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DAY YACHT

MASTERCRAFT 300

Definitely one of the most surprising boat designs of the year, the MasterCraft 300 makes a big splash as one of the most artful day yachts produced in this country. With the 300, the Tennessee-based builder — best known for its competition-level ski boats — has really stretched its creative muscle. Not only does the 300 redefine our perception of MasterCraft as a company, it also takes the concept of the day yacht to the next level.

It's elegant, yes, but the 300 also showcases sophisticated technology. It's one of the first production boats to employ ZF's new Joystick Maneuvering System for inboards. Then there's the unique look, which is almost electric, thanks to aggressive lines and ultra-modern features, including the hardtop made of tinted blue glass that filters UV rays and looks incredibly cool at the same time.

Kudos to MasterCraft for the strategic management of on-board space. Most boats in this size range try to do it all, attempting to balance outdoor areas with overnight accommodations. The MasterCraft 300, though, really is a dedicated day yacht, a beamy beauty that offers its owner an exciting afternoon escape. Each feature — from the luxury fabrics and hardwoods in the cockpit to the decor belowdecks (it says cocktails and conversation rather than nights on the hook) — has been selected with that owner in mind. These types of amenities were not found on MasterCraft models conceived just a few years ago, and that's one way the 300 proves an innovative builder can accomplish really great things.

DREAM MAKERS

NORDHAVN

It would be hard to find a more adventuresome group than Nordhavn owners. Indeed, it's safe to say a Nordhavn owner is probably cruising on, or heading for, every ocean in the world. All this started back in 2002 when a Nordhavn 40 circled the globe, putting the Dana Point, California-based company on the map for long-range cruising. Next came the Nordhavn Atlantic Rally in 2004, the first voyage of a fleet of recreational powerboats (18 in all) from Fort Lauderdale to Gibraltar.

Since then, Nordhavn owners have tackled the globe. Just this past summer three Nordhavns completed the Great Siberian Sushi Run, a 5,938-nautical-mile, 146-day voyage passing from Seattle to Osaka, Japan. Meanwhile, Sprague Theobald transited the famed (and often fatal) Northwest Passage across the Arctic Circle, putting some 8,500 nautical miles under the hull of his Nordhavn 55 from Newport, Rhode Island, to Seattle. At one point in the middle of the Passage, Theobald and his crew were trapped in ice for two days and were in danger of being carried to a lee shore. They finally freed themselves by simply forcing the Nordhavn forward through the ice pack like an icebreaker, gaining mere feet at a time. The damage to the boat, when they finally were able to take a look: some chipped paint on the bow.

FOREST JOHNSON (TOP); GREG DEASCENTIS