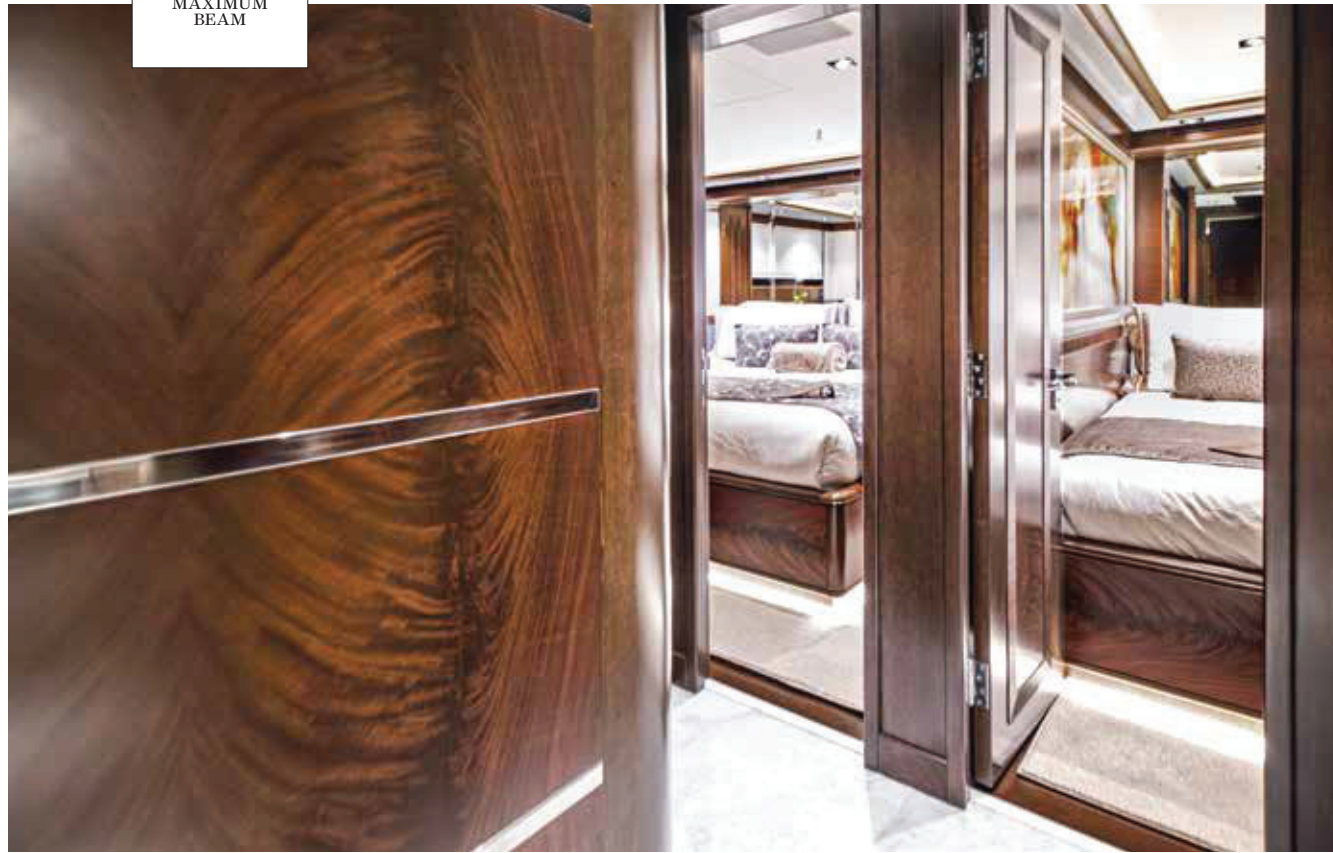


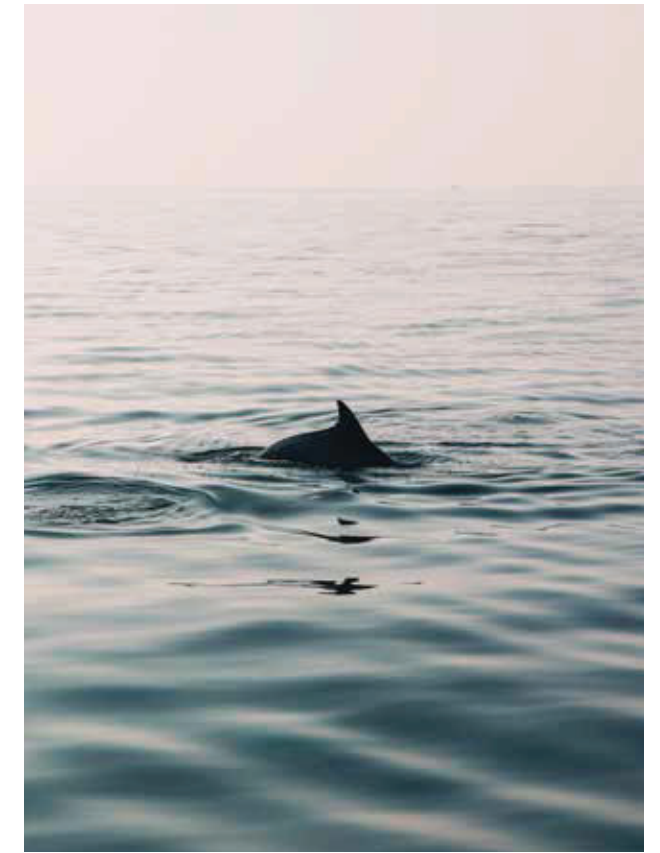
# going the DISTANCE

FOR AUTOMOTIVE DEALER BOB GILES, OWNING  
A NORDHAVN 96 IS A PASSPORT TO ADVENTURES AROUND THE WORLD.  
BY KIM KAVIN



96'7"  
LENGTH  
OVERALL24'  
MAXIMUM  
BEAM

PREVIOUS SPREAD: NORDHAVN, LEFT TO RIGHT: BOB GILES, SAFWANA BASHEER/UNSPLOASH



## BOB GILES HAD A GOAL.

Whereas most yachtsmen who head to French Polynesia aim for Tahiti or Bora Bora in the Society Islands, he was instead anchored in a less-traveled archipelago called the Tuamotus—trying to find one particular dolphin. ¶ “Where we are here, there was a dolphin that swam up to me, in this pass, and let me pet her like a puppy dog,” Giles said in mid-May. “Came right up to me, and I really didn’t know what to do. I started petting her back, and she rolled over for me to rub her belly. After

six, seven, eight minutes, she swam up to the surface to get some air. So, I’m hoping she’s still there.” ¶ Such are the goals a yacht owner can set when he owns a boat built by Nordhavn. The brand has been synonymous with go-anywhere, ocean-crossing powerboats since 1989, when it completed Hull No. 1 of the N46. Today, the company offers models from 41 to 148 feet length overall and routinely sees owners cruising them everywhere from the Panama Canal to Australia.

¶ Giles became part of the Nordhavn family about a decade ago, when he bought a Nordhavn 86 on the brokerage market. He liked the boat well enough but never got any farther than the Caribbean. He’s not sure exactly where, but it was somewhere in those islands—maybe the Grenadines, maybe St. Maarten—where, he says, “I just decided that I wanted to go around the world.” ¶ As the chairman of Giles Automotive, he had the ability to do it. He ordered a Nordhavn 96 and took

