





SPECIAL DELIVERY

OUR TRIP ABOARD A NEW RANGER TUGS 31
FROM ANACORTES TO BREMERTON IN THE
PACIFIC NORTHWEST DEMONSTRATES WHY
THE COMPANY AND THEIR PRODUCTS ARE
A FORCE TO BE RECKONED WITH.

Story By John Wooldridge



The Ranger Tugs 31 maximizes saloon and helm space with a number of tricks, including a dinette seat that reverses into a forward-facing companion seat, a compact second stateroom beneath the dinette and a helm chair (atop the fridge cabinet) that folds away when not in use or rotates for socializing with guests.

I was making a turn to starboard around the end of G dock, the transient dock at Roche Harbor, on the northwest side of San Juan Island, when I experienced a momentary lack of response from the steering wheel on the flybridge of the Ranger Tugs 31. It was only a quarter of a turn or so, and then the feedback from the wheel, and the change in direction of the bow, told me that my turn command was being relayed to the rudder.

I was pretty sure that there was an air bubble in the hydraulic lines serving the upper helm, since I had been operating from the lower helm earlier and felt no slippage. And I had no problems using the Garmin autopilot for most of the trip as my wife, Peggy, and I made the short hop from Anacortes, where we picked up the boat, to Roche Harbor.

With a little bit of back and forth on the wheel, I found what seemed to be a centerline position for the rudder,

then shifted the flybridge throttle to neutral as I drew close to my assigned slip. With a quick bump in reverse and a 90-degree twist of position using the standard bow and stern thrusters, I backed straight in. Once tied up and shut down, I picked up my cellphone and called Kenneth Marrs at Ranger Tugs who, along with Andrew Custis, was one of two customer service specialists who are available on the phone to owners with questions.

Marrs listened to my description of the event, concurred that it was likely an air bubble, and offered to walk me through the fix, find someone locally who could do it for me, or meet me in Bremerton, our destination in two days. I opted for the latter, but took a thorough look around in the engine compartment and bilges to ensure there was no hydraulic fluid leak. Inspection completed, Peggy and I headed ashore to enjoy the delights Roche Harbor has to offer.

BEGINNINGS

This trip began as a conversation I had with Jeff Messmer, Ranger Tugs' director of sales and marketing, at Anacortes Trawler Fest last May. I wanted to test the new Ranger Tugs 31, and he made me an offer I couldn't refuse. I could help deliver the boat over a period of three days from Anacortes to Bremerton for the Ranger Tugs Fall Owner's Rendezvous, and experience the company's Factory Delivery program, an attractive idea that begins with a customer's purchase of a new boat from their local Ranger Tugs dealership.

The boat is built and equipped according to your specifications, and is then launched at a nearby marina, such as Cap Sante Marina in Anacortes. For two days, you get a thorough orientation aboard with one of the customer service guys, first going through all the boat's systems—from their operation to care and

maintenance—followed by a full day on the water with a licensed captain from the factory, who is an experienced cruiser, covering vessel operation, from trip planning to anchoring, from startup to shutdown.

Now comes the best part. You get to cruise the San Juan Islands and the coastline of Washington State for an agreed-upon amount of time, shake down your new Ranger Tug, and have your questions answered by nearby customer service specialists. When finished, you return the boat to the marina, where it is hauled by the factory, shrink wrapped, and trucked across country to your homeport.

The cost for this optional service is a reasonable \$2,500, plus shipping, but it includes three days of moorage, a full tank of fuel and propane (if you elect the propane stove option), charts and cruising guides, a safety kit, a factory tour (if that interests you), and a factory discount at Fisheries Supply in Seattle for additional outfitting.

This is a thorough-going introduction that will satisfy new boat owners and veteran cruisers alike. Working with Kenneth Marrs, we learned about the systems in short order and were on our way to Roche Harbor for our first overnight.

