

# Across the Atlant

*Pacific Asian Enterprises (P.A.E.), builder of Nordhavn yachts, is about to lead a group of 32 power boats of various makes and their owners across the Atlantic, in the Nordhavn Atlantic Rally — starting May 16. Boaters from across the country — including the West Coast — have already signed up and are ready to start this ultimate “buddy boating” adventure.*

*In his own words, Jim Leishman, vice president and co-founder of P.A.E., describes how this transatlantic cruise was planned, what each participating boater will experience and how he and organizers have prepared for whatever might happen along the way.*

AZORES

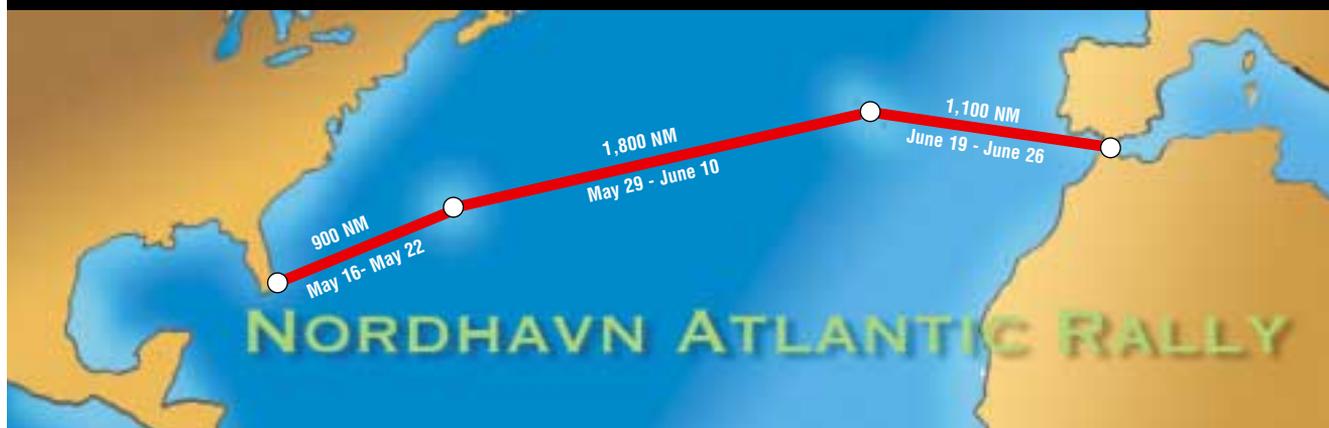
Russ Heint Group photo

# ic in 32 Trawlers

Nordhavn organizes the ultimate  
buddy boating adventure

By Jim Leishman

## FT. LAUDERDALE • BERMUDA • AZORES • GIBRALTAR



“So, how did you get the idea to do this?”

The inspiration came during the Nordhavn Around the World cruise, in 2002.

Passing from the Andaman Sea and clearing the north end of Sumatra, we were motoring west into the Indian Ocean. This leg — from Phuket to Male, the capital of the Maldives Islands — was 1,600 nautical miles, and we were voyaging in the company of *Feeling*, a Nordhavn 62 also bound for Male.

I particularly enjoyed this 10-day voyage, and found it effortless to maintain position and clearance with our companion vessel. The circumnavigation of *Nordhavn*, (our 40-footer) had been on a small boat alone on a big ocean — and for this leg, the constant view of our larger sistership gave a welcome sense of security and broke up the monotony of the long voyage.

We photographed each other, constantly chatted on the radio and even passed fresh tuna across, on one occasion. It was there, halfway around the world, that the idea of a “trawler rally” across the Atlantic was conceived.

### A NEW KIND OF RALLY

While transatlantic rallies have been popular for years, the vessels participating have always been sailboats. Never before has a fleet of motor-

yachts embarked on such a voyage.

Sailboat rallies have departure and destination points, but shortly after starting, participants generally scatter out over the ocean in search of favorable winds — each sailing at different speeds, depending upon the vessel’s sailing qualities and the crew’s experience and effort. Often, after a day or two, the only communication among the sailors is on long-range single sideband (SSB) radio during daily roll calls and weather updates, as the fleet will likely spread out over hundreds of miles.

