

The INSIDE STORY

A CRUISE TO ALASKA PROVIDES THE ULTIMATE SEA TRIAL FOR A FACTORY-FRESH NORDIC TUG

Story and Photos by George Sass, Sr.

LAST YEAR, JIM CRESS, PRESIDENT OF NORDIC TUGS, CORNERED ME at the Miami International Boat Show to tell me he had some good news and some bad news. Since he had previously agreed to make a new Nordic Tug 37 available for me to take up the Inside Passage to Juneau, Alaska, and knowing how these offers can evaporate, I braced myself.

But Jim had a twinkle in his eye. The “bad” news was that he was selling 37s as fast as he could build them, and he couldn’t spare one. The “good” news was that he would make his new 52 demo available instead. Half seriously he asked, “Do you think you’d like to take our new 52 to Alaska?” I thought about it for a New York minute.





AS WE PASSED SARAH POINT, MARKING THE ENTRANCE TO DESOLATION SOUND, ONLY THE PEARLY GATES COULD HAVE RIVALED THE GORGEOUS SCENE AHEAD.

When Jim also mentioned that this particular 52 was the three-stateroom version, my next thought was to call the Horvats, Canadian friends I had met in the Exumas. The Horvats were accomplished cruisers who were thinking about making the switch from sail to power. This would be a perfect opportunity to reunite our families, explore the Inside Passage and evaluate the newest — and biggest — offering from Nordic Tugs.



My interest in the area began years ago after reading *Inside Passage to Alaska*, a fascinating book written by Morten Lund, a *Sports Illustrated* writer who in 1965 ventured from Seattle to Juneau in a 24-foot, wooden, twin-outboard cabin cruiser. His story and photos were inspirational, and whenever I worried about the challenges ahead, I thought of Lund in his plywood mini-cruiser. (His boat sank due to stress fatigue exactly one day after returning from Alaska.)

Lund made his journey long before the Inside Passage became the fashionable destination that it is today. With ubiquitous cruise ships running up and down the coast, tour directors organizing everything from whale watching to bear sightings and mandatory stops at company-owned gift shops, I wondered if it was not too late to enjoy the wild wonder I had read about.

More and more pleasure boats are also making the trip, some in organized, convoy-style groups. What was once a

voyage for the thrill seeker is fast becoming the “in” place to cruise. Make no mistake, however: caution, preparation, experience and a sound vessel are essential to cruising throughout this remote and unforgiving land.

Preparing For An Adventure

Our 1,050-mile one-way voyage began in late June at the Cap Sante Marina in Anacortes, not far from Burlington, where Nordic Tugs are built. There, Joe Franett, Nordic’s knowledgeable and instantly likable operations manager, briefed me on the boat’s systems. Final prep work took on a frenetic pace as the boat was transformed from a factory demo to a serious cruiser.

Ground tackle, e-charts, paper charts, cruising guides, tide tables, galley accessories, a barbecue grill, binoculars, a handheld VHF, navigation tools, bedding, towels, spare engine and generator parts, extra life jackets, an inflatable with outboard, kayaks, fishing gear, a crab trap, an assortment of DVDs and my iPod suddenly turned this factory boat into a private yacht. Familiarizing myself with all the onboard systems, power plant and electronics was a daunting task, and I began to feel the pressure of being responsible for this million-dollar baby.

Adding to the stress just days before our departure was the news that the Nordic Tug dealer in California had sold the boat. The sale was, of course, contingent upon the 52’s being returned in perfect condition and passing a thorough survey.

As the dealer introduced the new owner to me, I wondered what was going through his mind: “So, you’re taking my new boat to Alaska, hmm? I hope you know what you’re doing.”

After days of intense preparation, Joe and I left for a shake-down cruise to Sidney, B.C., where Nordic Tug’s Northwest Rendezvous was being held and where my family and the Horvats would arrive by air. Wives and children would stay on board until Prince Rupert, where Pat Horvat and I would be joined by another crewmember for the last leg to Juneau. Finally at sea, I began to relax and get acquainted with this mighty little ship.

