

MOTOR BOATS TESTED

Nordic Tug 37

Too pretty to be a tug and it isn't from Scandinavia, so what exactly is this newcomer to the UK boating scene?

REPORT BY MARK TURLEY

FACT FILE
Nordic Tug 37
LOA: 38ft 11in
(11.86m)
PRICE: £281,900
TOP SPEED:
18 knots

The Tug part might just about work if one were to compare this graceful boat to the elegant old steamers that work the Thames, but the Nordic bit is a complete misnomer. The range is actually born and bred in America and brings to our shores a quite lovely take on the trawler yacht genre. But besides from an almost toylike charm, what's on offer? A glorious winter day on the Solent persuaded us that toys were off the menu and that what we actually had here was a very serious cruiser.

Design & Build

The near vertical stern, sit-up-and-beg wheelhouse and play funnel have been borrowed from the old harbour tugs of the US's Eastern seaboard, but that is where the similarities end and the single-engined hull will readily push up into semi-displacement mode. In fact, the underwater sections do all kinds of interesting things and although it looks as if it might be round bilge, it sports a fully chined hull, plus there is a formidable keel to ensure directional stability.

This also offers a degree of protection to the sterngear, with the propeller itself pushed up into a slight tunnel reducing the shaft angle and increasing efficiency. Another useful point is that the vessel's waterline length has been drawn out as much as possible, so that the bulk of the integral bathing platform is fully immersed. This increases the wetted area, and so speed, and acts as a fixed tab to push the bow down when in semi-planing mode.

The pseudo-planked topsides benefit from plenty of flair forward and we liked the

no-nonsense, mid-height, rubber knuckle, which helps to stiffen the topsides and take a lot of wear and tear from the fenders when alongside.

The superstructure is boxy-looking – just like the tugs it is meant to ape – and pushed out

“This Tug has been built with serious cruising in mind”

width-ways to such an extent that over the mid-portion of the hull there are hardly any side decks. Instead, you simply use the wheelhouse side doors for any forward deckwork.

Inside, the open-plan main deck area is split between the spacious raised wheelhouse and the saloon area back aft, which boasts a full liveaboard galley. The two good-sized cabins share a single toilet cubicle which benefits from a separate shower stall.

Everywhere you venture there is plenty of storage, and while at first glance the boat might

look a bit toy-like there is little doubt it has been designed with serious cruising in mind; the high level of engineering pressing the point home. A flybridge option, that comes complete with

exterior helm console and L-shaped seating, is also available but this will hurt the Tug's inland-friendly air-draught of just under 11ft (3.5m).

Design & Build

Charm by the bucketload and the layout works well





Optional teak in the saloon adds warmth and charm

Exterior

The bathing platform runs far enough outboard to make for easy boarding, but not so much that it becomes vulnerable during close quarter work. The topsides are best scaled opposite the wheelhouse side doors where several strategically placed handholds help you up and down or when out on deck handling lines. In fact, there is a neat trick when mooring up. If you run the forward lines back round to the door it can be readily picked up by the skipper, whereupon he

can either nip ashore himself or chuck it to a crewmember that has already made it to the pontoon from the bathing platform.

The side decks past the saloon superstructure aren't really wide enough to be used, they are more for aesthetics than anything else, but toing and froing from cockpit to foredeck via the saloon is no bother. The main bugbear is that midship fenders end up dangling from the guardrail running round the upper deck as there is no where to belay them at deck level. A tidier

alternative would be to have a couple of beackets added along the gunwale, reachable from the cockpit and the side deck through the wheelhouse. Access to the upper deck is via a ladder up from the cockpit, where you'll find a huge area ideal for stowing an inflated dinghy and other bulky toys, such as a kayak. As for relaxing up here, it is stable enough when tucked up alongside but it feels a bit exposed when underway. Another spot to adjourn to when moored up is the foredeck, as the coachroof is an

ideal sitting height. Nipping out here with a cushion, good book and a glass of wine is a must. The coaming that protects the cockpit is rather chunky and we were pleased to see a good high lip to the transom door to keep any wayward following seas out. A built-in decklocker doubles as a seat as there isn't any recourse for much lounging out here, so a few loose directors chairs won't go amiss. The lazarette beneath the sole will take care of the chairs when not required or you might want to pop them through to the saloon, adding to the dinette seating.

Deck hardware is commendable, railings being a heftier gauge than the norm, with five pairs of 12in (30cm) cleats at your disposal. The foredeck comes equipped with a ship-shape horizontal windlass and a large central bollard, while access to the Tug's chain locker is through the forecabin rather than from deck level.