Promoters of these sailboat rallies offer little “en route” support, aside from what the participants can provide each other — which may not be much, considering the likely separation among vessels. Most would agree that the real appeal of an organized sailboat rally is the camaraderie among the crews and the assistance with shoreside logistics for dockage, provisioning and customs.

The most experienced world cruisers will admit to the anxiety felt at the start of a long ocean voyage. Once under way, the concern seems to go away — but still, that one in a million chance of a fire, a flotsam collision or a major engine failure all lurk in the back of our minds.

Traveling within visual — or at least VHF radio — range of other vessels gives comfort when contemplat-

ing these worst-case scenarios. Unlike a sailboat, the power boat’s speed and course can be agreed upon and easily controlled, allowing a group of vessels to stay in close proximity to each other, thus assuring that assistance is close at hand, if needed.

After the successful completion of our circumnavigation aboard *Nordhavn*, my thoughts turned to this idea of a rally for motoryachts. An organized fleet of power boats crossing the Atlantic would be a historic event — and one that would further illustrate the suitability of specialty-built motorboats for long-range cruising.

### PLENTY OF BACKUP

We decided our transatlantic route would run from Ft. Lauderdale, Florida to Gibraltar, with stops in Bermuda and Horta, the capital of the Azores Island group. The three legs are approximately 900, 1,800 and 1,100 nautical miles, respectively.

To help organize what we decided to call the Nordhavn Atlantic Rally, we developed an internal committee — plus, we recruited friends for advice and to assist in the formidable task of planning the voyage.

As founder and owner of Blue Water Books in Ft. Lauderdale, Milt Baker has spent years discussing the voyage with mariners bound for Europe and providing the written

material available on the subject. Milt joined our committee and, along with his wife Judy, set out for Bermuda, Horta and Gibraltar to collect the latest information and make arrangements for our fleet.

Mike Martus, having recently retired as a U.S. Navy captain, volunteered to help with transit planning and organizing our running procedures, communication and roll calls.

Circumnavigator and film and television director Bruce Kessler joined our committee to provide overall advice — and with the help of television producer Jo Swerling Jr. — agreed to film the rally. They have been in negotiations with numerous television networks for the films, set to air late this year.

Based upon a limit of docking accommodations in Bermuda and the support capability of our escorts, a maximum of 32 vessels was agreed to, with a minimum crew of four. A mix of Nordhavns from 40 to 62 feet and four other vessels (one at 90 feet) quickly signed up — and three escort Nordhavns were designated.

Because of the varying speed capability of the smaller and larger

vessels, two groups will vary their departure time for each leg, so the whole fleet will arrive together. Running within close proximity, each group will travel with the comfort of knowing that aboard their respective escort, mechanical, technical and medical help are at hand.

During approximately one-week stays in Bermuda and Horta, participants will enjoy the convenience of easy inward and outward clearances, planned shoreside activities and tours, convenient provisioning, duty-free fuel at bunkered rates and the best accommodations the islands have to offer.

In Bermuda, our fleet will use the mooring facilities of Royal Bermuda Yacht Club in the historic city of Hamilton. While in the Azores, we'll be calling on the island of Faial and we'll enjoy the new docks at Horta Marina.

At our arrival in Gibraltar, we'll use the Marina Bay facility, which is reported to have Internet service at every dock. Gibraltar, the gateway to the Mediterranean, will be the conclusion point of the rally — and for many of the participants, it will be

the beginning of an extended Mediterranean cruise.

