



BOATING

MADE BY VIKINGS...

...sailed by kings. How Gotland brought the Baltic to the Med. By *Rory FH Smith*

Catching a glimpse of a sleek, mahogany-veneered vintage cruiser skimming through the waves is an unusual sight in the Baltic Sea. Typically made and manufactured in Italy, such a water-born representation of the *Dolce Vita* is usually found floating off the French Riviera, not between mainland Sweden and the Viking stronghold of Gotland. But the J Craft Torpedo isn't your typical retro-styled day cruiser.

"My wife and I chartered a J Craft one summer and fell in love with it," says the boatmaker's German owner Radenko Milakovic. That model, the Cabrio Cruiser, had been the brainchild of Swedish entrepreneur Björn Jansson and Gotland boat builder Johan Hallén, the very first one of which was delivered to the King of Sweden, His Majesty Carl XVI Gustaf, in 2000.

"Having tried it, we wanted to buy one for ourselves," says Milakovic, a former hedge-fund manager who has done so well he's retired at 52, "but with changes – put simply, I wanted something that looked and performed like a 1957 Corvette but had the home comforts of an Airstream trailer." In 2008, when J Craft came up for sale

Milakovic bought it and, working with Hallén and the J Craft team, had his dream boat ready for the water by the following year.

Like the Cabrio Cruiser, the Torpedo borrows the style of the wooden sports craft of the '50s and '60s, but with a modern fibreglass hull and mahogany veneer. If the shape looks familiar, it should – it references the iconic '60s Riva Aquarama, but is actually far more exclusive: fewer than 22 Torpedos have been made to date. Sporting an entirely new propulsion system in the form of two Swedish Volvo Penta IPS engines incorporated into a new, redesigned hull, Milakovic and Hallén's Torpedo took Jansson's vision of a classically styled cruiser and dialled it up – with more performance, modern comforts and materials. With a choice of IPS 400, 500, 600 or 650 engines, the most powerful J Craft can touch 47 knots and still pull off astonishingly tight turns given its size and stately ride.

With a curious mixture of *Dolce Vita* flair and the kind of robustness that can only be found in the rough and rugged Scandinavian environment, the Torpedo is an impressive all-rounder out on the open

water. Step aboard and the sheen of the hand-finished mahogany details on the deck draws you back to a golden age of transport when style and substance

"IT'S A 1957 CORVETTE MEETS AIRSTREAM TRAILER"

took priority over speed and efficiency. At the helm, a beautiful Italian-made wood and steel Nardi steering wheel invites you to take control, while powering up the two Volvo engines triggers a growl from below deck as the torque gradually pushes you back against the soft leather seat.

Navigating the Baltic Sea, albeit on a calm day, is a breeze behind the wheel; Milakovic assures me that many J Craft have taken on much more arduous journeys, such as Saint-Tropez to Corsica, Ibiza to Sardinia, Miami to The Bahamas and Hong Kong to Hainan. With a 280-nautical-mile range, room for four adults to sleep at a squeeze and a generously proportioned forward cabin complete with separate bathroom and stand-up shower, the Torpedo is a capable cruiser. Like the upper deck, the cabin is beautifully constructed from hand-finished mahogany, polished steel and leather. Given

Above: the Torpedo Zens on the J Craft factory floor.
Below: the interior of *Amarcor*



PHOTOGRAPH: LUCIO GELSI

Top: J Craft team member Zoltan Antunovic at the helm of *Zens* and (below) working on *Natalia*

