

Our purchase decision:

First understand, Clarice and I are certainly upper middle class North Americans but we are not wealthy by first world standards. We've often gotten the impression when talking to folks (especially boating supply vendors) that there is an assumption that if you are a Nordhavn owner you must be rich. Living on a boat has been a dream of ours for many years and in order to do in on the boat we felt would serve our needs and wants best we literally (almost literally) had to sell the farm (OK, houses we owned in the city – we did have a 5 acre “farm” at one time).

We didn't even allow our dream to flourish until we came upon a used Nordhavn 40 for sale. It was sitting next to some other boats that would never be considered for ocean crossing use for about the same price. That was the moment we started to believe that there was a chance of making something happen.

We didn't want to fixate on Nordhavn's from day one but recognized we needed to do a lot of homework. What we learned is that there are basically three “production” boat companies that specialize in ocean capable trawlers. The companies are Diesel Duck (really the name of a design with most of them constructed by Sea Horse Marine) <http://www.dieselducks.com/>, Kadey Krogen <http://www.kadeykrogen.com/dream/>, and Nordhavn <http://nordhavn.com/>. We also learned that the concept of “saving money by harvesting the wind” is somewhat of a fallacy when the numbers are crunched. The overall costs of owning and operating an ocean going trawler is frequently reported to be less than owning and operating a sailboat by people who have owned both. There is also the advantage of being able to go in a straight line instead of having to tack to go up wind.

We looked at examples of boats by all three companies. Diesel Ducks are a very cool and practical design with enough sail space to consider the sails as a true back-up or supplemental locomotion supply. They are generally made of steel and that was a big negative for us as we didn't want to deal with the challenge of maintaining a steel boat. The other issue was the lack of boats on the used market.

Kadey Krogens are also great boats. Most of the older used boats have walk around room on both sides of the salon which reduces the interior square footage noticeably compared to Nordhavns with the salons offset to one side. Since we planned to live-aboard in a rainy climate this was a big consideration. There is a lot of controversy about “get home engines” as to whether they are really needed (these boats all have remarkably reliable diesel engines) and if they work when they are called upon (there are far too many stories of them being ignored and not run until they wouldn't function from lack of use when the time came to use them). We decided we liked the idea of having a get home engine and Kadey's don't come with them.

The more we learned about the strength and quality reputation of Nordhavns the more we were convinced that was the brand to focus on (although we kept looking at other brands right up until our final buying decision).

Summary of Nordhavn strong points in our mind:

- Incredibly strong hulls well tested in ocean crossing service (the top millage boat is the same model as ours and just hit 100,000 miles having circumnavigated the globe 3 times)
- Open and light interiors with lots of traditional wood but no sense of being in a “dark cave”
- Larger salon and interior spaces because of the salon being moved all of the way to the port side (you can only walk around the starboard side on the outside of the lower level)
- Engines designed for 20,000 hours of continuous use before being overhauled (no one has reached this number to test the design theory yet to my knowledge)
- A small “get home” diesel engine in most of the boats
- Pretty much every Nordhavn has either passive or active stabilization (Salish Aire is one of the few that has both systems). Everything we have read about making ocean passages is that some sort of stabilization system is mandatory if you want to voyage in any kind of comfort.
 - Def: Active stabilization in this usage means a hydraulic system run off the engine using fins on the outside of the boat to stabilize the movement. They are activated by a computer in response to a motion sensor. (advantage – go into service at the push of a button; disadvantage – require complicated machinery and are expensive to maintain)
 - Def: Passive stabilization in this usage refers to a system where poles are put out from the sides of the boat and plates hang from them and “fly” under the surface of the sea. As the boat rolls one way the “fish” on the other side creates a downward force to counter the roll. (advantage – basic design, easy to maintain; disadvantage – reported to be a challenge to launch and retrieve (we haven’t tried yet) require a very wide area to operate and a minimum of 20 feet of water depth, and reported to take nearly a knot off of the boat speed)
- Overall high quality workmanship and equipment
- Older boats on the market that we could potentially afford that were in “turn key” condition

One of our greatest frustrations during our boat search was that we could not put an offer on any of them until we were sure we had a sale of our properties. During this time the boat market was heating up and we watched several local boats that we fully planned to put offers on get sold before we could get to them.