A total of 88 Nordic Tugs ranging from 26 to 42 feet attended the three-day owner’s event in Sidney, with the new factory 52 being a star attraction. The rendezvous not only gave me a chance to mingle with 200 enthusiastic “tuggers”; I also attended a number of seminars on cruising the Pacific Northwest. Knowing what might happen if I miscalculated while negotiating the region’s turbulent tidal rapids, which can run at up to 15 knots, I paid strict attention and took detailed notes. But knowing that so many Nordic Tug owners regularly cruise these remote waters made me confident that I had the right boat for this ambitious journey.

On Our Way

Our first stop was Silva Bay, an anchorage 35 miles north of Sidney, on Gabriola Island. We chose this short run to further familiarize ourselves with our Nordic Tug and acclimate ourselves to our surroundings. As is usual for the area, the afternoon wind picked up to 20-25 knots, and we appreciated Silva Bay’s



good holding ground and all-around protection. The next morning found strengthening winds and building seas in the Straits of Georgia, which we needed to cross on our way to Desolation Sound. Not wanting to endure a rough passage early on, we stayed another day, exploring the area by foot and dinghy.

Our boys proudly returned from the drying ledges with a bucket of mussels, but we were warned by a local not to eat them because of the risk of Paralytic Shellfish Poisoning (PSP). Indeed, we later saw weather-worn signs along the docks sounding an alert about red tide, something Captain Vancouver’s 18th-century crew was unfortunately unaware of. Several of his men died within hours of eating their newfound delicacies.

The next day saw a continuation of high winds and 6- to 8-foot seas, but we decided to see what our big tug could do. Her 74,000-pound displacement hull; tall, flared bow; and active-fin stabilizers took it all in stride, allowing us to move along comfortably at 9 to 10 knots, while burning less than a gallon of fuel per nautical mile. Pat and I couldn’t wipe the smiles off our faces as we took turns at the helm, watching the 52’s bow throw sheets of spray far and wide, and feeling ever more confident of our boat’s capability.

With our families comfortable and content in their spacious surroundings, we ran the 85 miles to Desolation Sound, a name that belies its spectacular beauty. Captain Vancouver apparently found the tricky currents, off-soundings depths and steep, rocky shores to be chaotic compared to his more civilized English waters, so he named it Desolation Sound. But as we passed Sarah Point, marking the entrance, only the Pearly Gates themselves could have rivaled the gorgeous scene ahead. Old Captain Vancouver must have been terribly disturbed or slightly blind.

We carefully threaded our way into Melanie Cove, part of the Prideaux Haven area, where our three teenagers found their way to the top of a 30-foot cliff — perfect for cannonballing into the deep pool below. Exploring the shoreline, we discovered a freshwater creek where a lone kayaker was filling his water bottles, and it was here that we first noticed how dense and impenetrable this wooded land is. Long ago even the Indians found the forests to be too hostile to live in, and so they settled mostly along the narrow beachheads.

Desolation Sound Marine Park is one of the Pacific Northwest’s most popular cruising destinations, but many waterborne visitors include areas well outside its boundaries when describing it. Even using the unofficial boundary lines, which include West and East Redonda Islands and continue as far north as the Yuculta Rapids, the area is relatively small. But it contains so many beautiful coves and places of interest, one can easily spend weeks anchoring in remote settings, visiting its unpretentious marinas and enjoying its casual waterside restaurants.

While Desolation Sound is the final destination for many cruisers from Washington or lower British Columbia, bigger

Desolation Sound (opposite top) is one of the most popular cruising destinations in the Pacific Northwest. We could have easily spent a week or more exploring the area. Pat Horvat (opposite bottom), who is making the switch from sail to power, couldn’t stop smiling when at the helm of our big Tug. Melanie Cove (left) provided lots of entertainment for our teenage crew.

challenges and rewards awaited us farther north. We stopped at Walsh Bay to see the Indian pictographs before spending a night at the enchanting “Get Away From It All” Toba Wilderrest lodge, where we followed a steep path up the mountain to check out the old, homebuilt hydroelectric plant, a Rube Goldberg wonder. Owners Kyle and Andrea Hunter are working hard to make their small marina and fishing lodge a must stopover for cruisers.