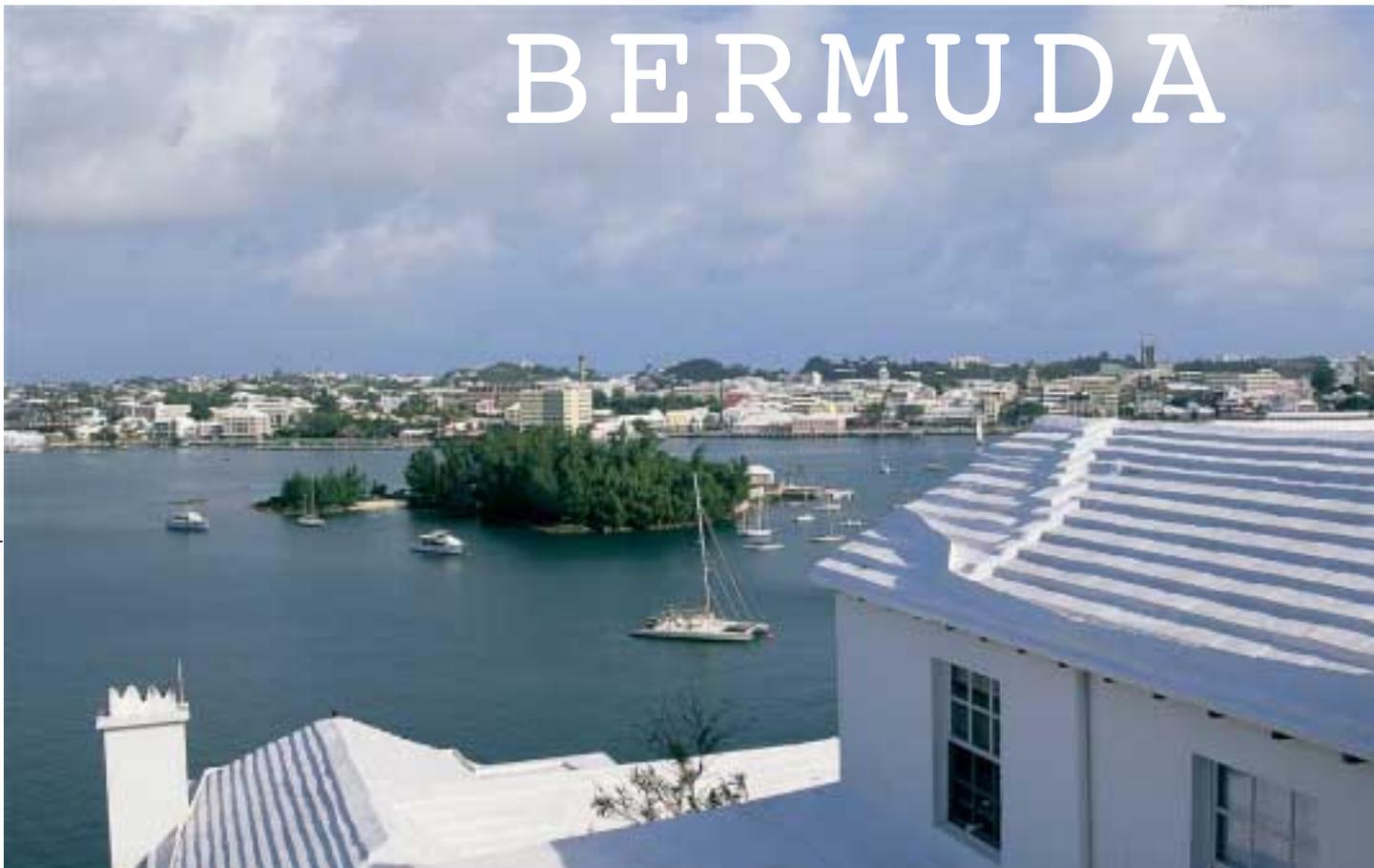
Our company-owned Nordhavn 57 *Atlantic Escort* will accommodate our film crew, our medical director (Dr. Kevin Ware), one of our top P.A.E. project managers (for technical assistance) and numerous journalists who will be covering the rally.

Departing with the slow fleet, *Atlantic Escort* will assist and carry

**ALONG THE WAY** — The first stop for Nordhavn Atlantic Rally participants is Bermuda, where they will moor at Royal Bermuda Yacht Club in the city of Hamilton (below, left). Boaters will stay in Bermuda for about a week, where a number of activities are planned.

