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Nor'westing

SERVING THE PACIFIC NORTHWEST BOATING COMMUNITY SINCE 1965

AT THE DOCK

Fathom Yachts 40' Element

DESTINATIONS

Rick and Patti Taylor's "First Timer's Cruise to Vancouver Island"

NW CLASSICS

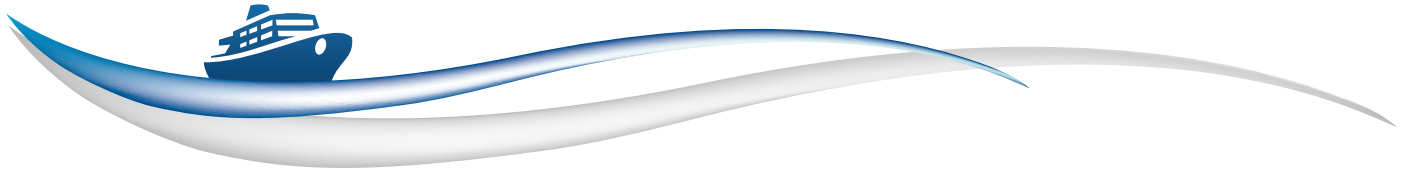
40' Transpac Eagle Trawler "Springtide"

AT THE RAMP

Hydra-Sports 2300 Dual Console



AT THE DOCK



Fathom's 40-foot Element Combining innovative design and quality construction

Most boat builders offer a small fleet of vessels in a variety of sizes. The same plant producing 25-foot trailer boats may also produce 35-foot family cruisers and 65-foot luxury yachts. Among the available models, each builder will have something the boating public commonly considers a "signature" offering; something that is particularly well done and makes outstanding use of the potential available at a certain length overall.

Fathom Yachts is one of the smaller manufacturers in the Pacific Northwest.

SPECIFICATIONS AND DIMENSIONS:

LOA: 40' 4"

LWL: 36' 1"

Beam: 14' 6"

Beam at waterline: 11' 8"

Draft: 38"

Displacement: 23,000 lb

Fuel: 400 gallons

Water: 145 gallons

Waste: 45 gallons

Standard power: 425 hp Cummins QSB common rail diesel.

Cruise speed: 6.5-16 knots

Maximum speed: 18.75 knots

Genset: Onan 9kW



Fathom worked with naval architect Greg Marshall on the Element, and the result combines traditional workboat lines with a slightly contemporary flair.

The firm was founded a few years ago by veteran boat builders with years of executive and production experience at regional manufacturers (including, among others, Nordic Tug). Fathom Yachts offers two models, the Fathom 40 and the Element. Both the Fathom 40 and the Element use the same hull. The primary differences between the boats are the lists of standard equipment and some choices of interior décor. The

Fathom 40 is luxuriously appointed, while the Element is finished to the same standards one would most normally expect to find aboard a high end, mass produced boat. The Element compares to the Fathom 40 in much the same way that a Buick compares to a Cadillac — both are deluxe and built to a high standard, but one is even more opulent and refined than the other.

Fathom Yachts cannot rely on one

“Certainly one of the more novel features of the Element is the tailgate style transom.”

spectacular boat to support some weaker designs. The firm has staked its fortune and its future on the 40-foot market. A 40-foot boat is large enough for two couples or a small family to enjoy without feeling unduly cramped, yet small enough that a pair of retirees can handle it with ease. It's enough boat to take some big waves if the weather turns sour, but small enough to find a slip in nearly any marina. If a builder is only going to build a single size, 40 feet is a great choice. Fortunately for Fathom Yachts (as well as the boating public) the Fathom 40 and the Element are also great boats. This review looks closely at the more affordable Element, a vessel so well done that few people would ever suspect a more highly-refined sistership was available.

GENERAL DESCRIPTION

The builders describe the Element as a “fast expedition yacht.” Fathom worked closely with renowned naval architect Greg Marshall to achieve a design that would offer the comfortable accommodations of a blue water trawler, while providing a better turn of speed at a reasonable fuel burn. Exterior styling combines traditional Pacific Northwest workboat proportions and lines with a slightly contemporary flair. The Element manages to appear salty and experienced, but is anything except outdated.

