for two chefs to work side by side at her galley to starboard. It's adjacent to an L-shaped settee. An optional 24-inch LCD TV folds down from a sapele cabinet above the galley, so cruisers can tune in to a ballgame as twilight approaches, or kids can watch during dinner prep.

The pilothouse, three steps up from the salon, has the same sapele wood treatment and an

unfussy, clean helm with a standard 12-inch Garmin multifunction display and autopilot, a VHF radio and a touchscreen for her single, 425-hp Cummins QSB6.7 (standard power is a 380-hp diesel from Cummins or Volvo Penta). A destroyer-style wheel and controls for the electric, proportional bow and stern thrusters are here too.

Nordic Tugs General Manager Ric Reid told me that the builder offers custom options, including in the pilothouse. There's room for one large display or two 12-inch screens. Owners also can choose to have the VHF radio and engine readouts (or the touchscreen for the optional Seakeeper) housed in the eyebrow above the windshield. A single helm seat and double companion settee further define the area, with a flat space ideal for

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Above: The double companion chair in the pilothouse is the ideal perch for a copilot. Doors to port and starboard here make things easy for cruisers. **Facing page:** Sightlines are excellent from the clean, unfussy helm. Sliding windows to port and starboard, and aft-facing, opening windows built into the headliner, will keep things bright and airy.

NORDIC TUGS

paper charts, binoculars, snacks and whatever else cruisers need.

The pilothouse has sliding windows to port and starboard, and aft-facing, opening windows built into the headliner. Doors to port and starboard (the latter a recent and welcome addition to the 40's layout) can further air out the area, and should make things easy for single-handers or a cruising couple. Walking through one side onto the foredeck and back through the other side, I found beefy handholds on the side decks and a sturdy bowrail that came up between my knee and waist (I'm 5-foot-11). The builder can build the bowrail higher on request.

Back inside, I took the centerline companionway belowdecks to her two staterooms: a forward

master and a starboard double berth. Headroom was 6 feet, 7 inches here as well.

Before we headed into Padilla Bay, I ducked into the engine room, accessed via a hatch in the salon sole. I didn't miss stand-over headroom because I could access service points on the engine without it. And, with a quick glance from abovedeck, I could easily see the Racors on the after bulkhead. A 5-kW genset was housed here as well; if paired with the optional reverse-cycle air conditioning, it would be upped to 9 kW. Owners can also add a diesel boiler furnace.

When it came time to motor from Anacortes' Cap Sante Marina, the boat's modern diesel power—what I'd consider the biggest step up from those early years—inspired confidence



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The boat deck offers space for a dinghy for longer passages, and can be fitted with a davit. Many owners choose to have a lift on the swim platform. **Above:** Molded stairs (with storage) are a recent update to replace the stainless ladder from the cockpit. **Facing page:** The commanding view from the flybridge.



NORDIC TUG 40

LOA: 43ft.
Beam: 12ft. 11in.
Draft: 4ft. 4in.
Displacement: 22,600 lbs.
Fuel: 320 gal.
Water: 144 gal.
Engine (standard): 380-hp Cummins QSB6.7
Optional power: 425-hp Cummins QSB6.7, 380-hp or 440-hp Volvo Penta D6
Info: nordictugs.com

throughout the rpm range. The 40 reached a top speed of 17 knots with the throttle pinned. She proved economical, as well: At 9.5 knots, she returned a range of just over 600 nautical miles. Backing off to 1400 rpm and 8 knots showed the 40 was capable of cruising 1,054 nm before refueling. No speed or range anxiety here, and the rips and currents common in the San Juan Islands were no match for the hull.

As we rounded Sinclair Island and headed back to the marina, I asked Reid about her running surface, and was pleasantly surprised to hear that it is nearly unchanged from Senour's decades-old design. The wide, hard chines that made her efficient at displacement speeds also contribute to stability at higher speeds. On recent models, the hard chines have been softened, reportedly reducing wave slap. Sightlines were excellent via the three forward-facing windows, and to port and starboard.

Once we docked, I climbed the ladder to the flybridge (a canvas fitter had just outfitted the helm and chairs) and saw an ideal perch to spot deadheads. This space is also prepped for a Bimini top. A 600-pound-capacity davit can be installed aft, though this hull was slated to get an Olsson lift on her swim platform for the dinghy (owners can also choose models from FreedomLift or Nick Jackson).

Comfort, livability and the economical performance of a trawler with as-needed giddyap are hallmarks of Nordic Tugs, and all those qualities are exemplified on the 40.

After 43 years, the boats still make perfect sense. ❁

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