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In the Lap of Rugged Luxury

The Nordhavn 40 blends workboat-inspired seaworthiness with a skillfully crafted interior to produce a safe, comfortable long-distance trawler.

by Holly E. Parker

Billy Black Photos

Commander, a Nordhavn 40 Mark II trawler, is designed for long-distance cruising through seas more challenging than these.

Legs tucked under me, I gaze out onto foggy Narragansett Bay; hearty wipers drive drizzle from half-inch-thick windows. The chartplotter beeps: *Commander* has arrived at yet another waypoint. Capt. Barry Kallander enters the next set of coordinates and retires below, leaving me in control of his 40-foot Nordhavn Mark II trawler. Almost immediately a lobsterpot buoy emerges from the mist. I feel a bit queasy as I press a button on the remote control in my hand. *Commander* responds, turning 10 degrees to starboard. As we glide past the buoy at 7.5 knots, I correct our course with the push of another button. Having never touched the helm, I have guided this marriage of workboat design and cruising luxury out of danger. Eyes on the bay, I sip my coffee, remote firmly in hand.

Design and Construction

How does a boat designed in California and built in China sport a Scandinavian moniker? Pacific Asian Enterprises (the corporate parent of Nordhavn) began importing Taiwanese-made boats in the mid-1970s. Owners Jim Leishman and Dan Streech, both sailors, teamed up with designer Al Mason to produce the venerable PAE/Mason line of sailboats from 1978 to 1985.

With the market moving more toward power, Leishman's younger brother, Jeff, began designing a Robert Beebe–inspired trawler. His goal was to create a full-displacement powerboat that could cruise long distances. Jeff Leishman placed the pilothouse as far aft as possible, roughly amidships, and budgeted space for a single large-displacement, low-rpm/high-torque engine. It was a novel idea at the time. Most boaters still believed long-distance cruising to be the exclusive realm of sailboats. The first Nordhavn 46 was completed in 1989. Almost 10 years later the first Nordhavn 40 left a factory in China; the 40 Mark II is its most recent incarnation. A stocky vessel, she looks like she could take on the North Sea without a thought. Hence, her name.

The Nordhavn 40's designers had to make some compromises. For example, exchanging speed for cruising range. This trawler tops out at 8.5 knots with the standard Lugger 105-horsepower diesel. With a full 920 gallons of fuel, her range is an amazing 2,500 nautical miles at a cruising speed of 7.5 knots. Only those who relish every moment at sea should consider the slow-but-steady Nordhavn.

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at a glance

NORDHAVN 40

Nordhavn Yachts/Pacific Asian Enterprises
P.O. Box 874, Dana Point, CA 92629
494-496-4848
www.nordhavn.com

Designer: Jeff Leishman

Details:

Production	1998–present
LOA	39' 9"
LWL	35' 5"
Beam	14' 6"
Draft	4' 9"
Displacement	50,000 lbs.
Fuel	920 gals.
Water	220 gals.
Main power	105-hp Lugger diesel
Reserve power	27-hp Yanmar diesel
Price range (used)	$369,000–$549,000 depending on options and hours at sea

On Deck

Nonskid covers almost every surface and ample stainless-steel railings rise 31 inches on the foredeck and 40 inches on the boat deck abaft the pilothouse. In squirrelly seas a Portuguese bridge allows safe passage for skipper and crew. The boat deck has room for a 10-foot tender or deck chairs. *Commander* also sports the optional flying bridge. An aft cockpit provides a last bit of outdoor space. The saloon's generous proportions limit the cockpit's usability: one deck chair would dominate. Built-in seats weren't the comfiest, but if cushioned would provide extra seating dockside.

With a 110-pound Bruce anchor and 400 feet of chain in the forward locker and shore-power cords and lines tucked neatly in aft lockers, everything has its place on *Commander*—there's not an inch of wasted space. She can't afford it.

Below Decks

Sporting teak on almost every surface, the saloon and cabins exude warmth. The finish work is precise. "I make furniture, and I don't even know how they do that," says Kallander, pointing at a corner of the owner's cabin, where three pieces of trim come together and are rounded to a soft curve.

