



Nordic Tugs 32

NEW TUNNEL HULL DESIGN PROMISES IMPROVED FUEL EFFICIENCY AND TRACKING

BY ROGER MCAFEE

FOR THE FIRST TIME SINCE NORDIC TUGS were introduced to the public in 1980, major changes have been made to the design of a Nordic Tugs hull. The Burlington, Washington builder has made a design change to the smallest boat in its line: the 32-footer. It has gone from a traditional semi-displacement hull, with a shallow V at the transom, to a tunnel hull.

Nordic's original designer, the late Lynn Senour of Seattle, melded a modern, semi-displacement hull to a tug-like upper works. According to the company, the change to a tunnel hull represents the first input from Nordic's new naval architect, Howard Apollonio of Bellingham, Washington.

TUNNEL HULL

The first reason for the change to a

tunnel hull was to allow the bow of the vessel to float slightly higher. The tunnel hull removes some of the buoyancy from the stern of the vessel. The second reason for the change, and one that is in keeping with Nordic's ongoing quest for fuel efficiency, is to allow for a more horizontal shaft angle and the installation of a larger, more efficient propeller.

Our test boat was the second tunnel hull produced, and the factory had

not changed the shaft angle or installed a larger prop. Apparently those changes – a 1-inch rise in the prop end of the shaft and a 2-inch increase in prop diameter – will be made on the next 32 built.

The glass hull is predominantly hand-laid, with continuous foam-cored glass stringers. Hull guards are UV-stabilized PVC. All exterior fastenings are stainless steel. The common bonding system leads to a single zinc at the transom, with separate zincs fixed to the rudder, shoe and thruster.

SITTING PRETTY

As I approached the boat, I could see that it floated slightly higher in the bow than the previous versions. Although it was barely noticeable, I later found that it did make some difference in handling. The finish of the exterior fittings, windows and doors was excellent – something that boaters have come to expect from Nordic Tugs. The exterior is “wash and wear” with

An Inside Look

no wood requiring annual refinishing.

The exterior glass work was excellent, without blemishes or print through, and all walking surfaces were molded in nonskid decking. Beefy stainless rails made moving around on deck easy and safe. The deep cockpit will appeal to boaters with children or elderly parents, particularly if it is equipped with cockpit rails. Its open, uncluttered sole will also appeal to serious anglers who can easily move about when fighting a large fish. The cockpit is self-bailing, so cleanup is quick and easy.

All windows (16) and doors (3) are commercial-grade, powder-coat finished. Eight 10-inch stainless cleats are strategically mounted on cap rails around the vessel.

BELOWDECKS PRACTICALITY

The interior of the vessel is up to the high standards one has come to expect from Nordic Tugs. The company has been building for more than a quarter century and, if anything, the quality of the interior woodwork on its boats has improved over the years. The matched-interior marine-grade paneling and fabric color selection, combined with the top-quality marine-grade windows and doors, give the vessel a luxurious, bright, modern and cheery feeling.

The interior layout continues to be traditional, with a salon/galley equipped with a settee that converts to a double berth and forward to a foc's'le containing an island double berth and a full standup head, complete with shower. There is plenty of storage in the main salon and galley as well as in the foc's'le.

The galley boasts plastic-laminate countertops, complete with teak sea rails, a two-burner alcohol/electric cooktop, an undercounter microwave and an AC/DC 4.3-cubic-foot refrigerator. A deep, single-basin, polished stainless steel sink completes the area.

Teak cabinets provide plenty of storage and a touch of warmth and luxury. The settee table is solid teak and there's plenty of storage underneath, accessed through drop-down doors.

The 32 is powered by a single Volvo Penta D6, common-rail-injection-system, electronically controlled engine.



The interior layout of the Nordic Tugs 32 will please traditionalists who appreciate functionality. The salon/galley is equipped with a settee that converts to a double berth. Forward is a foc's'le containing an island double berth and a full standup head, complete with shower. Visibility in the pilothouse helm station is excellent at a full 360 degrees and by crouching slightly, we could comfortably see the back deck.

TESTER'S OPINION

"The vessel handled well through its entire speed range and provided a very relaxing ride at about 8 knots. This is a good safe speed for those who want to cruise along the West Coast to Alaska and will have to dodge floating logs and fishnets or for those who want to poke around in the various 'rock gardens' along the way."



Nordic Tugs

32

SPECIFICATIONS

LOA	34 ft., 11 in.
LWL	32 ft., 8 in.
Beam	11 ft., 1 in.
Draft	3 ft., 11 in.
Weight (dry)	15,500 lbs.
Weight (as tested)	18,500 lbs.
Fuel capacity	205 gals.
Water capacity	100 gals.
Base price (w/single Volvo Penta D6 280 hp)	\$260,400

PERFORMANCE SPECS

Top speed	17 knots
Range	500 nm @ 8 knots
Fuel burn	3.4 mpg

STANDARD EQUIPMENT

Lewmar bow thruster, Teleflex hydraulic steering system, Nova Kool refrigerator, Corian countertops, teak cabinetry and interior doors and trim, Jabsco toilets, Racor fuel filter, 24-inch Michigan propeller, Heatercraft heating system.

