

Nordhavn 76: From shipyard to ship

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By Jeff Merrill

The Nordhavn 76 is an enormous trawler. Her robust construction consists of solid fiberglass, hardwood, machinery and stainless steel with the average hull weight topping over 250,000 pounds.



[Driving to An Ping harbor](#)

I traveled to Taiwan in December to see 7614 *Ammonite* spend her last few days at our Ta Shing yard and witness all of the final preparations that make a truly magnificent yacht like this transition from a boat under construction into a boat ready for sea. The owner is Marcus Blackmore, an Australian businessman who is no stranger to boats. He has raced sailboats all of his life, campaigning his Farr 40 worldwide over the past few years and he is also an avid power boater having owned a 70' custom power boat and presently the proud owner of an Aussie built Palm Beach 50.

Marcus wanted to do a final inspection and so we arranged a couple of days visit at the yard to check things out. We were greeted by the excited and enthusiastic Ta Shing staff and hosted by yard president Tim Juan and his staff of excellent engineers and craftsmen. Also on hand were *Ammonite's* captains, John and Tracey McBean, who have been managing and handling large yachts for many years (including a previous assignment on 7605 *Voyager III* so they are intimately familiar with Nordhavns in general and the 76 in particular). John and Tracey arrived in Taiwan several weeks previously to supervise and fine tune *Ammonite* to make sure she was ready as possible and to also become more familiar with their new charge. Important details like making sure the cockpit umbrellas were mounted properly were organized with Ta Shing 76 project manager Spenser with John and Tracey.

I intend to write more about the adventures of *Ammonite* (currently being commissioned by PAE in Newport Beach, CA) but I felt the story of how a newly finished 76 travels from ship yard to commissioning docks would also be an interesting topic to share.



[School interview](#)

Once Ta Shing has completed the build (they construct our Nordhavn Motorsailer 56, and the following Nordhavn trawlers: 62, 64, 68, 72 and 76) the boat is ready to embark on an amazing journey to its final destination. The orchestration of each step along the way involves skilled planning and timing and is simply amazing. I say amazing because until I witnessed some of the "heavy lifting" involved I hadn't really considered how a 76 goes from point A in Taiwan to point B in



[John McBean, Tracey McBean and Spenser with umbrella](#)

America.

To depart Taiwan as on deck cargo, the boat has to leave the yard in Tainan (launching in An Ping harbor) and then sail on her own bottom to Kaohsiung, the major sea port located on the southern end of the island of Taiwan. The Ta Shing yard is located about a mile from An Ping harbor, the launching pad for all new Nordhavns they build and where every new Nordhavn gets its first taste of salt water.

The process of shipping begins on a weekend day (minimal street traffic) by using a large crane to pick up the boat (secured to its metal cradle) and place it on a large trailer parked on the street in front of the yard – *Ammonite* splashed on December 7th.

This is a big event and it was fun to be interviewed by a local school group who was on hand to research a class project story about Taiwan’s manufacturing brilliance and specialty in exporting power and sailing yachts. Ta Shing president Tim Juan, vice president B.K. Kuo and owner Marcus Blackmore stopped for a photo.



[BK, Tim and Marcus](#)

Once on the truck a slow, deliberate drive to the harbor commences – signaled by the lighting of a long string of firecrackers to symbolically introduce the boat to the world at large. This drive involves lower tree height power cables so that the boat can continue down the road.

Ammonite looked stunning as she was paraded down the street traveling at human walking pace (I don’t think she could idle that slowly when wet) with passersby stopping to soak up the ritual procession. A large truck loaded with fenders and lines is part of the escort convoy and we all strolled along smiling and taking photos.



[Leaving Ta Shing](#)



[Fire crackers](#)

Upon arrival at the An Ping gates the local security measures are enforced and she slowly works her way to the sea wall. Here a large crew is assembled to man handle lines as the expert crane operator picks her up and slowly glides her into a graceful arc before gently slipping her in to the water. Before the lifting straps are slacked a crew from Ta Shing goes aboard to inspect every through hull, making sure everything is secure and that she is ready for sea. The cradle drops below her keel so she is free – floating and once out of the way the cradle is retrieved from the drink to be trucked later to Kaohsiung where *Ammonite* will be reunited and re-secured for ocean transit.