A high bow with a only slightly raked stem is well conceived for busting through ubiquitous Pacific Northwest chop. A proud pilothouse offers splendid visibility forward. Aft of the pilothouse, the sheer steps down to a slightly rounded transom. The boat deck overhangs the cockpit, creating a dry transition zone between the aft cabin and the often rainy Pacific Northwest weather.

Engine room access is through a specialized locker in the cockpit. There is no need to remove floorboards and disrupt the interior of the Element in order to check the oil or coolant levels. Should it be necessary to move bulky or less-than-immaculately clean mechanical parts in or out of the engine room, any potential mess will be confined to the cockpit. Like most 40-footers, there isn't standing headroom in the engine compartment of the Element. The engine room is nevertheless very well done, with lots of space for working, plenty of light, well-organized systems, and unstinting use of sound insulation.

Certainly one of the more novel features of the Element is the tailgate style transom. At anchor, or when stern tied in a



The helm, on the starboard side of the pilothouse, has convenient access to the side and foredeck.



The port half of the pilothouse is dedicated to one of the most deluxe pilothouse seating areas ever conceived in this size category.



The spacious galley is defined by careful selection of quality materials and excellent joinery.



An enormous settee on the port side of the main cabin ensures that guests will always find a comfortable spot to sit.



Easily negotiated steps and companionways are a hallmark of Element.

marina, the entire transom drops aft to create a large boarding platform or swim step. It will typically be a nearly-level step from the dock to the cockpit, and the extra width will be appreciated by anyone boarding a dinghy at a mooring buoy. Easily negotiated stairs permit sure-footed transit between the cockpit and the boat deck (or the optional fly-bridge), even in a seaway. Easy also applies to the exterior upkeep — the Element has no exterior wood trim, so you can throw away the varnish brush.

Fathom Yachts offers a twin-engine option, but the hull works well as a single-screw design. Standard power is a 425-horsepower Cummins QSB common rail diesel, which provides comfortable

cruising speeds of 6.5 to 16 knots and a top speed of 18.75 knots. An Onan 9kW generator is standard.

The semi-displacement design incorporates a large keel to enhance directional stability and resist roll. The keel additionally protects the prop shaft in case of a soft grounding, while the prop is shielded by a skeg and a large rudder. With a bow thruster forward, the Element should prove nimble enough in close quarters that a second engine is not required for maneuverability. Still, the availability of an extra engine expands Fathom's market reach to include boaters who would automatically rule out any boat with single-engine propulsion.

DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION

The Element was designed using modern CAD techniques. The interior layout was drawn and redrawn several times. Fathom Yachts was obsessed with maximizing the use of every conceivable cabin and compartment, and with only a single model to bring to market the future of Fathom Yachts revolved around getting the boat "right" the first time. One of the advantages of CAD design is that every aspect of the boat can be viewed and studied from every angle and perspective imaginable. The result of months of careful planning and study is a layout that "flows" naturally through



There's a big walk-around bunk and plenty of stowage in the master stateroom.



The guest stateroom is pleasantly appointed and features a double bunk.

“The interior layout was drawn and redrawn several times ... maximizing the use of every conceivable cabin and compartment.”

the boat, with useable space and features that put many 40-foot competitors to shame.

Fathom Yachts incorporates advanced and sophisticated layup techniques. The hulls are solid fiberglass laminate below the waterline. Core-Cell is used in the layup above the waterline, as well as in the house and decks. The Core-Cell improves rigidity, while reducing weight and minimizing noise underway. The Element has four major bulkheads, comprised of composite materials rather than old-fashioned plywood. The hull-to-deck joint is mechanically fastened, as well as chemically bonded with a material that creates a joint actually stronger than the individual fiberglass components.

Fathom Yachts uses infusion lamination, and the result is a stronger hull as well as more environmentally benign manufacturing procedures. Materials are placed into a mold, which is then enclosed in an airtight container. A vacuum is introduced within the assembled materials, and then the resin is introduced to the layup. The vacuum environment causes the resin to penetrate every available opening in the structure, eliminating voids. The laminated components are lighter, and typically stronger than similar “hand rolled” parts might be. Old fashioned fiberglass techniques typically result in parts that contain too much resin, and excess resin can actually weaken a laminated component. As each mold is contained in a sealed container, the layup process drastically reduces the toxic fumes that escape into the atmosphere with a more traditional process.

