

An Alternative Lifestyle: Living Aboard A Yacht

Most likely many of us have daydreamed about selling the ranch and all its contents, getting a forwarding address, and sailing off into the sunset. Welcome to the world where people do live their dream. They are known in the boating community as ‘live aboards’ and that is exactly what they do. Some for 8 to 9 months of the year, while others choose to never own anything on soil again.

They are a unique bunch, and while we attended the recent Newport International Boat Show, we caught up to a few boat manufacturers as well as owners that live an alternative lifestyle which, by the way, is attracting a large number of semi-retired and retired couples from all walks of life.



We requested to board Summer Ski, a 43’ Nordhavn trawler, and Jenny Stern, Director of Marketing for P.A.E. the parent company of Nordhavn Yachts, North East, granted permission. After removing our boat shoes, (a courtesy much appreciated by the owners of these pricey floats), we proceeded to enter into the small ship’s salon. Beautifully detailed in teak and what looked like granite, we were all in amazed how much open space the living and dining area offered occupants, including an abundance of headroom. After a quick 360-degree turn, in order to get my bearings, I was ready to begin my interview with Jenny. No sooner that I asked who the typical customer is of this type of vessel, she pointed and said, “Ask them, they own this boat.” A friendly and jovial guy named Jim Fuller and his somewhat shy wife Marge let us know; that they would not only answer our questions, but they would happily grant us a personal tour of *their home*.

Jim, previously a sailor with live-aboard experience had decided

with Marge to venture into the “dark side,” as he put it, basically meaning jumping from a sailing/motoring vessel to full time motoring. “We wanted to enjoy all that sailing has to offer, but with a lot less work involved. This boat will give us a chance to explore areas that we just couldn’t get into with the draft of a “sailboat,” Jim added. I asked Marge what she found to be the most difficult adjustment moving onto the water for extended periods. “I think that it would be the fact that you can’t bring on cardboard boxes—the bugs love the glue you know, and when you live on the water everything you normally do on shore will take at least two to three times the time to accomplish,” she said with a grin. “What I mean is cooking, showering, that sort of thing is always going to mean bringing out from storage the things you need and then having to re-store them securely.” She then added, “While we do have all the creature-comforts of a large home, the smaller stove and washer/dryer combo do take a little more time.” When asked if the extra effort disappointed her, she quickly answered, “Are you kidding; this is like being on vacation every day.”

The average couple you’ll find entering into this lifestyle is usually well into their 50’s or 60’s and have always wanted to try this intriguing way to see the world, the only thing keeping most couples from it is the price. After doing some research with owners and dock masters, I came up with a rough estimate of the cost of paradise. Pretty much, you can expect to dish out \$800,000 to \$1.2m for a boat large enough to accommodate two, with guest quarters for 2 friends (and by the way, when you do get a boat this size, you’ll find everyone wants to be your friend). If you are very conservative, meaning that you cook on board and skip the fancy dock side restaurants, anchor when at all possible—dock space is a high ticket item almost everywhere, you can probably live on about \$40-\$50,000 per year. That is if you live full time and don’t have the entrapments of a car and second residence.

After a gracious tour of Summer Ski, I had one last question for the two of our hosts, and that was, “give my readers some advice if they might be thinking about doing the same thing you two are enjoying.” After a brief pause, Jim and Marge had this to offer, “Live your dream, and don’t let anyone tell you your crazy.” Oh, and one last thing Jim added, “you know you guys could work from a boat like this.” I retorted with, “Perhaps but we are going to have to start charging for the magazine in order to live this lifestyle.

We at SoCo want to thank our wonderful hosts, Jim and Marge Fuller, again for their hospitality and willingness to share their dream with us. “May the wind be gentle and the seas calm on all your journeys. We wish you all the best.” ★