delivery five years ago at the factory in China. That’s the moment his circumnavigation began aboard the N96 *VivieRae*. It’s been continuing ever since. ¶ “I want to take my time,” he says. “When I picked up the boat, the trip was 270 days from China to San Diego, and I was on the boat 210 of those 270 days. That, and I am just kind of bored of the Caribbean. I wanted to go somewhere different. Where I am right now, in Apataki, that’s an atoll just north of Fakarava, and it’s very remote. Those are the places where I love to be—the places where most people don’t go.” ¶ Building a boat from scratch was a process he found intriguing. He hired

interior designer Destry Darr, lengthened the sky-lounge deck and sun deck so the overhangs would provide more shade to the decks below, and built the sky lounge to convert into a fifth stateroom. ¶ “If I want to bring four couples in addition to my wife and myself, I have room for it,” he says. “I also charter some, so the boat can accommodate 10 people.” ¶ He also built a scuba center off the stern to support his passion for diving every day, two to three times a day. There’s space to carry 10 scuba tanks, as well as a station to refill them. There’s also a hyperbaric chamber on board. ¶ “I bought it when I bought the boat,” he says. “Just because

of how much we dive and how remote we are, if somebody gets the bends, there would be no time or no way to get them to treatment.” ¶ Those kinds of locations also tend to lack trash facilities, which mattered to Giles because he used to end up with stinky bags of garbage in the bow, attracting flies. Aboard *VivieRae*, Giles asked the yard to build the swim platform, which is usually hollow, with watertight hatches and a freezer plate on one side, so he has a place to store trash when the boat is away from shore for weeks at a time. ¶ “It has worked phenomenally well,” he says. “It almost freezes the trash, and it’s watertight. It’s about 6 feet by the width