It was a pleasant day—not too cool—so we took our time and enjoyed the sights from the flybridge. The R31 is the first Ranger Tug with a flybridge, and it was thoughtfully designed with lots of handrails and teak treaded steps to make ascent and descent very safe. The double bench was comfortable for two adults, and the helm console, which, along with the stainless steel mast, folds down when clearance is critical, offered plenty of legroom. A wraparound canvas panel keeps wind away from your legs, and a well-positioned venturi windshield keeps wind out of your face.

A Garmin 5212 touchscreen MFD, repeating the information from the 5215 at the pilothouse helm, and a Garmin autopilot flanked the stainless steel wheel, both within easy reach. Like the helm below, the upper console was equipped with a digital throttle/shifter, thruster controls, and important electrical system switches.

The ride was very smooth, not at all sensitive to winds on the beam or



people moving around. The R31 had loads of stiffness in turns, and tracked exceptionally well, surely the result of the David Livingston-designed bottom with a sizeable, but not full length, keel and partial tunnel aft. Engine noise from the 300hp Volvo Penta D4 under the large hatch in the cockpit was negligible, and power output was very smooth, particularly noticeable when transitioning from displacement to semi-displacement speeds.

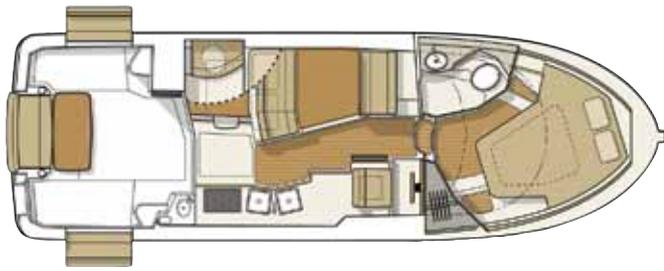
Returning to the boat after our Roche Harbor foray, I opened one of

the hideaway cockpit seats, which fold out of the hull sides. These comfortable double bench seats garnered quite a lot of attention from passersby, and actually made it spacious enough to accommodate up to eight people in the cockpit, with the addition of a couple of folding chairs forward of the built-in bench seat and removable table.

Our test boat was equipped with an optional third steering station console with digital throttle/shifter, a feature sure to be appreciated by cruisers who love to fish. Battery cutoff switches



Top: The foredeck does double duty with a folding seat and stow-away table that create a perfect perch for a round of sundowners. Above: The forward master berth lets you get in bed from either side, eliminating a common source of annoyance on many boats.



were installed in the locker below, for safety and ease of use.

Raising the centerline hatch gave excellent access to the engine and its maintenance points, as well as to the optional Onan genset just aft of the engine. Access to the rudder head and steering gear was just as easy, beneath the molded bench seat aft. A starboard transom door allowed access to the swim platform, with optional staple-type removable stainless safety rails and standard fenders along the aft edge.

Our cockpit was complete with a starboard transom door, seven recessed drink holders, two standard rod holders, and an optional icemaker in lieu of the standard refrigerator beneath the stairs.

Our favorite spot for relaxing was on the foredeck, where David Livingston created a flip-up bench seat, served by a removable table that stores in the cabin. It was easily accessible through the starboard sliding cabin door that serves the helm and the cabin interior. A small well, convenient cleat, and sturdy grabrails just outside the door made dropping a breast line on a dock cleat as easy to do as going forward to tend the anchor.

We slept well that first night on the forward berth, and appreciated the access to both sides. I unloaded personal items on top of the small desk to port, and learned recently that new shelves have been added running forward along both sides for plenty of additional storage. Before the trip was over, we also slept in the mid-cabin, which had a second electric head and a hanging rack, and was a good storage spot for bulky duffles, unused canvas, and more.