INTERIOR WALKTHROUGH

It would be hard to imagine an interior layout that better reflects the realities and priorities of many Pacific Northwest boaters. The salon is most aft, a single step away from the cockpit. Seating for 6-8 is available on an Ultraleather settee on the port side, surrounding a versatile teak table. The dinette area will convert to a bunk if needed.

A teak-and-holly sole in the salon and galley areas will prove easy to clean and maintain, and adds a dash of nautical ambience to the Element. Carpet is used in some other areas of the boat, and is a means of keeping costs under control without sacrificing structural integrity.

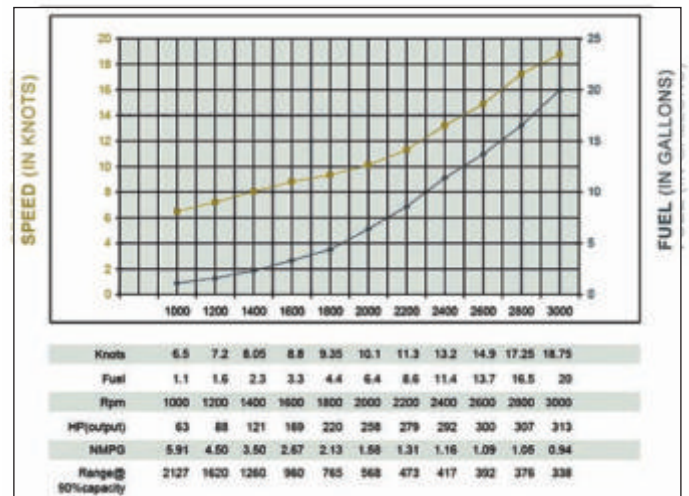
The galley is in the port forequarter of the main cabin, with upper and lower provisions for stowage. Teak joinery, high-quality countertops, and thoughtfully chosen appliances provide the sea-going cook with enough space and resources to



The head on the lower deck is conveniently accessed from both staterooms and the main cabin.



The engine room features excellent access, room to work, and thick sound insulation.



The Element was designed for fast, efficient cruising; a chart plotting fuel usage (bottom) against speed (top) shows an economical consumption rate of 3.3 gallons/hour at 8.8 knots.



This shot of the cockpit shows the transom tailgate lowered and the engine room access open at the aft bulkhead.



A aft perspective shows off the spacious boat deck and slightly rounded transom.

create some memorable meals or whip up a fast snack.

Perhaps the most unusual compartment is the pilothouse, just a few steps above the salon and galley. The helm, throttle, compass, and any desired electronics are neatly mounted in a fiberglass console, all the way to starboard. The port half of the pilothouse is dedicated to one of the most deluxe pilothouse seating areas ever conceived in this size category, with passengers and crew sitting athwart and facing the helmsman. If there's a downside to the concept, it might be that the only pilothouse door is to starboard. Prospective purchasers of an Element might be well advised to specify a left hand prop, as the starboard helm and the fabulous starboard visibility will definitely favor docking on that side of the vessel.

Accommodations on the lower deck include a guest stateroom with double bunk on the starboard side of the companionway. Opposite the stateroom is a well appointed head with a dedicated shower stall. The master stateroom is forward, with a walk-around, centerline berth. The staterooms and head are pleasant, with many stowage options. While not as lavishly decorated with tropical hardwood veneers as some competitors might be, the joinery is well done and there is enough wood to create a "yachty" impression. It's easy to visualize spending a few weeks at a time aboard an Element and being very comfortable doing so.

CONCLUSIONS

Nobody can indisputably claim to build the "best" 40-foot boat, but among single-screw trawlers capable of a turn of speed Fathom Yachts' Element clearly competes with some of the most highly regarded trademarks in the industry. The Element is a clean, classy package that trades off some of the more outrageous and over-the-top décor choices in favor of delivering a solidly built hull at a more realistic price. Anybody shopping for a new vessel somewhere near 40-feet should find the Element worthy of consideration.

Retail pricing for a new Fathom Yachts' Element begins at \$395,500. There is enough standard equipment that the base boat is definitely usable. According to the price list, budgeting another 10 percent or so for options (Fathom calls them "preferences") would provide a boat with a genuinely impressive list of features and systems. For additional information, visit the web site www.fathomyachts.com. 