

SOUNDINGS

Nordic Tug 44: A Winning Platform For Adventure Near And Far

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Written by Gary Reich



If you visit Maine by boat, you're apt to tie up somewhere and try a lobster roll. Philadelphia is the place to grab a slip and then a cheesesteak at Pat's or Geno's. On Chesapeake Bay, the Maryland-style crab cake provides plenty of reason for a day trip. Yes, wise men have always known that the search for great food and boating go hand in hand.

With that theme in mind, Nordic Tugs invited me to the Chesapeake to run its stout and capable 44 Flybridge, a semidisplacement passagemaker with long-distance voyaging in its DNA. We tossed around ideas such as motoring to St. Michaels, Maryland, for an oyster festival or cruising to Annapolis for hot steamed blue crabs. "Nope, that won't do," I piped in, and we set a course to legendary Faidley's Seafood inside Baltimore's Lexington Market. "Trust me," I said. "Those guys know how to do a crab cake right."

Casting Off

Bill Boyer from Wilde Yacht Sales, a Nordic Tugs dealer in Essex, Connecticut, met me at 8:30 a.m. at Osprey Point Inn, Restaurant and Marina on Swan Creek in Rock Hall. It was a beautiful, crisp autumn day. The shoreline woods and marsh grasses provided a vibrant yellow and gold backdrop as we tossed the lines, boated the fenders and got underway.

Though the Nordic Tug 44 is a heavy, full-keel, single-screw boat, maneuvering her out of the slip and into the marina fairway was as easy as I've found it to be aboard many joystick-driven boats. The close-quarters handling is thanks to well-placed bow and stern thrusters with progressive controllers that provide increasing amounts of thrust the farther you press the switches. A flock of Canada geese soon escorted us out of the creek before a wading great blue heron saluted our arrival in the open Chesapeake.

As we rounded the notoriously shallow Swan Point Shoal, a 10- to 15-knot north wind swept up the main stem of the Bay. We made steady progress toward Baltimore at around 10 knots, but the wind pushed about 8 nautical miles of beam-sea conditions at us. Although the motion these conditions produced wasn't overly uncomfortable — and is to be expected on a vessel of this type and design — the rolling was noticeable and might prove fatiguing during a long day. I asked Boyer about installing a Seakeeper gyroscopic stabilizer on the 44, and he said a customer in New England recently did just that with very good results. Still, the 44's solid fiberglass hull punched authoritatively through the 2-foot cross chop and 4-foot ship wakes with not a rattle or creak to be heard.



Natural light flows into the comfortable interior.

An Inside Job

As we made our way across the Bay toward Brewerton Channel, I handed the helm over to Boyer and crawled around inside. The 44's main saloon has lots of glass for excellent natural light, and plenty of headroom for folks taller than 6 feet. The U-shaped galley is forward and to port, and an L-shaped dinette is aft and to starboard. Warm, solid teak cabinetry and trim give the boat a rich and shippy feel. There's enough room for a pair of living room-style

lounging chairs adjacent to the dinette, and a flat-screen television pops up from a slender cabinet abaft the galley. Just like home. And there is easy access to the cockpit, helm deck and staterooms below.

A navigation station is to starboard just down from the galley, and the station has plenty of room to set up a mobile office with a laptop and printer. A guest stateroom is to port, and an enclosed head/shower with access for use as a day head is across from it. The master stateroom has a queen-size island berth, lots of natural light, an en-suite head/shower and more headroom than I've seen on a boat this size. I did find the walkway between all of these lower deck areas a bit claustrophobic, especially when entering and exiting the guest head doorway, but it's not a deal-breaker.

Moving up to the helm deck, the Nordic Tug 44 can be ordered with or without an access stairway to the flybridge. Boyer showed me a model without this flybridge access, and although it provided a more open concept inside, inside flybridge access is an option on which I would insist. It not only provides additional visibility aft, but it also allows access to the flybridge without having to walk all the way to the cockpit. At the helm, overall visibility and access to controls and electronics were excellent, and once we figured out all the adjustment levers, the twin Llebrog captain's chairs were supercomfortable. A day bench behind these chairs provides companion seating.