Our second night found us in the Nordic community of Poulsbo, flanked by the majestic Olympic Mountains. Our trip across Puget Sound was about six hours long at roughly 16 knots, and it was so brilliantly sunny, we finally retreated to



the pilothouse for a bit of shade. Peggy settled in with a good book on the companion bench seat to port of the helm—the same one that flips forward to make a second dinette bench at mealtimes. The table, which was hinged to serve entertaining as well as dining needs, opened to expose drink holders and a grabrail for moving about safely underway.

Visibility was outstanding from the helm, especially aft because of the large windows, the full-length door, and the panel beneath the bridge stairs. Five opening overhead hatches and two sliding side windows allowed lots of ventilation options and copious natural light. The swing-down television over the centerline companionway was well positioned not only for after-hours viewing, but also for repeating the fish finder screen on the Garmin MFD in a size easily seen from the cockpit.

The well-thought-out galley had beautiful Karadon countertops with deep twin stainless steel sinks, a spice storage shelf, and the trademark flip forward helm seat, which adds more working space. From forward going aft, you'll find a large under-counter refrigerator, lots of louvered locker doors for storage, and, on our test boat, an optional LP gas range with oven. A microwave and wine captain are recessed into the dinette seat bases to port.

As we pulled into the Bremerton Municipal Marina around noon on the third and final day of our cruise, we were greeted by the owners of 60 Ranger Tugs of all sizes that lined the outer breakwall and turned the corner to the end of the marina. The all-volunteer effort was well attended, and fun was the operative word for the next two days. Having completed the trip from Anacortes, we left the R31 there, ready for service and for shipping across country to some lucky owner. With this kind of customer service, innovative ideas, comfortable accommodations, and outstanding performance, Ranger Tugs remains a company committed to quality cruising.



The flybridge is lightweight owing to its use of wraparound canvas instead of solid fiberglass. Thus, the bridge can be folded forward for passing under low bridges.



LOA: 31' 2" **LENGTH:** 35' 2" (with swim step) **BEAM:** 10' **DRAFT:** 2' 4" (light load) **DISPLACEMENT:** 10,500 lb. (dry)
BRIDGE CLEARANCE: 17' 4"/13' 4" (mast up/down) 13' 4"/11' 4" (mast down/bridge down)
HEIGHT ON TRAILER: 13' 2" (mast and bridge down) **ENGINE:** Single 300hp Volvo-Penta D4 inboard (standard)
FUEL: 180 U.S. gal **WATER:** 80 U.S. gal. **HOLDING TANK:** 40 U.S. gal. **MAXIMUM SPEED:** 23.7 knots (std. power)
CRUISE SPEED: 7.4—17.3 knots (std. power) **RANGE AT CRUISE SPEED:** 544—274nm
DESIGNER: Dave and John Livingston **BUILDER:** Ranger Tugs **BASE PRICE:** \$279,937

RPM	KNOTS	GPH	NMPG	RANGE-NM	dBA
700	2.1	6	3.9	567	71
1,000	5.3	1.6	3.7	536	71
1,500	7.4	2.2	3.8	544	71
2,000	8.8	4.1	2.4	347	74
2,500	12.2	7.5	1.8	263	76
3,000	17.3	10.2	1.9	274	79
3,200	19.2	12.1	1.8	257	80
3,560	23.7	14.9	1.8	257	82

Performance as tested with standard single 300hp Volvo-Penta D4 diesel, as indicated by onboard instrumentation, with full tanks and two persons aboard. Range is figured with 90 percent of available fuel. dBA readings are with doors and windows closed, and no genset running.

For more information: Ranger Tugs
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NOTABLE OPTIONS: Aft bimini top with boot, aft clear Strataglass side enclosures, air conditioning/reverse cycle heat (16,000 BTU saloon, 12,000 BTU master), Onan 5kW genset w/soundshield, Webasto force air diesel furnace, Kyocera 135 solar panel w/controls, AGM batteries upgrade, Garmin navigation package (5215 lower and 5212 flybridge MFDs, 4kW radar, depth/fish finder, GPS antenna), Garmin autopilot (dual station w/remote), aft steering station w/electronic controls.