

A TRAILERABLE TRAWLER CAN OPEN UP NEW CRUISING
GROUNDS AS PART OF DRIVING-BOATING VACATIONS.

story Marilyn DeMartini photos Lisa Favors

BY LAND AND SEA

A Ranger Tugs R-27 is launched from the trailer and set to explore Lake Powell, straddling the border between Utah and Arizona, a rather unique backdrop for such a boat.

Jim and Lisa Favors wanted their children to experience the joy they remembered as kids boating with their families. They purchased a 21-foot Four Winns to cruise the Great Lakes. Once the kids were older, the couple graduated to a 42-foot Silverton and, next, a 40-foot Fathom that they used to cruise the Great Loop.

But after five years aboard the Fathom, embracing freedom and having plenty of adventures, the couple rethought the way they were spending time with family and friends. That led them to imagine boating in a new way.

They bought a house on land in Traverse City, Michigan, downsized to a 27-foot Ranger Tugs luxury edition (with a diesel generator and air conditioning) and embraced the trailer trawler lifestyle. Six years later, they moved up a couple of feet to a Ranger Tugs R-29.

“We think our boat is pretty perfect,” Lisa says today.

The trailer trawler lifestyle is about combining land and sea adventures. Think of it like having a motorhome, but with a boat. (Boaterhoming?) Most recently, the couple trailered *Kismet* to go cruising in Washington state’s San Juan Islands, some 2,000 miles from their home.

As limitations go, the main one the couple has discovered is space for overnight guests. For their two young grandchildren, the 29-footer’s accommodations are fine, but for adults, they’re a bit tight.

“There’s just not enough room,” Jim says. “We have to move some things around for adults to sleep, and then move them all back. Day trips are perfect though, and we do that instead.”

The advantages of cruising this way far outweigh the disadvantages, they say. Compared to the time spent cruising aboard their previous boats, they now have lower costs for insurance, dockage, stowage, maintenance and fuel. And, the ability to trailer *Kismet* provides miles of roads to take them to new boating locations in a matter of days.

“We can go places we couldn’t go in a 40-foot boat,” Lisa says. “Staying in RV parks along the way, we meet so many people around the country, and we can drive in a few days where it would take weeks to reach by boat.”

They’re also finding it easier to get slips at marinas. Their 29-footer can often be squeezed in.

Trailering does require a learning curve, they say. Parking can make Jim testy at times, and he has to remember to leave extra leeway in turns, as well as to drive slower to accommodate longer stopping distances. But aside from a number of flat tires and other repairs that towing insurance covered, the couple has had no major problems.

“Trailering was a little intimidating at first but became a nonissue, really second nature,” Jim says. “Weather and wind also play a part—especially in driving mountain roads, when weather patterns might require that you have to sit tight and wait it out for a few days. You have to be flexible.”

Weather also comes into focus when storms roll in, Lisa says: “In Florida, if it’s hurricane time, we can evacuate in



the trailer much faster than people can do in bigger boats.”

Staying in RV parks can be an adventure in and of itself. They recall one time at an RV park when they did an automatic check-in and then turned in for the night, only to have a bang at the door jolt Jim out of bed to respond to a park guard, who said they had to leave because no boats were allowed. The guard threatened them with a \$3,500 fine that the park manager eventually vacated, but it was a memorable lesson in looking for RV parks that welcome boats.

Another challenge is that, as with all boat owners, the couple has once again had to learn to pack for onboard stowage capacity. Downsizing from a 40 to a 27 eliminated quite a few drawers.

“We became more comfortable with the space we had,” Jim says.

They also learned to take time to plan each trip, he says, much as any boater would prepare for a long passage. The 10-foot-wide beam on their trailer requires the couple to get wide-load permits that have to be secured two or three days in advance, and that can restrict traveling on weekends, at night or on certain routes.

In a fun way, though, the couple has discovered that they are once again part of a circuit, much as they were while cruising the Great Loop. A lot of people trailer their boats to similar locations, albeit sometimes with more utilitarian brands than Ranger Tugs.

“Some people don’t want to get blood and fish guts on teak flooring, and an aluminum boat can be great for that,” Jim says. “The important thing is to get out on the water.”

To follow the Favors’ travels, visit trailertrawlerlife.com

Above: Canada’s Croker Island, a family favorite, is a mere half-day trip trailering from the Favors’ Michigan home. Right, top to bottom: Jim and Lisa Favors, and their newly christened R-29 *Kismet* in Fort Myers, Florida; *Kismet* awaits a lock on the Trent-Severn Waterway; Overnighting just outside Utah’s Zion National Park en route to Lake Powell. A shortcut through the park would allow the Favors to launch their R-27 in Page, Arizona.

