

STORY DAG PIKE

SPACE TRAVELER

STEELER YACHTS LAUNCHES INTO THE AMERICAS WITH THE ROBUST NG40,
WHICH PAIRS SPACE AND PRACTICALITY WITH TRADITIONAL FLAIR.



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Though the Netherlands is nearly halfway around the world from their home in Seattle, the owners of this new cruising boat from Steeler Yachts obviously thought the long journey worthwhile. Having tested *First Star*, their new Steeler NG40, myself, I can see why. Forget the extravagant style of many modern motorboats, this is classic styling in its purest form. But the NG40 doesn't score on aesthetics alone. She is also one of the most practical models on the market today.

The recipe for this traditional styling seems simple: Take a beautifully proportioned hull and add a straightforward superstructure comprising just a pilothouse and a raised coachroof on the foredeck. Stick to the tried and tested portholes in the hull sides—not the vast and vulnerable windows of many modern designs.

Yet while many builders have tried this formula, getting the proportions in balance and bringing a modern flair to a traditional look is quite an art. Especially when you are developing a boat in smaller sizes, making it look good and in proportion can be quite challenging. Regardless of the size of the boat, for example, the size of the people on board does not change. And in a country like the Netherlands where people tend to be tall, often over 6 feet, no builder wants to skimp on the headroom. But the design teams from Vripack and Steeler worked their magic with this 40-footer. It maintains an attractive profile while still having generous headroom inside.

This is a displacement hull—quite a rarity these days—and low speeds have their benefit. We cruised the Dutch canals where speed is not an option and the Steeler responded with

quiet, refined performance. The engine noise levels were low enough to have normal conversations at the helm without raising your voice, which makes for relaxed cruising.

It was a warm day in the Netherlands, with temperatures in the high 80s, so we used the air conditioning, for which *First Star* has an intriguing system: Just open the front wheelhouse windows. The flow of air generated by the boat's forward movement is all the cooling you need in many situations. While you don't have the same luxury down in the cabins, this boat's normal cruising grounds are in the Pacific Northwest, where "real" a/c is rarely necessary. It certainly cuts down on maintenance and eliminates the need for a generator on board.

Without a generator, the engine compartment is very simple. The low-profile Volvo Penta 150-horsepower unit fits snugly under the salon deck—so snugly, in fact, that Steeler introduced a small hatch in the deck to allow access to the cooling water filler on the top of the engine. Apart from the batteries and the electrics, the engine compartment is clear, and Steeler has introduced an inverter into the system so the batteries can supply enough 120-volt AC to charge mobile phones and laptops, and perhaps even power a TV while underway.

Steeler has made few, if any, compromises to the shape of the hull and superstructure to accommodate its steel construction. The builder used more than 800 separate pieces of steel to construct the hull, which allows for the complex double curves around the transom area that add visual appeal. There's even a double curved shape introduced into the top of the pilothouse to further enhance the profile of this tough steel yacht.

With a displacement hull, everything tends to happen at slow speed, and the Steeler's performance is entirely predictable. I would have liked to have seen a bit more directional stability from the rudder steering, as I felt the need to concentrate more than usual to keep her in a straight line. It may have had something to do with the relatively low speeds we were restricted to on the canals. However, the autopilot handled the steering well.

The trim hardly changes when the throttles are opened, and the top speed is around 9 knots. For a boat designed to be operated primarily by two people, the bow and stern thrusters are a bonus. Apart from easing the boat gently alongside or away from the berth, they can be used to hold the boat alongside while handling lines.

On the interior, the owners of *First Star* wanted the galley up in the pilothouse instead of below, where it's located in the standard layout. With the sink and the four-ring gas hob along the starboard side, there's ample room for the dining table and comfortably sized settee on the port side. Stowage space is found in every available corner.

The woodwork, which is used mainly as trim in the

pilothouse, is beautifully crafted walnut with a matte finish. The walnut is also used for much of the paneling and furniture in the cabins below, giving a warm and intimate feel. Special attention was given to the master cabin in the bow where a queen berth occupies much of the space. A seat in front of the dressing table swings out on a lever, allowing it to be folded away. The single head has a spacious shower compartment, and a molded Corian deck keeps the water in place.

The salon and the aft cockpit integrate well when the wide double doors are open. With both decks on the same level, it's an easy transition from the interior carpet to the teak decks outside. The cockpit deck hatches allow access to the engine compartment and the aft lazarette, which has enough room for a bike or a folded tender as well as additional chairs.

You'd be hard pressed to tell the NG40 is Steeler's first foray into the U.S. market. The model is one of the smallest yachts in the Steeler range, which now includes 23 different designs. The quality and style of *First Star* should go a long way to convince potential U.S. owners that it is worth the trip to Europe for a new boat. ⚓

Currently cruising the waters of Seattle, Washington, the first Steeler NG40 sold to the U.S., First Star, offers a social layout with the galley and settee positioned near the helm. Engine noise is kept to a minimum, allowing for a normal level of conversation at the helm, even when underway.



STEELER NG40 SPECS

LOA 40ft. **Beam** 13ft. 10in. **Draft** 3ft. 3in. **Displacement** 33,500 lbs. **Construction** steel
Engines (standard) 1 x 110-hp Yanmar 4JH **Engines** (optional) 1 x 150-hp Volvo Penta D3
Speed (max./cruising) 9 knots/7 knots **Fuel** 132 gal. **Water** 120 gal. **Info** steeleryachts.com