Exterior
Deck concept works well but limited seated area
✓✓✓✓✓

Accommodation

The door between cockpit and saloon is nice and wide and although the dinette settee is a good size – pulling out to form an extra double – a few of those directors chairs will help increase the number that can gather round the table. The domestic-sized galley running down the starboard side boasts a separate fridge and freezer, a decent gas hob and oven, together with masses of Corian counter space and stacks of sizeable cupboards and drawers. Deep windows right around let in loads of light and provide an uninterrupted view, while along the deckhead we were pleased to find a couple of handrails, which is an important detail where you have large open spaces.

A couple of easy steps up and you are in the pilothouse area, again with a great view and



The wheelhouse will seat four but it was the full sized chart table that Mark really loved

sliding doors out to either side deck. The two bench seats will take a couple of crew apiece and again there is always a handhold about. We also appreciated the slight backward slope to the seat cushions which are designed to draw you back into the seat. The Tug also gave us a MBM first – this is the first test in 20 years where we have encountered a full size chart table. We were so excited we actually got a chart out to try it for size. Also, for the most part the consoles here have a matt black finish, which helps reduce glare onto the three part screen. Variable speed wipers keep the screens clear

outside, while the insides benefit from demisters. All-in-all an excellent setup and a great spot to watch the world go by from too.

The two sleeping cabins, down a short run of steps, share a single toilet compartment and separate, full-size shower cubicle. The forecabin is generous with plenty of space either side of the queen-sized double as well as good sitting headroom. There is stowage in abundance, with loads of cupboards outboard and a useful set of deep drawers to the end of the bed. Circular opening portholes here, in the toilet and the guest cabin add to the nautical ambience.

The guest cabin, accessed via a neat sliding door, can be fitted with bunks rather than the smallish double featured here and

“A flybridge with exterior helm and L-seating is available”



The master cabin boasts cabinetry, light and plenty of storage space



A sliding door gives access to the comfortable guest cabin



A separate shower is also fitted



Plenty of access space to the engine makes it easy to service



Great engineering and back-up systems impressed us



The upper deck is great for storing bulky kit, or for sunbathing. An optional steering flybridge is available

again there is no shortage of clothes space or standing room.

The interior enjoys plenty of well-executed teak joinery but to enjoy the finish featured here it means shelling out for the teak/holly sole, plus

Accommodation

Roomy, well appointed interior for easy living



some extra panelling in the pilothouse area, which might otherwise be a bit bland. But it's worth noting that the warmth and practical nature these extras add will set you back around £6500.

Engine Options & Access

One option you won't need to ponder over is which engine installation you might prefer as just the one is offered. A single 380hp Cummins

complete with Smartcraft electronic throttle and LCD engine display that keeps you updated on everything from propeller loading to fuel consumption. That's not to say there isn't room down the engine compartment for a twin installation, it is just that this is the way the design works. However, the yard puts plenty of effort into ensuring you are not caught without a working engine by installing a dual set of primary fuel filters and an exhaust alarm as standard. And to make oil changes hassle free – literally at the touch of a button – a Reverso oil-change system is plumbed in as standard.

Access to all of this is excellent with hefty hatches in the wheelhouse sole, and another one further aft gives onto the separate tank space. A false floor here allows access to the shaft log while back

A nicely worked transom

in the main engine compartment there is enough room to take a sizeable, standard fit generator

Engine Options & Access

Excellent systems back up the single engine



without it getting in the way of any activity round the engine itself. Overall the engineering is first class and good attention has been made to the sound insulation.

Performance & Handling

When we first clapped eyes on this boat at Southampton Boat Show we pegged it as being suitable for some light-estuary work, much like the American's Intercoastal Waterway. However, having checked out the boat's substantial build as well as feedback from some lengthy cruises people have undertaken – like thousand mile jaunts to Alaska – we were looking forward to putting the 37 through something pretty taxing. Typically, our test day could only throw at us blue skies and nothing short of a mill-pond, so we had to make do with the wash off passing ferries.

Not a great way to assess sea-keeping but even so it was quite clear that, aside from an easy roll when seas are set on the beam, the hull isn't going to be upset easily. And, of course, the best part of this hull shape is that it is happy to troll along in full displacement mode without ducking its bow and slopping water unnecessarily about. On the other hand, ease open the throttle and the bow takes an interested sniff, pushing along in the mid-teens with minimal fuss, even if the fuel consumption does not look as attractive. But that's the beauty of this sort of boating, it's either

lazy, comfortable and frugal, or get going, which is still comfortable but thirstier. Let your own time dictate the pace and maybe even drop back to 7knots for some 6mpg, 1300 nautical miles economy.

Visibility from the wheelhouse is excellent with a couple of small windows let into the upper rear bulkhead to help check what is coming up dead astern. The skipper's seat can be adjusted fore and aft, with a foot rest that hinges up when you want to stand or lean against the seat and feel the breeze through the open door. The wood wheel and hydraulic steering feel just right and we liked how larger, yet unobtrusive, electronics have been catered for within the angled, teak console.

