

« F J O R D 4 0 »

# Cutting Edge

All eyes are on the wicked-looking new Fjord 40  
as we cruise from Key West to Miami.

BY PETER A. JANSSEN  
PHOTOGRAPHY BY PAMELA JONES



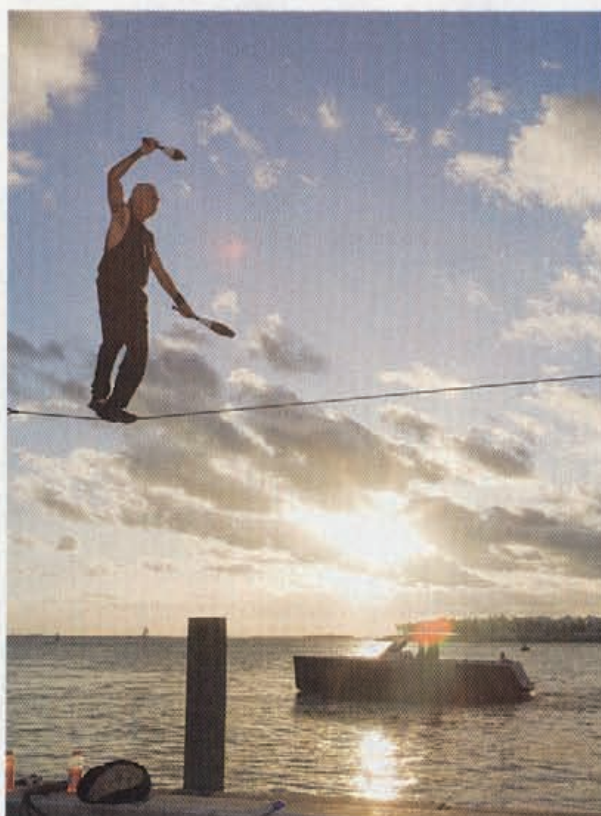




**T**he first time I saw the incredibly cool new Fjord 40 Open was at the Palm Beach Boat Show this spring. It was easy to find; it was where all the people were. Actually, I had to politely ease my way through the crowd eyeballing the boat at the dock so I could get a good look at its strikingly unique profile before I climbed aboard for a closer inspection.

The next time I saw the Fjord was a week or so later in Key West, Florida, where I stepped on for a test run up to Miami. We idled over to the fuel dock and, even though it was before 7 a.m., half a dozen guys gathered around to gawk. After talking with them for a few minutes, Alex Harrison, the North and South American importer for Fjord from Annapolis, Maryland, turned to me and laughed. "This boat is great for your ego," he said. "No matter where we go, people come around to look at it." Indeed, and with good reason.

Voted the European Powerboat of the Year by boating magazine editors there, the Fjord 40 is stunning in its simplicity, head-turning in its freshness. In an era when powerboat manufacturers around the world are trying to come



**OPEN SPACES.** The Fjord strikes a clean look on plane (opening spread) and facing forward (top); the sunset scene at Mallory Square (above).



out with a better mousetrap, Fjord has succeeded wildly with its first entry into the U.S. market. Not bad for a company that very few people in America (including me) had ever heard of before. As a Norwegian builder, Fjord has been around for generations. But a year or so ago, Hanse Yachts, the thoroughly modern sailboat company in Greifswald, Germany (about due north of Berlin on the Baltic Sea), bought Fjord as its entry into the larger international powerboat market. The 40 Open is the immediate result.

At first glance, the Fjord 40 looks like a close cousin to one of Luca Bassani's iconic Wally powerboats, but with much more freeboard. Indeed, the Fjord was designed by Patrick Banfield, who has done some work for Bassani. It has the same vertical bow, the same super-clean

(almost ascetic) decks and the same teak-laden heritage as the WallyPower and Wally Tender. But it's really nothing if not a big, free-flowing walk-around day boat or weekender, a picnic boat with attitude — particularly this one with its battleship gray color scheme.

If you see the boat from astern, the most striking thing is the absence of a transom. Instead, there's a teak swim platform and then open aisles running all the way forward along each side of the boat to the bow. A fixed Bimini top (with six windows built in for light and a post-modern look) is perched over the helm. Two lounges flank a large teak table in the cockpit; the entire area converts to a massive sun pad (and lifts up for easy engine access). Forward of the helm and two steps down behind a sliding door is a surprisingly large cabin and head, so a couple could spend a long weekend on board comfortably. What the boat does not have below is a traditional galley; this is in a pod behind the helm station. (The Fjord is not a boat for major meal preparation, in recognition of how most people really spend their time afloat.) Finally, the boat boasts almost 40-knot performance and fingertip maneuvering that comes with the Volvo Penta IPS joystick control and its twin, forward-facing, counter-rotating props.

It was hard to leave Key West, particularly since, thanks to an airline situation, I'd gotten in much later than I'd planned the night before. The southernmost city in the United States, Key West is actually closer to Havana, Cuba, than it is to Miami, and, like the Fjord 40, it definitely has a style all its own. The capital of the self-proclaimed Conch Republic, it's where Ernest Hemingway wrote *A Farewell to Arms* and Tennessee Williams wrote *A Streetcar Named Desire*. Now it's home to Jimmy Buffett's



**CLEAN AND SPARE.** The interior is light and airy, including the berth area (above) and the Euro-style head (above right); note the many hatches.





**ROMANTIC SPOT.** Little Palm Island Resort, about 28 miles up from Key West, is a luxury-class getaway, whether you arrive by Fjord or some other vessel.