In the morning, after studying our tide and current tables, and double-checking our calculations, we headed toward a series of three consecutive rapids — Yuculta, Dent and Greene Point — where timing is everything. Referring to Kevin Monahan’s helpful *Local Knowledge: The Skipper’s Reference, Tacoma to Ketchikan*, we planned to reach Yuculta a half-hour before the ebb, which would put us at the more violent and dangerous Dent Rapids at slack water. We used “The Rule of Thirds” in planning our passage.

Rule of Thirds — From Time of Slack

- End of 1st hour = 50% of maximum tidal flow
- End of 2nd hour = 90% of maximum tidal flow
- End of 3rd hour = 100% of maximum tidal flow
- End of 4th hour = 90% of maximum tidal flow
- End of 5th hour = 50% of maximum tidal flow
- End of 6th hour = 0% of maximum tidal flow

Those who have survived transiting Dent Rapids at the wrong time and peering into “Devil’s Hole” have sworn never to try it again. We heard stories of fishing boats being swept sideways, with crewmembers falling overboard and disappearing forever into the 30-foot whirlpools. We took no chances, and while our passage was exciting, it was thankfully uneventful.

Tidal ranges here average between 12 and 15 feet, so we were used to seeing floating docks at our stopovers. But we never



expected to see an entire *village* floating on docks. Sullivan Bay, on North Broughton Island, is a delightful collection of summer homes, a restaurant, general store, library, laundry, shower facility and fuel dock — all afloat and neatly arranged according to “street” names. Owners have their homes towed here and spend \$10,000 or so in seasonal dockage fees.

The colorfully painted buildings, hanging flowerpots, tongue-in-cheek street signs and distance markers (Liverpool, England: 4,702½ miles, General Store: 2 Blocks) portray a sense of whimsy. Adding to Sullivan Bay’s intriguing quaintness, the only way in and out is by floatplane or boat. But the place is well worth a visit, especially if you love to fish, as it serves as a base camp for some of the best grounds in B.C.

Leaving at daybreak the next morning, we reached Queen Charlotte Sound before the afternoon winds picked up, finding only gentle swells as we rounded Cape Caution. During our 95-mile run to Pruth Bay, a protected anchorage between Calvert and Hecate Islands, we spotted several humpback whales before dropping our hook off the luxurious Hakai Beach Fishing Resort. Here we met Bob and Marilyn Hale, publishers of the invaluable *Waggoner Cruising Guide*, a “Bible”



“The Boys” (opposite top) enjoy the hot springs at Bishop Bay, where there’s even a separate pool for doing your laundry. Sullivan Bay (opposite bottom) is an entire village built on floating docks. Stacey Sass, exploring Verney Falls (above) is on the lookout for bears coming to fish. Humpback whales (below) were spotted on the way to Pruth Bay in B.C. and off the Alaskan coast north of Petersburg.

for Northwest cruisers. Undoubtedly, they were on one of their scouting missions, cutting trail for the rest of us.

Cool temperatures had so far limited our swimming to quick dips, and we looked forward to reaching Bishop Bay Hot Springs, about 200 miles farther north. Finding just enough room at the floating dock for our 52-footer, we followed the boardwalk through the woods to the springs. The graffiti-covered walls of the bathhouse told of the many cruisers before us, and we added our own entry after a relaxing soak in the naturally hot, clear water. We had now traveled 515 miles from Anacortes, signaling the halfway mark to Juneau.