[Launch at An Ping](#)

Getting aboard *Ammonite* while floating for the first time was a real pleasure. Seeing water views out the portlights and feeling her tug on the dock lines was a gratifying milestone for a process that begun in May of 2007 when Marcus and Caroline flew to Hawaii to make this purchase decision while inspecting a sister ship, hull number 5 named *Voyager III* (and yes John and Tracey were there then too!) All of the months of emails, phone calls, visits and other building related

communications were finally done and the finished product was released into her element for several days of sea trials and fitting out in An Ping before departing south to Kaohsiung. I was unable to stay much past the launch date, but the sea trial went smoothly and the roughly 60 mile trip from An Ping to Kaohsiung was reported to be a smooth trip.

In Kaohsiung *Ammonite* was lifted back aboard her cradle and put on the hard awaiting the ship that would sail her across the Pacific. Once the ship pulled in she was lifted again to be placed as on deck cargo and secured in place.



[Water view An Ping](#)

Next stop San Diego, California approximately two weeks later. *Ammonite* was placed in a nice window seat on the starboard side of the deck of the freighter “Mekong River” We received daily email position updates from the mother ship as she trekked across the ocean and on January 13th I was reunited with John and Tracey

and the PAE offload crew, including 76 project manager Garrett Severen, to greet *Ammonite* and welcome her to America. We drove down to San Diego early in the morning and after clearing dock security we got up on board the deck of the *Mekong River* to make sure that all systems were ready for our 70 mile cruise from San Diego to Newport Beach, CA where we have docks reserved for commissioning. This preparation involves carting spare oil, tools and other equipment and we were in a forest of pleasure trawlers all coming to America after construction to be dispersed to eager buyers who have been waiting patiently for their dreams to arrive. The PAE crew had a busy day as after the 76 was launched we also had a new Nordhavn 56 Motorsailer and new Nordhavn 68 to off load.



[Marcus](#)



[Jeff and Marcus](#)



[Mekong River ship](#)

It was fun to prowl the ship’s deck and look at all of the different underbodies of the various trawlers on board. I am fascinated with how different boats are built – stopping to check out hull shapes with various arrangements of chines, keels, propellers, thrusters, exhaust, fins, etc. Each boat is cabled into place and the longshoremen come aboard enmasse to cut the cables and ready each boat to be launched.

When we had *Ammonite* ready we got off the ship and took our places on a Vessel Assist launch which provided a ring side view of the proceedings and then took us along side once launched to get aboard and sail away. A huge floating crane was brought alongside the ship and a huge piling was driven in to the bottom of the San Diego harbor sea floor to help her hold position. A very large tug was secured to the crane barge and provided assistance when pivoting the barge was needed. The actual lift is carefully paced, it is almost agonizing to watch for over 15 minutes – the time from pick to splash – it seemed like an hour, but when we finally got aboard we fired up the mains (*Ammonite* is a twin screw wet exhaust 76) and were soon underway. Our



[Ammonite on deck](#)

commissioning manager, Russell Barber, was at the helm and we purred along for a couple of miles to the local fuel dock where we took on a couple hundred gallons of diesel.



[Crane launch San Diego](#)

It was a peaceful, uneventful trip up the coast. A few phone calls made and details organized as we make the trip up. A calm clear California day and we had long range views of the far away local islands – first the Coronado islands off Mexico, then San Clemente island and finally Santa Catalina island.



[Garrett, John and Russell](#)

These pick ups are usually an all day affair – starting early in the morning and ending late in the day. It was 8pm and night had fallen by the time we were tied up in Newport Beach. It was a long day for the crew and the end of a long journey for *Ammonite* to arrive for commissioning.



[Night arrival Newport Beach](#)

Final note: An *Ammonite* is a prehistoric Nautilus type creature known best today for their prized fossilized remains. The logo on the hull is also used in other areas of 7614 and the name is, in my opinion, a great emblem for a Nordhavn – deep ocean, slow moving, rugged and solid, yet also silent and graceful...



[Ammonite light board name and emblem](#)

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