

Headlines

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For one Nordhavn 47, third time carving through the Panama Canal is a charm

By Jeff Merrill



[Ready to Go](#)

Nordhavns are designed to see the world, to travel across enormous bodies of water and safely deliver their crew to distant landfalls. Often times the only “company” on desolate waters are sea birds and freighters.

Freighters, tankers and huge bulk load ships account for an incredible amount of commerce these days and the huge ocean liners ferrying containers and assorted cargo clip along at a good pace and need to take the shortest route possible to be efficient with time. (To them time is money, to most Nordhavn owners money bought them time to be savored). When you have to make it around a continent, fortunately for Nordhavn owners and freighter captains a couple of well placed “divides” make it easier to split the distance. (Of course there is always the “unconventional” Nordhavn owner like pioneers Scott and Mary Flanders aboard the Nordhavn 46 *Egret* who take the long way home and round Capes, but their story is well documented and stands alone as awe inspiring).

Large ocean going commercial freighters and tankers pass by Nordhavns at sea (hopefully with a few miles in between as recorded on the CPA –closest possible approach), but as shorelines come into view the pleasure and commercial traffic begin to merge together. One of the most famous boating funnels in the world and the best known “short cut” for US sailors is the famous Panama Canal. Built in the early 20th century it is one of the marvels of the modern world and if you want a fun research project (that will hopefully be relevant in your future cruising lifestyle), take some time to read up on it. I strongly recommend David McCullough’s book, *The Path Between the Seas*.



[Passing Bridge of Americas](#)

My first experience with the Panama Canal was in 2001 when I made the transit arrangements for *Nordhavn*, our 40’ ATW (Around the World) yacht to pass through the Canal. It was an incredible day that has remained a highlight in my life. I also took part in a Canal passage as part of a second circumnavigation when in 2009 I flew down to go through the Panama Canal with Eric and Christi Grab on *Kosmos*, their Nordhavn 43. I would love to make additional trips through the Canal; it is truly fascinating.

The number of Nordhavns that have slipped through the Canal is anyone’s guess, but must be

in the dozens. Interestingly, most Nordhavns go through one way and then continue on about their adventures. I'm only aware of one Nordhavn (the 55 *Always Friday*) who has gone through the Canal in both directions (once on the way to Florida and then back to the Pacific to her new owners and again to the Atlantic for Brazil). *Nordhavn owners – please email me if you have two or more Panama Canal transits and I'll submit an honor roll to our website and include the boat names and owners.*



[John and Rosie locked in](#)

So it was quite interesting to hear from John and Rosie Olson when they sent me a photo and a short recap of Nordhavn 4708 *Serena Ray* just completing her THIRD trip through the Canal at the end of April. The Olsons bought the former Strickly for Fun in Seattle and have been working their way down the west coast, stopping to enjoy the wonders of [Pacific harbors](#). They want to see the Caribbean and explore, so the Panama Canal allowed their entry into “eastern” waters.

I don't have the exact dates, but 4708 as *Strickly for Fun*, owned by Scott and Terri Strickland, was delivered in California. The Stricklands then went through the Canal back to their home state of Florida in March of 2004.

They cruised the east coast, crossed the Atlantic and went on all sorts of adventures before deciding to bring the boat back to the US west coast. Poised at the Canal a strange twist of fate occurred. Instead of coming through on her own bottom which they were prepared for, they hitched a ride...here are Scott's words:



[Scott and Teri](#)

“We used YachtPath, it was not planned. Their ship ran aground in the Canal and was damaged; while they were waiting for a new ship we were able to get a GREAT deal to ship it to Seattle so we did. It was a little worrisome, since YachtPath did not have government permission to pick up a boat in Panama but we had no problem. They had 35 other boats to pick up and ours was just thrown in the middle and lost in the shuffle. We got a rebate on our insurance to ship and that plus the cost of fuel – means it cost much less than driving the boat up the coast. We had already done the coast twice, did not need a third time.” Scott Strickland – *Strickly for Fun*



[Rosie](#)

“We transited on April 29th. Picked up our advisor (they only act in an advisory capacity on pleasure boats) at 9:30 AM and exited the last set of locks (Gatun) at 3:30 PM, completing our transit in just over 7 hours. We side-tied in all the locks (tugs primarily). Our crew (line-handlers) consisted of 3 friends from the States and my brother ...all first timers. John Olson – ***Serena Ray***

Congratulations 4708, a sturdy hull with three passages through the Canal and special thanks to Scott and Teri Strickland for their input and especially to John and Rosie Olson for reporting in from the waterfront. As a testament to her durability Serena Ray now has 6,140 hrs (assuming a 5 knot average speed that is over 30,000 nm's (and it's probably more like 6.5 knots which would push her over 40,000 nm!). She may be the most traveled 47 of them all.

I always love hearing about the Canal, so if you too have a story, please let me know. And all you freighter captains out there, eat your hearts out (or send me an email and we'll talk about what size N boat you want...regardless, give us plenty of room please!).



[Transit crew](#)



Jeff Merrill is a salesman for Nordhavn who has done two Panama Canal transits to the Pacific on two Circumnavigating Nordhavns. He would like to hitch a ride on a Nordhavn going from the Pacific to the Caribbean and would also like to hear from other Nordhavn owners about their Canal experiences.

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