

KROGEN EXPRESS GOES FAST (OR SLOW) IN THE LAND OF CHILL.

story **ANDREW PARKINSON**

# HURRY UP AND TAKE YOUR TIME





In the eyes of many, the Abacos embody all that's great about cruising in the Bahamas. The water is, in a word, stunning. On sunny days, you'd be hard-pressed to find a more breathtaking kaleidoscope of vibrant blues in most swimming pools, with views all the way to the white, sandy seafloor. The beaches and snorkeling are second to none, with rich coral and abundant marine life in every direction. The villages are quaint, the locals treat you like family, and the conch is, well, conch, which I can't seem to stuff into my mouth fast enough.

While I've been to the Abacos many times, among my top visits has to be my most recent one. I joined the owner of Krogen Express, John Tegtmeyer, his wife, Betsie, and their rescue dogs, Zoey and M.E.—a schnoodle and a Jack Russell terrier mix, respectively—on a cruise aboard their new 52, *Daystar*.

Back in 2003, *Passagemaker* covered the launch of the first Krogen Express 52—an evolution of the KE49. The model launched after the Tegtmeyers, owners of their own 49 at the time, bought the company in 2001. Our writers found the boat to be a cruiser's cruiser, offering the salty, rugged performance of a trawler but with stylish lines reminiscent of graceful Manhattan commuter yachts of the 1920s.

With the model's newest iteration, the bones are still there, and as with any Krogen Express, the owners customized her to fit their cruising needs. For the Tegtmeyers, that included adding a hardtop on the flybridge; a sliding screen door in the salon entry, for generous ventilation while keeping the dogs secure; augmented reality electronics; and marble countertops in the galley and heads.

In the 18 years since Tegtmeyer took ownership of Krogen Express, the company has offered only one model, the 52, whose owners tend to keep the boats for years; you rarely see one hit the brokerage market. The 52 exudes a distinct DNA that stands out in a marina. You either love it or you don't, and that's just fine with Tegtmeyer, who is well aware that his boats appeal to a specific breed of cruiser.

Beyond its good looks and a few requisite bells and whistles, a Krogen Express is a fairly simple boat, and that's by design. In this boat's intended realm of cruising, functionality is the objective.

"We don't try to be as sophisticated as some boats; we just want [our boats] to work," says Tegtmeyer, who has logged more than 5,000 hours on Krogen Express boats. "This boat is designed to cruise, and it comes with everything you need to do that. I tell people, 'There's nothing that will happen to you that hasn't already happened to me on these boats.'"

The goal, he says, is to sell one or two hulls a year, not to mass produce a dozen at a time. The management team includes the Tegtmeyers and Bob Loudon, who serves as general manager, handling both sales and the Krogen Express lifetime concierge service.

"That's it, and I wouldn't have it any other way," he says. "It allows us to stay close with our owners. Sure, a business needs to make money to support itself, but our secret to success isn't money driven. It's about making lasting relationships with our owners, while building a product we're proud of and being challenged to improve the



M.E. the dog enjoys a bit of island time up top, while the salon and cockpit below seem an equally inviting place for a good book at anchor. An easy hike (facing page) down a lush, sandy trail across Great Guana Cay rewarded us with an unspoiled beach all to ourselves.







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product. To us, it's very personal."

I got a real sense that if the business were only about turning a profit, a couple of seasoned cruisers like the Tegtmeyers would absolutely spend less time selling at boat shows and more time on the water, say, like this six-week shakedown cruise in the Bahamas.

I met up with *Daystar* in Treasure Cay, a resort area on Great Abaco with a laid-back marina. (Plenty of mooring balls are available, as well as dockage for a fee.) The main attraction, Treasure Cay Beach, may be one of the most magnificent stretches of sand throughout the Caribbean.

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Outside of the shallows, the Krogen Express 52 has plenty of speed for island hopping. The boat tops out at just over 20 knots, but most folks cruise between 9 and 16 knots, according to Tegtmeyer. "If you're in a hurry, you can put some serious miles behind you," he says, "but you also can do the slow-and-steady thing and burn very little fuel."

We set out on a 9-knot cruise northward to explore a few Abacos hot spots. There's Green Turtle Cay, whose village of New Plymouth is located at Settlement Harbour, though it's best to anchor just outside the harbor and dinghy in. Be sure to make the walk to the other side of the

bluff for some beach time, and visit the Green Turtle Club.

No Name Cay is another great day stop for visiting the area's famed "swimming pigs." Anchor out, dinghy to shore and remember to bring leftover veggies to feed the four-legged natives.

Another must-do is Manjack Cay. Anchor in the cove at the northern end of the island and swim in to shore.

*Facing page (top to bottom): Wide side decks and high handrails ensure accessibility and safety, especially while underway; It doesn't get any fresher than this chilled conch salad prepared dockside by a local chef; Picturesque Hope Town Harbour is a must for any cruising itinerary in the Abacos.*

Gorgeous and secluded, this place provides a good chance for an encounter with a docile stingray or nurse shark. It's also a great spot to fire up the hibachi and dine under the stars—but if you stay for the night, move to a less exposed harbor to the south. We spent the night at Great Guana Cay, where an easy hike to the ocean side rewarded us with a lovely stretch of beach for swimming and snorkeling. If you're into the bar scene, the famous watering hole Nipper's sits high on the bluff with an incredible view.

After our peaceful night tied up at Orchid Bay Marina & Yacht Club on the leeward side of Great Guana Cay, we eased our way down to Man-O-War Cay, a small settlement with a laid-back vibe and an interesting background, having been the center of Abacos boatbuilding

and repair for years. The entrance channel into the harbor is narrow, so use caution.

Without fail, my favorite spot in the Abacos is Elbow Cay. The island's claim to fame is Hope Town, easily identifiable by its candy-striped lighthouse. The town itself is charming, with colorful houses and shops lining cobblestone streets—and the best cracked conch in the Abacos. Hope Town Harbour can get crowded in season, so we dropped a hook just outside the harbor north of Eagle Rock to enjoy a scenic picnic lunch aboard *Daystar*.

According to Tegtmeyer, many Krogen Express owners come from full-displacement boats and consider 6 knots to be a fast cruise. They're quite content to cruise at 9 knots on a Krogen Express burning just 6 gallons an hour.

But some owners are speed demons who revel at 17 knots all day, and I got a taste of how that feels. With weather filling in—and for me, a plane to catch—we kicked up the rpm to notch a 16-knot quick cruise back across Abaco Sound to Marsh Harbour. The 52's semi-displacement hull form did what it was designed for, parting the water through the light chop with solid handling and no pounding.

For cruisers who love island hopping, the Abacos are not to be missed. As much as I'd love to keep such a spectacular cruising ground all to myself, I can't seem to stop telling like-minded mariners to go there.

On second thought, maybe it's time for some new scenery. I hear the Tegtmeyers are taking *Daystar* up to Maine next summer. Perhaps I can call in a favor. ✿