Woodwork and fit and finish throughout the 44 are top-notch. When I asked about the teak and holly sole, Boyer shocked me. "It's vinyl," he says. "I know, hard to believe, right?"



The boat can be driven from the pilothouse or flybridge helm.

Having walked most of the day on it and handled it when removing engine hatches, I can tell you that it's virtually indistinguishable from the real deal. The best part is that it is far more durable and resistant to dents, dings and stains than teak. But if you're a purist, you can have the real stuff. Some owners opt for carpeting.

Port Call

Given that Baltimore is one of the busiest ports on the East Coast, with two frenetic approach routes for ships, we expected to encounter a load of commercial traffic during our approach. With three 15-inch Garmin GPSMAP 7616 multifunction displays at the helm, we found it easy to spot traffic well ahead of our range of sight. The displays made what can sometimes be an anxiety-inducing part of cruising an easy and pleasurable task.

As we pulled into our slip and I shuffled dock lines fore and aft, the side decks seemed a little narrow and required more two-step action than I'd have liked, but plenty of handholds made the space feel secure. Side decks are a difficult engineering challenge for boat designers, as the wider you make them, the less interior room you get. All said, I think Nordic Tugs struck a good balance here.

We secured the boat at Baltimore Marine Centers at Inner Harbor and took a quick Uber ride up to Lexington Market. Faidley's Seafood is in the back half. It has been around since 1886 and serves all sorts of Chesapeake Bay delicacies, but the jumbo lump crab cakes were our prize. We ate with the locals at the standing tables. The standing is just as much a part of the experience as the lump crab meat.



Inside access to the flybridge area is a convenient feature.

Homeward Bound

As we cruised past the Fort McHenry National Monument and Historic Shrine — near the spot where Francis Scott Key wrote a poem that would provide the lyrics for our national anthem — I stoked the coals to see what the Nordic Tug 44 could do. A 510-hp 6-cylinder Volvo Penta D11 diesel lies in the boat's belly, mated to a 2½-inch stainless-steel shaft and five-blade, 30-inch-diameter, 27.5-pitch, left-hand bronze propeller. The boat seemed happy at a wide range of speeds, but I found the most consistent fuel efficiency at 8 to 9 knots, with a fuel burn of 5 to 7 gallons per hour. Boyer said most owners cruise around 10 knots, where I noted a 7.6 gph fuel burn. Much of the day we ran at 11 to 12 knots, burning about 16 gph, and all in at 15.8 knots we burned 24 gph. There's 600 gallons of diesel in two tanks, providing plenty of range: 1,700 nautical miles at 8 knots.

SPECIFICATIONS	
LOA:	44 feet, 8 inches
BEAM:	13 feet, 10 inches
DRAFT:	4 feet, 7 inches
DISPLACEMENT:	31,400 pounds
TANKAGE:	600 gallons fuel, 175 gallons water
POWER:	510-hp Volvo Penta D11 diesel
BASE PRICE:	\$844,688

Conditions were slick calm on our way back, which let us keep pace with several oyster boats and a skipjack returning to Rock Hall after working the oyster bars at Seven Foot Knoll. By 3:30 p.m. we rounded Swan Point Shoal and slid our way back up into Swan Creek. Despite the Nordic Tug 44's intended mission of long-distance passagemaking, the boat provided us with an

excellent day-trip platform. She was easy to dock, comfortable underway and a pleasure to run.

That said, I looked back at her as I walked toward my car and thought about how much I'd love to run her to the islands or farther beyond. Based on my time with her, I know she'd be a capable partner in those adventures. Nordic Tugs, Burlington, Washington. (360) 757-8847. nordictugs.com

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