Lowe Inlet’s Nettle Basin, our last stop before Prince Rupert, treated us to a spectacular view of beautiful Verney Falls, where we enjoyed kayaking in refreshing spray. But anchoring in the basin takes patience and lots of rode, as the

best holding ground is in 100-plus feet of water. Having at least 400 feet of chain and/or rode is highly recommended in these parts, as is a 400- to 600-foot spool of nylon line for an aft shore-tie.

After nearly two weeks, the family portion of our voyage was coming to an end, and we arrived in Prince Rupert in a mood matching the weather, which was cloudy, cool and raining — or, as they say up here, “clousy.” Finding a dock in this busy commercial port can be difficult, as there are limited accommodations for pleasure boats. The Prince Rupert Rowing and Yacht Club, the preferred place for cruisers, was chock full, so we squeezed our big Nordic Tug between two gill netters along the fishing docks at Fairview Marina. “Welcome to Gagsville,” joked a fisherman repairing his nets, referring to the gagging smell of the fish-packing plant just 50 yards from our dock.

“Rainy Rupert” and “Gagsville” lived up to their reputation, but we found everything we needed to restock our vessel for the final assault on Juneau. With our families departed and our new crewmember, Pearse O’Doherty, on board, we were anxious to move on. Instead, we were stuck at the dock for days as a wicked front whipped up gale-force winds and 15-foot seas in Dixon Entrance. Even the bravest fishermen stayed in port. We simply got used to smelling like packed herring.



North to Alaska

Finally the weather cleared, and we were treated to flat seas and blue skies on our 90-mile run to Ketchikan. Here we not only found excellent marina facilities for cruisers, but also a town full of life and energy. Cruise ships were coming and



Floatplanes and boats (above) are the preferred, and often only, means of transportation in Ketchikan. A collapsing cannery (below) at Butedale, B.C., is symbolic of the harsh environment and struggling economy of the region. Our mothership (opposite) awaits us as we find our way back through the ice flow in Tracey's Arm.

going, floatplanes were constantly landing and taking off, fishing boats were arriving with their catches and tour boats were filled to capacity with shutterbugs and wildlife lovers. Checking in with U.S. Customs was simple, as the friendly officer came to our boat within an hour of our arrival.

Although we estimated that we still had enough fuel in our 1,300-gallon tanks to reach Juneau, we filled up with 675 gallons of diesel — not bad considering we had traveled over 700 miles and had been running our generator about six hours a day. We had definitely found the sweet spot of the 52 to be 10 knots (see sidebar on page 56).

Our next destination was Anan Bay, an anchorage lying 75 miles north and acclaimed in the cruising guides for its Forest Service Wildlife Observatory. Loaded with camera gear, we landed our dinghy and started up the well-marked trail to a waterfall where the bears are known to hang out and fish. Before we had walked 100 yards, a Forest Service ranger beached her skiff and politely, but authoritatively, asked for our permit. We were told that as of a year earlier, we needed to apply in Ketchikan or on line for a \$10 permit to walk the trail and that there was a waiting list of at least two weeks because of all the cruise-ship traffic. Disappointed, we left without a bear sighting. The thought of having to use the computer to get permission to see a bear was a bit too Disneyesque for us.

After a brief stop in Wrangell, an authentic Alaskan town not yet gentrified by the influence of visiting cruise ships, we transited tricky Wrangell Narrows, a 20-mile stretch busy with ships, ferries, fishing boats and tugs towing huge cargo barges. The currents can run five knots or more in spots, so slower boats should plan their run during a favorable tide. With the

maze of navigation aides, strong currents and dangerous ledges in the Narrows, captains need to keep an eye on their charts as well as on all the traffic. Exiting the north end, we passed Petersburg, a town that has retained its Norwegian heritage and continues to be an active fishing center.

As we entered Frederick Sound and saw the peak of Devil's Thumb sticking out of the cloud cover, we had a sense that we were entering a different, less forgiving world. It is here that cruisers first encounter icebergs coming from the glaciers not far away, and the water begins to take on a milky appearance from the glacial silt. After spending the night tucked into Thomas Bay behind Ruth Island, we explored the steep walls of Scenery Cove and had a close look at Baird Glacier. We began to feel isolated from civilization and were thankful that we had such a sturdy, dependable vessel under our command. I thought of Morten Lund and almost felt guilty as we dined



on fresh salmon while watching a movie on our 42-inch home-theatre system, comfortable and cozy in our heated saloon.

