

Gulf Island GETAWAY

The Ranger 27 proves to be an ideal platform for a short cruise through the Canadian Gulf Islands.

BY PETER A. JANSSEN

The Kenmore Air seaplane climbed north from Lake Washington, leaving the damp and gray of Seattle behind. As the sky cleared, a vista of blue water and green islands unfolded below. Soon, I thought, I'll be down there among them. I could almost chart my course from the window of the plane.





An hour later, we touched down in the harbor at Nanaimo, the second-largest city on Canada's Vancouver Island. The water was flat; the sun was shining; a cruising adventure was in the offing. Mark Mansfield, the sales manager of Ranger Tugs, and I stepped off the seaplane float and were met by Jeff Messmer, Ranger's vice president of sales and marketing. He walked us to Nanaimo's municipal dock, where a pair of vessels waited.

Mansfield would drive a Ranger 29 to Anacortes, Washington, some 100 miles away, while I followed aboard the company's new 27-footer. This provided a chance to put the Ranger 27 through its paces and to see parts of the Gulf Islands I had never seen. Mansfield, who has cruised the region for many years, promised to show me some of his favorite sites.

Anxious to start, we had a fast lunch at Penny's Palapa at the top of the dock then made ready for departure. Nanaimo is nice, but it's still a city with office buildings and traffic lights. I wanted to get out on the water and look at whales and eagles instead of cars and condos.

Standard bow and stern thrusters let me walk the boat off the dock easily, even into a wind. I later found the R27 to be easily maneuvered, even when not using the thrusters. Turning into the fairway and heading south, I followed Mansfield through the Dodd Narrows rapids, which can be nasty when tides are running but were benign when we hit them at slack water.

A Garmin touch screen GPSMAP 5212 was mounted on the R27's wooden helm pod. I divided the screen into



ALL THE COMFORTS and conveniences of home are found in the cozy salon (top), with ample room for adults in the forward berth (above).

three windows: chart plotter, radar and engine controls. This was probably overkill, since all I really had to do was follow Mansfield, who was 100 yards ahead. But when cruising, I'm super-cautious; I also spread out paper charts on the empty passenger seat to my left.

Once under way, I had a chance to get acquainted with my surroundings. The adjustable helm seat was comfortable and the facing passenger seat could easily hold two adults. As nice added touches, the back of the helm seat flips forward to extend the galley countertop behind it, while the back of the passenger seat converts to extend the dinette.

The R27's cockpit offers almost 50 square feet of

BILLY BLACK (2)

deck space — one of the most significant differences between it and the company's popular 25-foot model. I found this added space became a very pleasant spot to sit and relax at the end of the day; it's also great for fishing and launching kayaks or dinghies. The large cockpit allows the engine compartment to sit aft of the cabin, where it is accessed by a large hatch in the aft deck; this keeps the engine noise out of the salon. A bump in the bilge also places the 180 hp Yanmar diesel engine deeper in the hull, which lowers the overall center of gravity and results in an efficient 6-degree shaft angle. There's also a protective shoe aft to shield the prop and rudder from obstacles.

After a few hours of 15-knot cruising through a postcard-perfect day, we made a left turn between Thetis and Kuper Islands and into Telegraph Harbour Marina. As we hailed the dockmaster for a slip, I realized this was the scene I'd been hoping for. Telegraph Harbour was tucked away at the top of the bay, encircled by low green hills with rocks dotting the shore and boats bobbing at their moorings. It seemed the perfect place to unwind and relax.

The docks were wide and clean, and the bistro overlooking the marina had both outside seating on the porch and stools around the counter inside, like an old-fashioned soda fountain. I was in the mood to go in and order a milkshake, but I first ran into the marina's owner, Ron Faoro, who bought the place last January with his wife, Tara Kaulback. They sailed to the Pacific Northwest from New England after Faoro retired from a graphic design business. The couple saw Telegraph Harbour and fell in love with it. The marina stays busy all summer and even into the fall, but closes in winter. "We're going to the Maldives this winter," Faoro says. "We want to get warm."

Mansfield and I took the Livingston dink from the R29 and explored a beautiful little cut leading east from Telegraph Harbour to the wide, peaceful Clam Bay, where a dozen boats were anchored. A sparse collection of day markers demarcated a channel in the middle of the cut. Faoro said large boats cruised through at high tide. Mansfield and I looked around at the shoaling mud flats and decided there was no way we

would take the Rangers through there. We retreated to the bistro's porch for burgers and beer.

Back aboard that evening, I continued to be pleasantly surprised by the amount of living space I enjoyed on this compact cruiser. Though I'm a couple of inches over 6 feet, I had plenty of headroom throughout the cabin. The one space I did not spend any time in was the second stateroom that's tucked into the aft section of the salon on the port side. It was filled with gear from an earlier trip. I'm sure I could have ducked in there

RANGER TUGS 27

SPECIFICATIONS

LOA: 27'1"

Beam: 8'6"

Draft: 2'2"

Disp.: 6,200 lbs.

Fuel: 100 gals.

Water: 40 gals.