GOING THE DISTANCE > NORDHAVN 96 > Purpose-built for a bucket-list cruise around the world

There is guest seating in the pilothouse, out of the way of the crew space at the helm.

7,000 GAL.  
FUEL  
CAPACITY

—

900 GAL.  
FRESHWATER  
CAPACITY



PREVIOUS SPREAD: NORDHAVN; LEFT: ERNESTVS VAGA/UNSPLOASH; RIGHT: NORDHAVN



of the boat.” ¶ Inside *VivieRae*, Giles had the yard set up an office so he can continue running his automotive company from anywhere in the world. He owns five dealerships and is in the works to buy a sixth, and he owns a tunnel car wash with a second one about to come online. Global Data Systems in Louisiana set him up with the bandwidth he needs, and the yard installed satellite-communications equipment, including a 3-meter Intellian dish. ¶ “Communication hasn’t been a problem,” he says. “There’s worldwide coverage. It allows me to get away and still allows me to stay connected with what’s happening at home.” ¶ And get away he

has. So far, his itineraries have included the Panama Canal, Costa Rica, Cocos Island for some diving with hammerhead sharks, the Marquesas Islands and more. *VivieRae* was expected to be in French Polynesia through July before heading to Fiji this month and then Vanuatu from there. ¶ He remembers Vanuatu from a previous visit. It’s a memory as vivid as the dolphin that acted like a puppy. ¶ “We went to some amazing places there,” he says. “One was a volcanic island where the caldera had collapsed, so we could sail up into the middle of the island. As we approached it, about 20 dugout canoes came out to greet us. Our mate

was ahead of us in the tender, and I was flying my drone, and these looked like warriors coming out and surrounding him. I thought, *Oh, my God. They’re going to kidnap him or something*, but they were so happy to see him. They hadn’t seen anyone in three years. ¶ “We’ll visit that place again and then go north to the Solomon Islands, and then around to West Papua and Raja Ampat and all through Indonesia, and then Malaysia, Thailand and the Maldives, and through the canal to the Med for maybe six months or longer and then back to the Caribbean.” ¶ The day before he spoke with *Yachting*, Giles had dived at Manihi Atoll, just ahead of

a naturally occurring grouper-spawning event. ¶ “At the entrance to the pass, there were thousands of 1-, 2-, 3-pound grouper that were all arriving to spawn,” he says. “As we went through the pass, it was filling up with the sharks that also come to feed on the grouper when they start spawning. These were gray reef sharks and some small whitetip reef sharks, all common in the Pacific.” ¶ He was hoping to see something similar at Fakarava. ¶ “That’s where there’s lots of sharks in the pass, going in and out,” he says. “People that don’t understand think you’re crazy, but I love diving with sharks. When we went out to Cocos, there [were] some tiger

sharks out there that have killed a couple people in the last few years, so we were diving with the hammerheads and looking over our shoulders. There are a lot of sharks I wouldn’t want to spend a lot of time with, but the reef sharks are really fun.” ¶ He also likes the comfort that he returns to after every dive. *VivieRae* is the kind of boat he always told himself he’d buy when he turned 60. Now that he’s 68, he appreciates having not only go-anywhere capabilities, but also plenty of creature comforts. ¶ “He uses that boat as his own personal cruise ship to take him anywhere he wants, and it has all of the amenities,” says Jenny Stern, Nordhavn’s

director of marketing. “If you look at their Instagram, it’s phenomenal—the diving, the fishing, the local food, the locals themselves, getting into the cultures where they visit. He is the epitome of what we hope the average Nordhavn owner will strive to do.” ¶ Giles definitely is still striving to explore, and he says he’ll probably buy a 120- or 130-foot yacht next, to get even more interior volume for even more comfortable world exploration. ¶ “But when I bring people on the boat and tell them that, they always ask, ‘Why?’” he says. “I don’t know why.” ¶ He’s just going. ♡

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