Back in Prince Rupert we were given some fishing tips by the owner of *Peace Maker*, a Nordic Tug 37 that spends every summer exploring Alaska. Pearse was anxious to try his luck and show off his culinary skills. Attaching a couple of bloody fish heads to the inside of our crab trap, we lowered it to the bottom in 80 feet of water about a mile offshore of Portage Bay, and then jigged our lures over it. Within minutes, Pearse had two beautiful halibut, enough for a fabulous meal that evening.

But our adventure was only beginning. On our way to Tracey Arm, the 22-mile, iceberg-strewn passage to Sawyer Glacier that's on every cruiser's "must see" list, we were thrilled to see several waterspouts off our port bow. We were outside Cape Fanshaw, where Frederick Sound meets Stephens Passage, and as we slowed down, at least 20 humpback whales entertained us with their swimming and breaching. All cameras began clicking, and it was an experience that will be permanently imbedded in our minds.

At the mouth of Holkham Bay, where Tracey and Endicott Arm meet, we slowed to an idle while we figured out how to get around the huge iceberg floating between the entrance markers. Remembering that icebergs show only about 20 percent of their bulk above the water, we approached carefully as we made our way to Tracey Arm Cove, a protected anchorage where we would spend the night. This large cove is a holding area for adventurous cruisers coming and going from the two main attractions — the head of Tracey Arm and Fords Terror.

Next morning we chose to explore the more benign route,

Tracey Arm, working our way up the winding fjord with its vertical walls of granite, milky waters and thick ice flow. Slowly we maneuvered around the chunks of ice, marveling at the dramatic, "lost world" scenery all around us. A mile before we reached the head of the arm, the ice became too thick to continue without risking damage to our hull and running gear, so Pearse and I launched our inflatable while Pat kept the tug in the clear. Pearse drove slowly as I tried to focus my camera on the approaching glacier, but soon the two of us were shivering cold, and while we were finally able to see North Sawyer Glacier, we lost sight of our mothership behind all the ice, which was in constant motion. It was time to make our escape, find Pat and warm up.

That evening we celebrated our exploration with a dinner of steak and freshly caught Alaskan king crab while anchored in Taku Harbor, 20 miles south of Juneau. A sense of melancholy took over, though, as we realized that we would soon be leaving our able vessel and the daily excitement of discovering new places.

We had experienced a rare glimpse into the past, as well as a look into the future. Much of the spectacular scenery is just as Captain Vancouver first saw it in the 18th century. But like thorns on a beautiful rosebush, we saw prickly signs of a troubled past. Falling-down canneries, decaying piers, abandoned logging camps, closed stores, empty buildings, idle fishing fleets and jobless men were reminders that all is not well in this land of opportunity.

Yet, resilient Alaskans and Canadians are learning to adapt. Like it or not, the cruise-ship industry is bringing tourism

A MILE BEFORE WE REACHED THE HEAD OF THE ARM, THE ICE BECAME TOO THICK TO CONTINUE WITHOUT RISKING DAMAGE TO OUR HULL OR RUNNING GEAR.



ACCOMMODATING TWO FAMILIES ON ONE BOAT

Going on a cruising vacation with other families can be difficult, if not disastrous. So before we left Sidney, B.C., I told Pat that my main goal — in addition to reaching Juneau safely — was to still be friends by the time we got there. With three active teenage boys along for two-thirds of the voyage, I had reasons to worry.

But there was good chemistry between the youngsters to begin with, and they were old enough to go off on their own either in the dinghy or in kayaks, although admittedly they sometimes got into mischief. Since my wife, Stacey, teaches high school, she used her skills to keep these young minds creatively engaged. If she wasn't out in the dinghy hiding clues for an afternoon scavenger hunt, she was setting up a bowling alley in the main saloon using empty water bottles and a tennis ball. (Yes, the 52 is a big boat.)

