

April 26, 2011

Paradise Found...in Mexico



By Jeff Merrill

The first thing I think about as I hear the twin diesel Luggers fired up on board this Nordhavn 60, bound southward from its Dana Point, CA slip, is what a great name *Paradise Found* is for a boat. It's a multi-layered moniker with its most obvious interpretation being that her owners, Jay Peterson and wife, Lisa Dillon, have found "paradise" in their Nordhavn, the vehicle which will take them wherever they wish and provide a safe, comfortable haven away from the sometimes monotonous, often frenetic pace of real life. *Paradise Found* is also a GPS position that somehow implies if you get there by boat, you are in the perfect place. And as I quickly learn on this overnight delivery to Ensenada, Mexico, *Paradise Found* is an attitude conveyed by her owners and crew. It's a state of mind where things like choice of reading materials and dinner menu options take priority. It's Sunday, January 16th, and in an instant, this five-



person crew – consisting of Jay and Lisa, Lisa's uncle Dave Dillon, the couple's captain, Rich De Wolfe, and myself – settles quickly into paradise mode as we creep towards the Mexican border accompanied by a magnificent Pacific sunset.

We synchronized the engines at 1700 rpm and were slipping down the coast at 7.7 knots with a glassy, smooth windless sea providing a glistening magic carpet ride for us to glide across. With the sun down we were treated to outstanding visibility and friendly flickering shore lights. Life should always be this easy, I think, as I wait for my turn at the helm. Captain Rich set us up on two hour watches, with the on-deck man taking their place in the pilothouse to serve not only as back-up but watchstander company as well. Engine room checks, playing with the electronics and microwaving Lisa's delicious Chili were about the only things that required any effort. I truly can't remember an easier trip to Ensenada.



Paradise Found is hull 49 of the popular Nordhavn 55/60/63 line and she is a beautiful example of a wonderful cruising trawler. She was built at PAE's South Coast yard in Xiamen, China and arrived in the U.S. this past August for commissioning and fitting out.

Over the December holidays she had undergone some upgrades and minor refits, all in preparation for today's trip to Mexico. The couple wanted to make sure everything was perfect for the boat's first serious itinerary, so they brought Rich on as captain, hired not only to oversee things on this voyage but also to help with some additional training on systems, docking and little fitting out projects like installing a cool tool box retainer. It usually takes a few weeks to settle in after taking delivery – plus, Jay and Lisa have been focusing on stashing the large load of boat goodies they trucked from their home in Colorado – so it was nice for them to have Rich, a very experienced Nordhavn captain, looking after things.



We pulled into the Hotel Coral Marina about 7:30 am, were greeted by the dock crew and were tied up at our slip by 7:45, having covered 115 miles with barely a thought. In my opinion, it's nice to get the miles behind you at night. I definitely prefer to arrive at a port of call in the morning when you are fresher and have many hours of daylight should you need to delay your approach. As we pulled into the Coral Marina I started counting

Nordhavns – a 40, 47 and two 55s – a reasonable flock patiently awaiting the return of their owners so they can continue adventures.

Once tied up, we took the hotel shuttle into town with our paperwork all in order and made a call to the Port Captain's office. For some reason, this was a busy Monday and it took us four hours to clear in. Once all of the formalities were behind us, we went up to the Coral restaurant and had a wonderful lunch.



Ensenada marked the end of my trip. From here, the adventure for *Paradise Found* and her crew will officially start, but this prelim run was crucial being the first overnighter for the boat and her owners. Hitching a ride meant I could make sure everything went smoothly. (It was essentially uneventful - that's good!). In fact, something occurred to me as I noticed how dialed in the boat was: I am continually astounded at how adept Nordhavn owners are about figuring out all of the literally hundreds of little things you should have on your boat - beyond the obvious cooking gear, office supplies, navigation books and charts, etc., You really have to set things up as home at sea. If you leave the dock without some significant necessity, you'll have to endure without it until you come back to shore - and depending where you're headed, living without it may be longer than that. (Not sure how many iPod accessories you can find in Bora Bora, you know!) I couldn't find anything missing on *Paradise Found*.

The afternoon was spent catching up on sleep and reading. We didn't really have to unwind because we never got wound up, courtesy of that paradise-like atmosphere on board. The very casual and laid back tone set by Jay and Lisa is a perfect approach to the whole idea of the peaceful cruising lifestyle. Don't get me wrong, everyone has their responsibilities and needs to abide by the "laws" of the ship, but our crew intuitively connected with the go-with-the-flow attitude. We were able to truly enjoy the ride, and isn't that what it's all about?

After cleaning off the boat and showering we went up the road for lunch. Later, a quick ride into town to get into the vibe helped remind me why it is so appealing to travel to Ensenada. It's just close enough to the U.S., yet far enough away from the border that the sights, smells and vibrancy of being in real Mexico eclipses the tortured tourista hard sell I saw the next day in the normal traffic jam waiting to get through the U.S. entry gate.

We spent some time talking about 2011 and enjoying several months in Mexico. The weather window was looking good for all but me to head south in the morning so we looked at charts and passed the time before I took the gang out to dinner at my favorite restaurant in Ensenada, Punto Morro, with its lights shining down on the surf. The restaurant is walking distance from the Hotel Coral (along the waterfront and a trailer park!) and is a glass lined building that is perched on a small bluff overlooking crashing waves. It is a great place, great food and fun atmosphere. I always marvel at the abalone aquarium by the greeting desk, sure are a lot smaller than the ones I'd catch in Catalina as a boy. I've never been able to concede to trying them...I have to pry myself away.

Back at the boat we all had a good night's sleep then woke for breakfast. Most of the crew went on a walk so I did one final inspection of the boat to make sure everything looked right and that they would not be wanting - but again, couldn't find anything to recommend. By



about 9 a.m. we had settled our slip tab and I helped cast off the lines as ***Paradise Found*** departed Ensenada for points south. It was a fun send off with goodbye waves and big smiles all around. I watched the crew expertly guide the large 60 out into the bay and then hopped in my cab to begin the return trip home by land.

Over the ensuing weeks, I've kept in touch with Jay and Lisa by Skype while in Mexico and phone during visits home to the States. Whenever I ask them how they're doing, their answer – not surprisingly – is always the same: enjoying another day in Paradise.



Jeff Merrill is an eleven year veteran salesman for Nordhavn based in the CA office. Jeff enjoys travelling on Nordhavns and has done so literally all over the world amassing over 10,000 Nordhavn sea miles. He usually takes too many photos and writes too many words, but enjoys sharing his knowledge with Nordhavn clients who always become his friends.

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