A bow thruster is included as standard, which is a pre-emptive touch given the Tug's single-engine and decent run of keel. This boat behaves itself at slow speeds and eases astern without losing its way, and if you put the helm hard over while running faster the hull pulls round on the level.

Performance & Handling

Predictable handling while you set the pace



Specification & Value

Everything you need for day-to-day living and cruising are included as standard; a bow thruster to remove manoeuvring qualms, a generator for independence along with a heating system for liveaboard comfort. To a certain extent these

Specification & Value

A well-spec'd boat, backed by serious build quality



costly 'non-extras' are reflected in the price but, even so, this is an interesting boat with an affordable price tag, when you consider the Tug's excellent build and engineering.

Verdict

Give the Tug a quick glance and it is likely to be a boat you're either going to like or dismiss immediately, but take a bit more time and there is plenty here to sway the sceptical. Build quality in terms of fitout and engineering is reassuring and there are lots of practical touches, as well as masses of space for lengthy spells aboard. Plus, this interesting all-rounder has the pace for both inland and coastal cruising. **8/10**



Nordic Tug 37 technical data

specifications

BUILD	GRP
RCD	B
LENGTH OVERALL	38ft 11in (11.66m)
HULL LENGTH	37ft 5in (11.40m)
BEAM	12ft 11in (3.94m)
DRAUGHT	4ft 4in (1.32m)
AIR DRAUGHT	10ft 11in (3.33m)
DISPLACEMENT	10.3 tonnes
FUEL CAPACITY	270gal (1226lt)
WATER CAPACITY	120gal (545lt)



performance

Engines	single Cummins QSB 5.9-380hp diesel					
Configuration	6cyl, 5.9lt, 380hp @ 3000rpm					
conditions	wind NW'ly, Force 2, sea calm					
Load	fuel 60% water 30% crew 3					
Rpm	knots	gph	lph	mpg	range	noise
1200	7.3	1.2	6	6.08	1313	64
1600	8.8	2.9	13	3.03	654	69
2000	10.2	5.6	25	1.82	393	72
2400	12.4	8.8	40	1.41	305	74
2800	15.9	12.5	57	1.27	274	75
3040	17.8	15.8	72	1.13	244	79

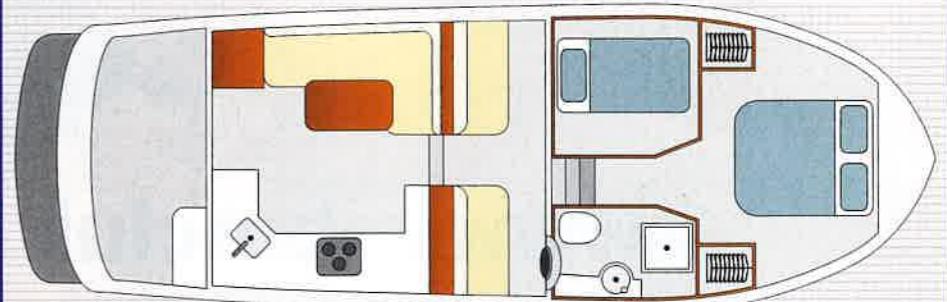
Range figures quoted above are in miles based on standard fuel tanks and include a 20% margin. Figures may vary due to weather conditions, water, engine temp, crew and hull fouling. Noise readings in dB(A) were taken in the saloon.



prices

STANDARD BOAT	inc VAT
with single 380hp Cummins diesel	£281,900
BOW THRUSTER	standard
HEATING	standard
ELECTRIC WINDLASS	standard
GENERATOR & SHOREPOWER	standard
COMMISSIONING & ANTIPOUL	standard
INTERIOR TEAK & HOLLY SOLE	£5400
BOAT AS TESTED	£299,070

Enquiries: Nordic Tugs (UK) Ltd, Tel: 02380 456368. www.nordictugs.co.uk



the rivals



NIMBUS 380
From £268,600
Tardis-like layout with raised wheelhouse and flybridge, two cabins and a smart finish with loads of Swedish practical touches.
Tel: 01590 677955
offshorepowerboats.co.uk



AQUASTAR 38
From £287,880
British semi-displacement design available with either an aft cabin and raised deck or an open cockpit with a wheelhouse walkthrough.
Tel: 01481 244550
aquastar.gg



MENORQUIN 1100
From £258,500
Looking for something different? These Med-based fishing boats surprise with a fair turn of speed and comfortable accommodation.
Tel: 02380 457656
epsmarine.com



The railings are a heftier guage than the norm



There is little in the way of seating in the cockpit so some directors chairs will be needed