Early on, we also set some rules that helped get the boys in the cruising mode. There was no watching DVDs or playing video games while underway. Instead, the boys were encouraged to follow the charts, read the cruising guides, be on watch for whales and bears, and finish reading at least one book each. They were also given specific boat chores to do each day, including cleaning the heads, keeping their cabin shipshape, scrubbing the dinghy and helping with the dishes. The key to their happiness, as well as ours, was to get them involved in our daily cruising activities.

Since Trish Horvat loves to cook (and all five males onboard love to eat), she took command of the 52's gourmet galley and supervised the provisioning. Pat and I are used to running our own companies and being in charge, but in this case we welcomed each other's input. I certainly felt less pressure knowing he was an experienced navigator and helmsman, and that he was also handy with tools. Even though the 52 was virtually flawless, it had a few "new-boat" problems like a clogged generator intake hose, a GPS software glitch and a cranky power-steering pump. By working together, we quickly solved or worked around these minor problems.

The general harmony onboard was reminiscent of the lessons learned on our family's one-year Great Loop cruise. If every crewmember has a positive interest in the voyage and is willing to contribute to the operation and maintenance of the vessel, the trip will be a successful and happy one.

Room, Luxury and Power to Spare

A good part of the credit for our pleasurable cruise, however, must go to the Nordic Tug 52 herself. The accommodating layout provided us with quiet times and private spaces. She easily swallowed our party of seven and provisions for a three-week voyage. With three private staterooms, two full-sized heads and a huge main saloon, we had plenty of room. The all-electric galley featured an under-the-counter refrigerator and freezer, four-burner stovetop, icemaker, dishwasher, built-in microwave and lots of counter space.

The biggest hit, though, was the pilothouse. With its large, U-shaped settee and dining table, it was a great place to hang out during long runs. In the evening it provided welcome separation between adults and teenagers. The youngsters' typical table manners and their predictably crude humor (I'm sure these things were funny when we were 15 years old) sometimes caused the adults to flee to the pilothouse for a more civilized dinner setting.

Above all, the 52's pilothouse is a serious command center not unlike the bridge of a commercial vessel. Three Simrad 15" screens make navigation data (from the radar, chartplotter and depth sounder) clearly visible to the helmsperson, as well as to those at the two chart-table areas. One of these is perfect for paper-chart plotting, the other for a laptop. An adjustable helm chair, two built-in copilot seats, a large drawer for full-sized charts — plus storage lockers for cruising guides, tide books, binoculars, nav tools, handheld VHF's, cell phones, chargers, flashlights and more — show that experienced cruisers designed this boat. Pat and I were in helmsman heaven.

Not far from heaven was the 52's stand-up engine room, which in this boat featured a single 700-hp Caterpillar C12 diesel. Although the twin-engine model is a personal favorite of Nordic Tug's Jim Cress, I like the simplicity and economy of the single-screw version, and I especially appreciate the extra room it allows for access to all sides of the engine. Maneuverability with a single prop is a non-issue thanks to the effective bow and stern thrusters. So far, fully half of the 52s sold have been single-screw models.

The main entrance to the engine room is through a utility room, which contains the ship's battery banks, stabilizer hydraulics, air-conditioning compressors,



Wheelhouse

tank-level indicators and a DC sub-panel. Keeping these components away from the heat of the engine room is a smart move. A Northern Lights 16 kW generator is located aft in the engine room. Still farther aft and accessible from the cockpit or engine room is a cavernous lazarette that is ideal for stowing spare parts, oil, anchors, rode and all kinds of cruising gear and supplies. Heck, it's big enough to stow away misbehaving kids (we didn't try that).