In the midst of this we also settled on a broker. Don Kohlmann of Nordhavn in Seattle used to work at the factory building the boats. (It’s fun to watch his face as he talks with great pride about how they are constructed.) We were not used to telling someone we were going to fly to Florida to just see if a boat might be of interest while we took a mini vacation and have them tell us they had booked a flight and would meet us there. He was incredible in giving us support even though I expect we were his “cheapest” clients in some time. We consider ourselves to be pretty independent and are the type people who buy and sell houses using our own inspection skills (we even sold a cabin without any agent and haven written the contract ourselves (the buyers banker was reported to be very impressed with the clarity and completeness of the document)). In this case we knew we were in over our heads and really valued having someone at our side who always seemed to know who to call and what to watch for.

We also needed to nail down the model to focus our energy on. Initially we looked at 40 ft models but the two we had our eye on sold. Others on the market were a newer design that commanded a much higher price. Also since we had looked at a couple of 46 ft models we realized that although the 40's may have a lot of living space they don't have the storage space of the 46's. Since we eventually plan to move ALL of our possessions aboard the boat this was a big consideration. On the other end we looked at a 47 ft boat that was a "great" price relative to other 47's but still \$100,000 more than anything else we had looked at. To this day I still drool over the walk around engine room (the 46's engine room is more of a crawl around design). Our final decision came when a long time owner wrote us and made the comment: "I find that both 46 and 47 owners love their boats. The 47 owners as a group like the extra room and don't tend to be the do-it-yourself crowd whereas the 46 owners find their classic design to be more sea-kindly and simpler to maintain. The 46 owners tend to be the ones who maintain their own boats." Since we clearly fell into the 46 owner classification we knew what we were looking for.

Next we needed to find the specific boat and have it available when we believed we had the properties sold. The boat that caught our eye was in Florida and was curiously owned by a couple who lived a mile from us in Washington. To make a long and painful story short: We put an offer on the boat and they accepted and we got very very very excited. In the end we realized that the offer on our properties was not going to pan out and we felt we had to drop our offer on the boat so the current owners could get her back on the market.

This led to a complete change of plans on how we marketed our properties (and the recognition that if we were to sell them we were going to have to accept some significant losses – ouch). In the end this strategy worked and we both feel strongly that this was a really good decision. The anxiety associated with trying to sell them as a sub-division just was not worth the extra money we could make – life is much too short.

Suddenly we were back in the boat buying market. In the mean time the first boat we had made an offer on had been shipped to a port within a very short distance of our home but there was another boat in Florida for much less money. The boat in Washington had non-corroding fiberglass fuel tanks. The boat in Florida had steel tanks but the owners reported they had been visually inspected and cleaned yearly. The boat in Washington had already been shipped and we had already spent several thousand dollars on survey costs. The boat in Florida had a full solar array system on it that was worth a LOT of money (Clarice has always wanted to have a solar system to minimize the use of the generator at anchor). The boat in Washington had a painted hull (more expensive to maintain) the boat in Florida had the original gel-coat and it was in very good condition. Both boats had engines that ran like fine clocks but the one in Florida was reported by our broker "to be the quietest running 46 he had ever been on". Our estimate of shipping costs ran to about \$45000 to get the boat to Washington from Florida (that will be another story). The boat in Washington was a 2001 model the one in Florida a 1996 model.

In the end we agreed that if our planned offer was accepted we would save about \$50000 in initial costs if we bought the Florida boat (after shipping). We expected to have about the same costs in bringing

electronics, etc up to date for either boat. Finally, the overall savings of having a non-painted boat plus already having a full solar system on the boat moved us to make our final offer on the Florida boat.

When we finally came to closing we closed one house on day #1, our other rental house on day #2, the boat purchase about 3 days later and arranged to have it shipped on a freighter leaving the next week.

I will end here as the story about moving the boat from Florida to Washington will take another chapter in itself.