Margaritaville, Sloppy Joe's and Harpoon Harry's — not to mention the annual Fantasy Fest before Halloween and every evening's gathering of locals and tourists at Mallory Square to watch for the green flash on the water when the sun drops below the horizon. The rest of our crew — Harrison; Clay Becker, the head of Fjord Florida; his father, Dean, a merchant banker of intellectual property; my colleague Ken Kreisler; and photographer Pam Jones — had been able to enjoy the town after they arrived the previous afternoon. But now, after refueling, we had to leave. We had to make it to Miami late in the day, with a stop at Little Palm Island, one of the most romantic and luxurious resorts I've ever seen, along the way.

Passing some cruise ships and early-morning fishermen, we headed for the outside route up Hawk Channel, essentially running between the Florida Reef and the Keys, as opposed to the inside route along the Intra-coastal Waterway. Hawk Channel is well-marked, although it narrows down in spots to only a quarter of a mile. And the depth generally is only 9 to 34 feet, so the seas can kick up in a blow. With Harrison driving, the rest of us sat around the cockpit table for an egg sandwich and banana bread breakfast and quickly found out how comfortable the boat was. Harrison settled into an easy 31-knot cruising speed at about 3,000 rpm and the rest of us simply relaxed. The boat, with a fine entry, didn't pound or rattle, even though we started with the wind off the bow. As we rounded the curve of the lower keys and

headed north, the wind settled and was a bit off the beam. We also stayed dry in the cockpit, probably due to the high bulwarks. I sat chatting with Dean for a while, waiting for the usual spray to hit us, but there wasn't a drop of water in the boat. The Fjord is a quiet boat; we were able to talk in normal voices even though we were basically over the engine compartment. (Low sound levels, of course, are a trademark of Volvo's IPS system.) And its advanced epoxy fiberglass construction saves weight — and boosts performance.

After an hour, we headed in to Little Palm Island. (It's 28.5 highway miles above Key West; for us, it was four nautical miles north of Looe Key Light off Little Torch Key.) Accessible only by boat (or seaplane), Little Palm is a world-class (and very expensive) South Seas-type resort, with crushed seashell paths leading to very private thatched-roof bungalows. There's a first-class restaurant, a lagoon-style pool, a Zen garden, a spotless marina that can hold yachts up to 120 feet and service and ambience that have landed Little Palm on the best lists of *Condé Nast Traveler* and *Travel+Leisure*, among others. We admired the *Truman*, the resort's 35-foot launch named after one of its more famous visitors, and relaxed a bit. This also gave me time to explore the boat.

Lifting a hatch behind the galley and wet bar, I found that the storage was stunning. The lazarette is big enough to hold a couple of Segways, I'd think. There's certainly more than enough room for all the lines, fenders,

buckets and extra stuff you'd take even for a weeklong cruise. Sturdy stainless-steel rails run along each side of the boat from amidships all the way aft for safety, and two stainless gates can close across the aisles leading to the swim platform. Walking forward, I noticed the teak foredeck (there's also teak lining the top of the bulwarks all around the boat) was clean, leaving me to wonder where the anchor was. Harrison lifted a hatch on the bow that swings back to reveal the anchor, rope and chain locker and a Lewmar windlass, all hidden from view. All around the boat, pop-up cleats are where you need them.

Below, the interior carries out the simple, post-modern theme with lots of white and light varnished wood and room to walk around. There's one berth forward and another on the starboard side that's partially tucked under the helm. The head has a raised circular bowl for the sink, very European, and a telephone shower. I'm 6 feet 2 inches tall and my head brushed the top of that compartment.

The helm, protected by a massive tinted windshield with sensuous wraparound curves, is centered, facing a flat-panel dash with a Raymarine E-Series plotter and rocker switches below. Two custom drop-down seats are for the driver and a starboard-side passenger; there's another seat off to port. When we left Little Palm, I drove for an hour or so, settling in easily as the low-lying keys,



**HARD AT WORK.** For Peter Janssen (above), the Fjord 40 Open was a real joy to drive.

with their causeways and bridges, slid by on the left. The Fjord skimmed along the light-blue water as we cruised past occasional flying fish and dolphin. This was a delight. All too soon we picked up the Miami skyline and eventually came in Government Cut, as people on passing boats did double takes and waved. Since I had to head for a flight back home, we tied up at Miami Beach Marina. Needless to say, a crowd gathered before I was even off the boat. ♦

## FJORD 40

### SPECIFICATIONS

**LOA:** 39'3"

**Beam:** 13'1"

**Draft:** 3'1"

**Weight:** 16,980 lbs.

**Fuel:** 265 gals.

**Water:** 90 gals.

**Base Price:** \$541,000

**Contact:** Fjord, [fjordboats.com](http://fjordboats.com)

**Price (as tested):** \$639,000

### PERFORMANCE

**TEST POWER:** (2) 370 hp Volvo Penta IPS500 diesels. Speeds measured by GPS off Little Palm Island, Florida, in flat seas with six people on board, full fuel and three-fourths water. Sound readings taken at the helm.

RPM	KNOTS	DB-A
500	4.4	63
1,000	6.4	67
1,500	8.8	71
2,000	15.7	77
2,500	23.7	80
3,000	31.4	93
3,500	37.9	96

### PROS:

- Innovative design and a one-of-a-kind look.
- Getting around on deck is a breeze; it's a perfect day boat.
- The ride is dry. No spray reaches the open back seat.

### CONS:

- Not enough room on the dash for more electronics.
- The latches on the galley and sink modules are not strong enough.
- The boat could use a little more headroom going from the helm deck to the cabin.



**INSIDE:** ① The anchor, windlass and chain/rope are all cleverly hidden by a lift-up hatch on the bow. It's a neat arrangement that keeps the deck looking clean. ② The comfortable cabin with standing headroom is perfect for a couple who want to spend the weekend away. ③ Two large seats on either side of the teak table in the cockpit can accommodate the entire crew for lunch, or convert to a supersized sun pad.