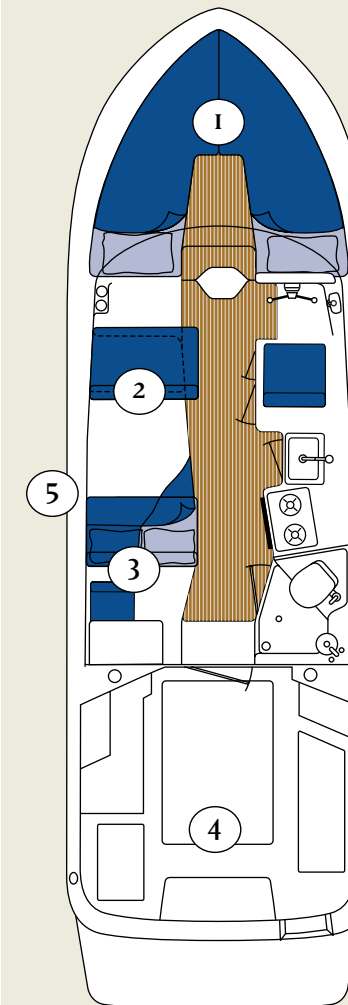
Contact: Ranger Tugs, rangertugs.com

Base Price: \$149,937

PERFORMANCE

TEST POWER: (1) 180 hp Yanmar diesel engine. Speeds measured by GPS in calm conditions on Houston Passage west of Galiano Island in the Canadian Gulf Islands with full fuel, full water and one person on board. Sound levels measured at the helm in dB-A.

RPM	KNOTS	GPH	DB-A
800	3.1	0.2	69
1,000	4.1	0.4	64
1,500	5.2	0.8	65
2,000	6.5	1.6	69
2,500	7.9	2.9	73
3,000	9.9	4.3	79
3,500	13.5	5.5	76
4,000	17.5	8.3	82
4,140	18.3	9.0	83



INSIDE: ① Comfortable 6-foot 6-inch V-berth forward. ② Back of passenger seat folds forward to extend the dinette area. ③ Second cabin provides sleeping space for children and extra storage. ④ Large hatch in cockpit allows easy access to diesel engine. ⑤ Rooftop storage means you can take a lot of toys and supplies with you.



A Family Affair

Would you believe a family of five spent 10 days cruising on a 27-foot boat and they all came back smiling? Hard to imagine? Well, that's exactly what happened to the Banks family of Kenmore, Washington, who spent that time on a Ranger 27 and loved it. "It was the trip of a lifetime," says Todd Banks. His wife Jayne adds: "We had such a fun time. We were sad to leave."

The Bankses were part of a flotilla of 17 Ranger Tugs on a summer cruise north from the Seattle area to Desolation Sound in British Columbia. For the 10 nights on board, Todd and Jayne slept on the large V-berth in the forward cabin while their children Hunter, 9, and Mason, 7, slept in the small aft cabin and Olivia, 12, stretched out on the dinette, which was converted to a berth with extra cushions.

"I like the way the boat is laid out," says Jayne. "There's limited space, but given the space available, everything is really functional. I like how the captain's seat folds up for additional counter space. And the kitchen was more than adequate for preparing meals for a family of five." At the end of a cruising day, she says, "The kids liked that they could fish off the bow."

For his part, Todd liked the agility provided by the bow and stern thrusters and the functionality of the Garmin electronics. He was also pleasantly surprised by the amount of storage space available, both inside the boat and on the roof.

"I couldn't believe how much stuff we were able to keep up there," Todd says. Ranger owners routinely carry sea kayaks, rafts and a host of smaller items on the broad rooftop. "The boat had everything we really needed for life aboard," he says. "All in all, it delivers a lot of bang for the buck and provides a lot more cruising potential than you might first expect." — P.A.J.



THE BANKS FAMILY on board. **TOP LEFT:** Jayne and Todd, then Mason, 7, Olivia, 12, and Hunter, 9. **RIGHT COLUMN, FROM TOP:** Mason on the bow; Olivia with the catch of the day; Jack Messmer, left, with Hunter, smiles all around.



SITTING PRETTY at the Messmers' dock on Center Island, the Ranger 27 is still loaded for a two-week cruise in the Gulf and San Juan Islands.

and slept well, although I think it might be more suitable for shorter people. Instead, I stretched out in the 6-foot 6-inch forward berth and slept like a log.

The next morning we reluctantly headed south then east into Payne Bay at the lower end of the long, noodle-shaped Galiano Island and cruised into Montague Harbour, a wide, fairly active bay with a good-size marina. Mansfield dropped the hook on the R29 and I rafted up next to him.

The side decks on the R27 are necessarily slim, making it more difficult to move about when hanging fenders — especially when single-handed. I soon discovered a simple solution: Open the sliding windows next to the helm and the passengers' seats, reach out and hang the fenders, then just tuck them inside the rail when you leave the dock, the same thing with the bowline. Tie it off and then either secure it to the rail or bring it inside the window.

Once again, we launched the Livingston and rowed 30 yards to the *Atrevida*. This 82-year-old ferryboat was converted into a floating bakery and sandwich shop and now sits anchored in the bay.

Later, Mansfield led the way west to Ganges Harbour.

Though it seemed nice enough, in my get-away-from-it-all mode, it also seemed way too civilized. We circled and left, aiming instead for the U.S. side of the sound and the familiar pleasures of Roche Harbor, Washington. This picturesque port has been one of my favorite cruising destinations for many years, and the appeal returns every time I see the white peaked spire of the old church rising among the trees at the end of the harbor. After a quick visit to the customs office, we were officially back in the United States with ample time to retreat to the restaurant at the top of the harbor for the evening display of colors, when the Canadian and American flags are lowered and a canon fired in salute.

It took only a few hours the next morning to cruise to Anacortes and a state park ramp, where I loaded the R27 on a trailer hitched to a white Suburban and Mansfield put the R29 on a trailer pulled by a Dodge Ram pickup. This entire procedure took perhaps 15 minutes and illustrated one more appeal of a Ranger Tug. You can cruise comfortably for days — or weeks, if you have the time — with all the comforts of home, then load the boat onto a trailer and drive it away, and that combination is hard to beat. ♣

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