Leishman's efficient design does not sacrifice luxury. Bookshelves, two cedar-lined hanging lockers and 16 additional lockers and drawers surround the queen-sized berth; there is plenty of space in which to store months' worth of gear. The guest cabin has a washer/dryer, hanging locker,

With plenty of room, elegant teak cabinetry, an ample galley, a plasma TV and a surround-sound stereo system, Commander's saloon makes a comfy shelter from nasty weather.

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Capt. Barry Kallander, a retired U.S. Navy submariner and longtime sailor, decided to buy a Nordhavn 40 because he and his wife wanted to cruise in comfort and safety.

chest of drawers and single bunks. The bottom bunk expands to a double.

The stark-white head compartment stands in sharp contrast to all of that woodsy warmth. While it is hard to find anything particularly welcoming about this very necessary part of a boat, this one sports a marble countertop, and a teak seat in the enclosed shower makes things easier underway.

The galley is amply appointed with a Seaward stove and oven, a compactor—garbage can be real concern when you're at sea—and two refrigerator/freezer combos. Seating to starboard and port, a stereo and a plasma TV make the saloon a perfect spot for relaxing in crummy weather.

Power and Performance

"I'm so embarrassed," Kallander apologizes as we enter what looks to me like an immaculate engine room. Then again, I am speaking to a Navy man. A retired submariner and now a businessman, Kallander has spent a lifetime on the water. A few years ago he traded in his 42-foot Catalina sailboat for the comforts of a trawler. He and his wife are used to getting places slowly. They wanted to do so more comfortably and quickly settled on the Nordhavn.

The boat's 105-horsepower Lugger diesel engine drives a 32-inch prop. Kallander also opted for the 27-horsepower Yanmar wing engine and folding prop. It's a stand-alone engine that can keep the batteries charged and even drive the boat at 4 knots if something goes wrong with the Lugger. Amidst engines, an 8,000-watt generator and a hot-water heater, there is still plenty of room for three adults in the engine room. All that space and a Reverso oil-change system makes oil changes (every 200 hours) a breeze, even at sea.

Simple things impress me, like the glass sight gauges for each 460-gallon fuel wing tank. There will be no mistakes when reading these gauges, or the water-tank gauge in the saloon. Burning approximately 3 gallons per hour at cruising speed, the Nordhavn is an economical choice. In a season that saw *Commander* up and down the New England coast, Kallander was still working on his original tanks of diesel in mid-August.

The Pilothouse

Kallander loves electronics. Closed-circuit TV cameras at the stern feed onto one of two consoles, allowing the

skipper a clear view when docking in inclement weather. A third camera gives him a view of the engine room. Speaking of views, at five feet, two inches, I had no problem seeing well beyond the bow from the pilothouse.

A neat feature on the Mark II are the Westmar stabilizers that respond to data from a ceiling-mounted gyroscope and help negate rocking and rolling in beam seas. Alas, our test ride did not really challenge *Commander*. The water was flat with the exception of the odd wake. Kallander demonstrated the stabilizers in one such wake. As she took the wake on starboard, I barely felt a roll. Without the stabilizers, we took the same wake again. I felt compelled to grab my coffee cup. Even in minimal seas, the stabilizers work wonders.

