

Seeking Excitement on a Typically Uneventful Nordhavn Seatrial

By Jeff Merrill

I have to admit it – most seatrials on Nordhavns are boring. Yes, getting out in the salty air is nice. And watching a proud owner maneuver his brand new boat is gratifying. But our boats are built so well, and our commissioning team so dialed in, that there usually just isn't anything that gets your blood pumping. So we look beyond the boat for some excitement.

Well I got what I wanted one day last fall on a seatrial of a new Nordhavn 40II. It turned out to be a perfect day for a boat ride. The sun shined, the wind was calm and the seas were barely undulating. *Maria Elena* left Dana Point just after first light on Veteran's Day bound for San Diego. It was a day off for many and we expected some holiday boat traffic, yet we had the Pacific Ocean all to ourselves. New owner John Torelli smoothly set us on a southerly course for the 8- mile journey and we both settled in for a day untethered to the mainland.



[Heading south as the sun rises](#)

We saw the sun come up over the coastal foot hills while nibbling on coffee cake (hope Jimmy Buffet will understand) and a couple of hours out we threaded through two large US Naval warships who were “mother-henning” a small pod of hovercraft. It is amazing to watch these stealth clouds scurry about the surface clad in a plume of sea spray and mist. In fact, up close it's more than a little imposing. Suffice it to say, I'm glad they're on our side.



[John performs an engine room check](#)

Since we were passing through their game theatre it seemed inevitable that we would be hailed on VHF and so John and I talked about our response. (It's always a good idea to have your story straight when questioned by an authority). John was doing an engine inspection while I had the con. “Vessel heading –blah, blah, ...this is US Navy Warship 24, what are your intentions?” Whew, even though the hail was expected it charged my blood pressure. I told them our heading and destination and they couldn't have been friendlier. They were polite and professional and kindly suggested that we should pick up speed or change our course pretty soon as they were about ready to ramp up speed and would not have great steerage. Aye-aye Captain, we're bugging out! Without any further discussion we exited, stage south.

One particular image remains permanently and I don't think I will soon forget seeing that huge Navy ship's bow pointing directly at us. So much for my need for excitement.



[A US Naval warship off the port beam](#)

John and his wife Mary (who couldn't join us today because she was our ground transportation for the return back to Dana Point) had just finished commissioning 40#50 and I offered to help John make the trip south. It was just a few weeks ago that John and I met in San Diego to see 4050 discharged from the freighter that had delivered her from China and now we were making a homecoming of sorts by returning back to this wonderful seaport on the border. A record turn around by the Nordhavn commissioning techs allowed me to give John some docking lessons and soon he felt comfortable enough to do a trip solo (with Mary and seadog, Daisy, a Chihuahua) from Dana Point to Newport Beach.

John and I have been talking Nordhavns for five years after meeting at the one and only Long Beach, CA Trawlerfest in 2000. What started out as a business relationship has developed into a very natural friendship. We phone and email regularly and the direction of the conversations has gone from what gear to put on to what-if scenarios and systems management ideas. We enjoy talking boats, particularly Nordhavns!



[No wind? No problem on a Nordy!](#)

Maria Elena is a flybridge model mark II. The flybridge trend is clearly getting more and more popular on our full displacement trawlers. On a coastal day trip like this particular short run, the flybridge is a fantastic room with a view and a great place to ride. You are very high off the water and with mild conditions and unlimited visibility it's a very comfortable place from which to drive the boat.

The Torellis have been regular visitors to Dana Point during the commissioning process and we had already reviewed most of the onboard systems. This jaunt south allowed John some more practice as captain with me ready to help out if needed (and I wasn't) and gave us some peace and quiet to finish up a few items on the eight-page New

Nordhavn Owner check list.

We saw some porpoise, a whale and a mystery splash – you know the usual stuff. Running along at 7 knots is quiet and comfortable. John and I had some great conversations and you don't miss a thing looking out the windows – the 40II has great visibility. Power boat owners with semi-displacement yachts that cruise at 20 knots can't be having as good a time while underway. Sure they get there faster, but is that the point? I just don't get it, but I'm biased and I admit my sailboat upbringing has made it pretty easy to fall in love with the full displacement tortoise vs. hare approach to traveling at sea. And this was just a simple day trip - the type that Nordhavn owners take all the time. You don't



[Coming around Point Loma](#)

have to set out on a major ocean passage every time you fire up a Nordhavn...but you can if you want to.



All of a sudden it was mid-afternoon and our trip was nearly complete. We could see the Coronado Islands in Mexico and I was tempted to press on. As we came around Point Loma we saw the Old Point Loma lighthouse, which earlier this month celebrated her 150 year anniversary of warning sailors. I chuckled to myself that with the solid fiberglass construction of the Nordhavn 40 there was a good chance that *Maria Elena* would still be in action when the lighthouse is being saluted for 300 years of service.

[John, Mary, Daisy
and Maria Elena](#)

(c) JMYS 2022 - Please contact: Jeff@JMYS.com