



AFTER SHIFTING FROM A GRAND BANKS 36
TO A GREENLINE 33 AND THEN
A NORTH PACIFIC 28,
THIS FAMILY FOUND
UNEXPECTED
BENEFITS IN
DOWN-
SIZING.

TINY BOAT TRIUMPHS

STORY ANNIE MEANS
PHOTOS JON KANDELL

TINY BOAT TRIUMPHS

For most mariners, the opportunity to buy a dream boat is a rare privilege. Few are so fortunate, and even fewer manage to do so by cold-calling an expired ad they spotted four years earlier.

Jon Kandell, however, had luck on his side.

"I'd saved the ad from back then, and I just thought, maybe if I call, he'll tell me who bought the boat, and then I could reach out," Kandell says.

Now the proud owner of the North Pacific 28 *Slow Dance*—his dream trawler and the final step to downsize his family's cruising life—Kandell is on a mission to showcase the benefits of long-distance cruising on smaller vessels. Through his newly minted YouTube and Instagram channels, @SlowDanceCruising, he's sharing his experiences and encouraging us all to consider what we sacrifice with bigger boats.

Originally from the interior of southern Sweden, Kandell moved to Stockholm more than a decade ago for work. There, he met the loves of his life: his wife, Sophia, and boating. Eager to explore the Baltic Sea, he purchased a wooden sailing boat within a month of moving to the capital.

"I remember putting up the sails for the first time and realizing something was wrong," he recalls. "I had put the mainsail where the foresail should have been."

Since that first foray on his sailboat, Kandell has become a skilled waterman and made the transition to powerboats, buying and selling vessels as his needs evolved—though not in the way most boaters do. Most cruisers

The Kandell children demonstrate that learning can happen anywhere on a tiny boat—even in the pilothouse.



The Kandells' new vessel, *Slow Dance*, offers many new benefits, including the ability to squeeze into tight anchorages. **Below:** The family's former boat, the hybrid-electric Greenline 33, charging at the dock.



scale up for their second purchase, Kandell downsized.

Transitioning from a Grand Banks 36 to a Greenline 33, and now to a North Pacific 28, he has consistently sought out smaller boats to enhance his experience on the water. He has done this with Sophia and their two kids, ages 6 and 9, regularly piling aboard for weeks-long trips.

While most boaters would gasp to hear that a family of four cruises for weeks on a vessel with an 8½-foot beam and a 28-foot overall length (and they often do—Jon frequently has conversations at the dock about how it all works), the Kandell family has found the boat to be just enough.

"You can actually enjoy time together and cruise in a much tighter space than you think," he says.

That enjoyment stems from the reasons many people get into boating: to spend time outdoors, to unplug and to be with loved ones. With the Grand Banks 36, Kandell quickly realized it was all getting lost in maintenance demands. "I've never relied on marinas to take care of the boat for me," he says. Doing so while working full time and raising two children, he and Sophia felt frustrated by the long stretches of time spent on projects, rather than cruising.

"If you want to be more self-sufficient or self-reliant with your boat's

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The stunning Baltic cruising grounds that first inspired Jon's love for boating.



Jon and Sophia Kandell looking rested and content aboard their new, smaller vessel.



Sophia Kandell knits on the flybridge of *Slow Dance*, making the most of the boat's exterior space.



The Kandells' youngest grins aboard their former Grand Banks 36.

A refreshing dip at sea is a great way to start the day.



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The Kandell family in Italy, scouting for their upcoming several-month voyage from Sweden to the Adriatic via the continent's winding canal systems.



systems and not spend all your time on maintenance but actually enjoy cruising, then I think bigger isn't always better," he says.

The Greenline 33 satiated their love of classic lines, and Kandell thought the Slovenia-built, hybrid-electric yacht would be less demanding. "That was a really naive thought," he says.

While the Greenline required less time to sand wooden decks, he couldn't manage its technology system. "You need specialized computers just to understand if the boat is doing alright," he says. "It was too complex."

As it turned out, trading afternoons of varnishing for evenings spent tinkering with solar systems left him wanting not just smaller, but also simpler. Enter the North Pacific 28. This vessel was intuitive enough for the Kandells and the perfect size for them to cruise as they intended: to enjoy the surroundings instead of gathering around a flat-screen TV for movie night.

"When you're out with the family for maybe four, five or six weeks on a limited space, I realized that we tend to spend more time outdoors than indoors," he says.

That epiphany has largely informed the redesign of his North Pacific to better suit the long-distance cruising needs of his family. Jon understood that most of the time he spent on board, rather than exploring with his family, was relegated to sleeping or traveling.

As a result, he focused on making the accommodations and lounging areas as comfortable as possible. He installed non-marine bunk beds that collapse into a futon, providing seating during the day.

"I'm from IKEA country, where compact living and smart solutions with dual functions are often the way to go," he says.

That same creative—and possibly characteristically Swedish—thinking also informed his upcoming redesign of his flybridge, where he plans to remove the helm chairs in favor of more lounge and outdoor space.

The Kandells still reminisce about the aft deck on their Grand Banks 36, but having less space on the North Pacific 28 encourages a more imaginative use of space and more time outside enjoying the surroundings. A smaller hull also comes with practical benefits. In addition to cheaper moorage, docking is less of a challenge. "With the North Pacific, I realized that it's just so much easier to maneuver," he says. "It's made me feel so much more relaxed."

With only a 2½-foot draft on the boat, the Kandells can now access a world of shallow bays and anchorages that previously would have been hair-raising. After a harrowing experience in high winds, he is grateful for the trawler's seaworthiness, and when approaching anchorages and marinas, he says, "There's always room for us."

The most surprising aspect of downsizing, Kandell says, has been how easy the transition turned out to be: "I think people tend to believe that this would be a really big change, but in reality, it's not."

Next, the Kandells are planning to take their boat to the Mediterranean and navigate Europe's winding canal systems. This journey will span several months.

It's a long time on a smaller boat. And they couldn't be happier about it. ☼

TINY BOAT
TRIUMPHS