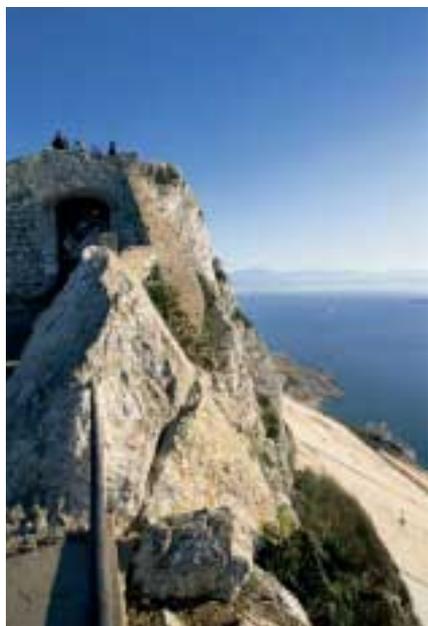


# BERMUDA



the film crew, then double back to intercept and film the faster group prior to arrival at each destination.

Each participating vessel not equipped with twin engines is required



Dave G. Houser/Houserstock photos

to have auxiliary power capable of maintaining over half the boat's normal cruising speed — however *Atlantic Escort* is fitted with commercial towing gear, should a disabled vessel require aid.

The three escorts will have a surplus of fuel for each voyage leg — and emergency fuel transfers for vessels in need, although they are not likely to be necessary, have been planned for.

### READY TO CRUISE

Each vessel participating in the rally has had to meet detailed requirements for design, condition and equipment — and each captain is required to prove his or her experience level and to have completed offshore voyages on his or her vessel.

Vessels participating must have a minimum of 2,400 miles range at 7 knots and carry specific equipment — such as a self-inflating life raft, an SSB radio or satellite phone, radar,

EPIRBs, towing gear, medical supplies and a mandatory list of essential spare parts.

Emphasis has been placed on making it clear to participants that assistance of the escorts is limited — and during rough weather, the transfer of personnel, towing or refueling will not be possible. In rough conditions, each fleet will have to proceed at a speed and a course suitable for the smallest vessels in the group — and it may be hard to maintain radar contact due to sea clutter.

Normal separation between vessels will be 1 mile — however, an increase may prove necessary when conditions are rough, to minimize the risk of collision.

One of the biggest concerns is

**LIKE A ROCK** — The leg from Bermuda to Gibraltar is the longest leg of the rally, and also where it will end. Known as the “gateway to the Mediterranean,” Gibraltar is connected to Spain by only a thin strip of land. The Rock of Gibraltar (left) is the region's highest point, at an elevation of nearly 1,400 feet.

# GIBRALTAR



weather — and leaving Bahia Mar Marina in Ft. Lauderdale on May 17 might subject the fleet to a late season gale or storm, especially as Bermuda is approached.

Departing Bermuda — the middle and longest leg — is often the easiest, with mild conditions and very little wind. This region of the North Atlantic is heavily influenced by the Azores high, an area of high pressure that dominates the area in the summer and keeps weather disturbances to the north and east of the Azores Islands. Unlike sailboats that would climb above this high in search of westerly trade winds, our power boats will pass directly through the high's center, enjoying milder and more predictable weather and a shorter and more direct route.

Our final leg into the Mediterranean may be slightly more challenging, with rougher conditions likely. Weather forecaster Walt Hack, based in New Jersey, will provide the three escort vessels with satellite voice and text forecasts and recommended routing twice a day, which will be summarized and broadcast to each group by VHF radio. Any of the participants will have the capability of receiving the text forecasts, as well.

Each vessel is equipped with an automated position reporting system that also allows text communication via satellite. Twice a day, each escort vessel will receive a position report, speed and course from every participating vessel via satellite e-mail that will be confirmed with a VHF roll call. In the event that vessels become separated beyond VHF range, SSB radio or satellite phone will be used.

This summer, more production motoryachts will cross the Atlantic than have done so in the past 10 years, crewed by amateurs of varying experience with skippers ranging from middle age to over 80 years old. With a little luck, we'll conclude the rally with a Fourth of July celebration and dinner party in St. Michael's Cave under the famous Rock of Gibraltar.

And you can follow our adventures in the pages of *Sea Magazine*, in the months ahead. 🍀

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