CONSTRUCTION

Hand-laminated RFP construction process on the hull and deck, hull guards are UV-stabilized PVC, infusion-molded process on the bulkheads and cabin soles, aluminum powder-coated doors and windows.

COMPANY PROFILE

Years in business	27
Number of employees	150
Boat lines produced	Nordic Tugs

BUILDER

Nordic Tugs Inc., Burlington, WA; (800) 388-4517; www.nordictugs.com

WEST COAST DEALERS

Ballena Bay Yacht Brokers, Alameda, CA; (888) 619-8600; www.ballenabayyachts.com

Ballena Bay Yacht Brokers, San Diego, CA; (619) 523-1151; www.ballenabayyachts.com

Skipper Cress Yacht Sales, Anacortes, WA; (800) 996-9991; www.skippercress.com

Nordic Tugs of Alaska, Juneau, AK; (206) 919-7887; www.nordictugsofalaska.com

Annapolis Sailyard, Annapolis, MD; (410) 268-4100; www.sailyard.com

Bay Breeze Yacht Sales, Traverse City, MI; (877) 941-0535; www.bbysc.com

Bay Breeze Yacht Sales, Richmond Hill, Ontario; (877) 727-2297; www.bbysc.com

Wilde Yacht Sales, Essex, CT; (888) 447-6944; www.wildesyachts.com

Nordic Tugs UK, Ltd., Southampton, United Kingdom; +44 (0) 23 80455 977; www.nordictugs.co.uk

It transmits power to the 24-inch bronze Michigan four-blade prop, through a ZF 63 2.80:1 reverse/reduction gear and a 1.75-inch stainless shaft. This four-valve-per-cylinder engine is turbocharged and aftercooled.

BOW-UP ATTITUDE

With Jim Cress, Nordic's CEO on board as helmsman, we fired up the Volvo and idled out of the marina. The new tunnel hull moved slowly, but under complete control at all times, a feature which is becoming more important given increasingly crowded marinas and waterways. Visibility was excellent at a full 360 degrees and by crouching slightly, we could comfortably see the back deck from the pilothouse helm station. This feature allows the helmsman to keep track of all on board, an important safety feature, particularly if there are children among the guests.

As the Volvo spooled up to top speed, about 17 knots, and with Cress at the wheel, I poked around the vessel, looking in cupboards, lockers and storage areas for loose or creaking doors or fittings. I was also looking for any signs of deck or bulkhead flexing. Having tested and operated other Nordics in the past, I didn't expect to find any and I didn't. During our entire test, the interior of the vessel was so quiet we could easily converse at a normal volume.

The vessel handled well through its entire speed range and provided a very relaxing ride at about 8 knots. This is a good safe speed for those who want to cruise along the West Coast to Alaska and will have to dodge floating logs and fishnets or for those who want to poke around in the various "rock gardens" along the way. That's often where the best fishing is!

Sea conditions were moderate and the vessel handled them with ease, knifing through the chop and staying dry on deck. We eased off on the throttle, put the helm hard aport and then slowly increased to full throttle. The vessel rolled very slightly to starboard and then flattened out and completed several circles, almost within its own length. This maneuver is a good, quick test of the vessel's stability while under way, and the Nordic showed itself to be very stable indeed.

Cress handed the helm off to me so I could find out, hands-on, how much difference the change in the hull made. Even though the vessel did not have the mechanical changes made – a more horizontal shaft and a larger prop – I was satisfied that the change in the hull design would make the most obvious difference in handling. The mechanical changes will make some difference, but mostly in a more efficient power train, leading to better fuel economy – a good thing in these days of \$3.75 to \$4 per gallon diesel.

What every manufacturer of a successful vessel fears when making a hull change is that the change will make things worse, not better. Nordic Tugs need not worry. The new hull has a slightly more bow-up attitude at rest. Under slowly increasing power the bow appears to rise to about the same height as the previous hull design, but since it started slightly higher in the water, the range of change is less in the new hull. The new hull also seems to track slightly better than the previous one.

Under rapid acceleration – throttle from idle to slammed fully open – the bow of the new tunnel hull rose slightly quicker than the previous design.

PLEASING TO PURISTS

There are many who believe the 32-foot Nordic Tugs is the best small trawler-style cruiser on the market and it's hard to argue that the believers are wrong. They argue that one can't improve on perfection. However, all successful builders have recognized they have to continuously work at improving their product and, in current market conditions, improve efficiency and reduce boaters' operating costs. One of the reasons Nordic has remained so strong in the marketplace after almost three decades, is by making changes, albeit small ones, whenever it makes sense to do so.

The new tunnel-hull 32-footer is the latest change. It tracks slightly better than the previous hull configuration and exhibits a more bow-up demeanor. It has given up nothing to make that change and when the shaft-down angle is decreased and a larger prop installed, Nordic Tugs will have improved fuel consumption. Even for a purist, that can't be a bad thing. ●