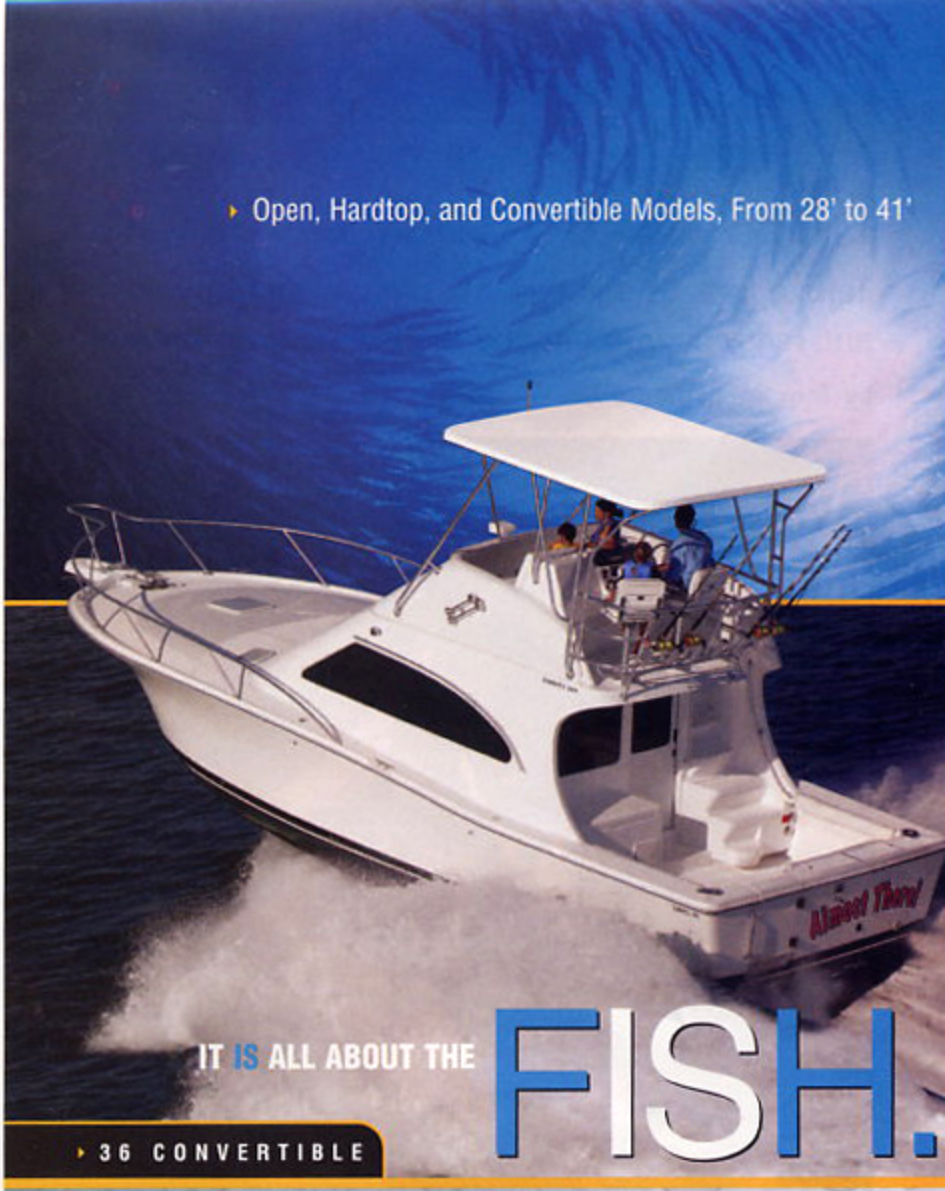
The Nordhavn's diesel engine is surprisingly quiet; a low hum alerted me we were at cruise speed. And thanks to a dry-exhaust system that expels fumes 25 feet above the deck, I couldn't detect any odor. While wet-exhaust aficionados might complain of excessive noise on the flybridge with the dry-exhaust stack, I wasn't bothered by it.

Prices and Availability

With the first Nordhavn 40 Mark II produced in 2005, most used Nordhavn 40s will lack a few of *Commander*'s niceties. On the Mark II the pilothouse and saloon windows have been enlarged, and there's a stainless-steel rub rail along the hull-to-deck joint. Bottom line: A Nordhavn 40, Mark II or not, is built for the sea, not the dock.

An Internet search turned up five Nordhavn 40s, model years 1999 to 2002, ranging from $369,000 to $549,000. It is a hefty price tag, but if open water is in your future and you want more comfort than a sailboat will allow, this passagemaker will open up a world of possibilities.

When not on the water, Holly E. Parker works at a Massachusetts prep school.



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