We found the boat's sweet spot to be 1,465 rpm, which moved her 74,000 pounds along nicely at 10 knots while burning 9 gph and generating a very quiet 65 dBA of sound in the pilothouse — equivalent to the noise generated by a normal conversation. Increasing our speed to 11 knots, we burned 15 gph, while a top speed of 14.7 knots sucked up 36 gph. With diesel fuel costing \$2.80 per gallon, we chose to run the boat at 10 knots for most of the trip, burning less than 1,000 gallons of fuel during the entire 1,050-mile voyage, which included frequent use of the generator. But as with all the Nordic Tugs, it's nice to know you can push the throttle forward and get up and go when you want to.

Nordic Tugs now builds a 32, 37, 42 and 52. Jim let me in on a little secret that lines are now being drawn for an all-new 47, scheduled for 2008. Knowing that he'll probably need hull number one delivered to the East Coast for the fall boat shows, I have my fingers crossed that he'll remember I returned his 52 without a scratch

NORDIC TUG 52 SPECIFICATIONS

LOA: 56' 10" with pulpit

LWL: 52' 6"

Beam: 16' 10"

Draft: 4' 10"

Fuel Capacity: 1,300 gals.

Water: 300 gals.

Standard Power: Single 670-hp Cummins QSM-11

Weight (dry): 60,000 lbs.

Weight (loaded): 74,000 lbs.

Price: \$1.15 million (base)

Information: 800-388-4517

www.nordictugs.com



Saloon

dollars to areas where once-thriving fishing and logging industries have been crippled by overharvesting and government regulation. Gift shops, galleries and mini-malls are replacing saloons, fish-packing plants and warehouses. Even the hard-hit people of Prince Rupert are optimistic, as construction is underway for a huge commercial shipping center that will be a gateway to the Far East and a source of hundreds of new jobs.

Quick Turnaround In Juneau

We arrived in Juneau under cool, cloudy and rainy conditions, and after a frustrating time of trying to find a slip we finally tied up among the fishing vessels at the Aurora Harbor docks. Our GPS plotter showed that we had traveled 1,052 miles during our three-week journey from Anacortes, and after topping off our fuel tanks, we found that we had burned fewer than 1,000 gallons.

The Nordic Tug 52 proved herself to be an ideal boat for such an ambitious cruise. She had the muscle to shoulder through rough seas, dead quietness in her pilothouse allowed conversation during our all-day runs and her dependable Caterpillar diesel and Wesmar stabilizers never skipped a beat. And, while she was big enough to comfortably accommodate two families in luxury, her bow and stern thrusters made her easy to maneuver in tight spots.

Nordic Tugs of all sizes are popular in these waters, as evidenced by the solid bookings of the Nordic Tug charter fleet based in Juneau. With a variety of 32s, 37s, 42s and a brand new 52 available, a one- or two-week adventure in these spectacular waters should be on every cruiser's short list. Juneau International Airport is nearby and offers good connections to all major U.S. and Canadian cities.

Nordic Tugs' Joe Franett met us in Juneau, and after an oil change and reprovisioning, the 52 was ready for the 1,000-mile return trip to Anacortes, where she would be commissioned for her new, lucky owner. She had performed flawlessly during her 2,000-mile shakedown cruise and would soon be on her way to her new home in California.

As for the three of us, we returned home wondering where we could possibly go to top the spectacular scenery, wildlife and sense of adventure that we experienced on the Inside Passage.

RESOURCES

Route Planning Maps

- "The Inside Passage," North & South Editions; www.fineedge.com
- "Desolation Sound" and "Broughton Archipelago"; www.insidepassagenews.com

Cruising Guides

- *Waggoner Cruising Guide*; www.waggonerguide.com
- *Charlie's Charts North to Alaska*; www.charliescharts.com
- *Exploring the South Coast of British Columbia* and *Exploring Southeast Alaska*, both by Don and Réanne Douglass; www.fineedge.com or www.insidepassagenews.com
- *Local Knowledge: Tacoma to Ketchikan*, by Kevin Monahan; www.fineedge.com