



Beneteau Swift Trawler 48

Join us for an adventure aboard the Beneteau Swift Trawler 48

DANIEL HARDING • JUL 27, 2022

Island (Just in) Time

A whirlwind trip to Bimini aboard the Beneteau Swift Trawler 48 proves that even short amounts of time on the water can create lasting memories.

A burning metallic blue stripe of water rests on the horizon just below a land mass. Sitting atop the flybridge of the Beneteau Swift Trawler 48, it's the kind of surreal color that your eyes never really adjust to, and photos can never quite capture.

We'd just completed a 4-hour (3-hour inlet-to-inlet) crossing from Ft. Lauderdale to the iconic sportfish port of Bimini, the westernmost island in the Bahamas. It had taken two tries to reach the island, but after taking in the postcard-perfect views, it was worth the wait.

On our first attempt the afternoon prior, our crew was in for a much different ride. Cool spray was lifted by a 20-knot wind and thrown around the boat until our crew was covered in more salt than McDonalds fries. We climbed up and over a closely packed 6-foot swell. Our crew of marine journalists, Beneteau staff and one green-around-the-gills model took the sporty conditions in stride. After a long day sitting dockside, the wind and salty spray made everyone feel alive, if only for a moment.

Laughter and excitement dissipated quickly as I noticed the captain making a phone call. The speed on the MFD read 9.8 knots. The captain, a prudent professional delivery skipper named James Marshall, knew that at that speed we'd be arriving at Bimini well after dark. Faster than you can say, "Customs is closed," Marshall turned the Swift Trawler around and headed back to the barn. Island time would have to wait another day.

There's always a degree of apprehension that comes with a significant delivery and an unfamiliar captain and crew, especially when crossing the Gulf Stream in March—a volatile tempest at the best of times. My fellow editors (Jeff Moser, editor-in-chief of *Passagemaker*, and Pim Van Hemmen, executive editor of *Soundings*) and I felt a growing sense of confidence in our captain as the days leading up to our trip drew near.

"I was impressed with James because of what he sent us in our itinerary. It was just so detailed," said Moser. "I immediately felt confident in his skills."

Marshall was closely motoring the weather while helping to organize our crew's documentation for entering the Bahamas (at the time of this writing, Covid regulations require vaccination and a negative test before entering and departing the country). He was poised, organized and, from what I could tell, knowledgeable. He would be tested on our trip.

It's said that the most dangerous thing on the water is a strict itinerary, and we were embarking on our trip to Bimini with a long, detailed mission brief. The editors' mission was to test and experience the newcomer to the wildly popular Swift Trawler line. On top of that, the Beneteau marketing team had planned an exhaustive photo and video shoot complete with models and a videographer from Annapolis. There would be wardrobe changes, numerous shot locations and an array of activities.

[Capt. James Marshall earned a career in the marine industry thanks to a self-assured confidence. For a March Gulf Stream crossing on the Beneteau Swift Trawler 48, he was the perfect guy for the job.](#)

On multiple occasions, Marshall was pressured into leaving earlier or pushing into conditions he wasn't comfortable with. Every time, he held his ground with professional confidence. And it's not his own comfort or a lack of confidence in our vessel that caused his caution but his first-hand knowledge of how dangerous—even deadly—it can be to have a full crew aboard with different levels of experience.

This lesson was forged in the infamous 1979 Fastnet Race that claimed the lives of 19 sailors. Marshall first mentioned his involvement in the race with the nonchalance you or I would use when telling our spouse that we're running out to pick up milk.

"Wait ... you were in the Fastnet?"

He nodded. We pressed him about how his harrowing experience helped prepare him to become a professional motoryacht captain.

“That race has been written about many, many times, and it really boiled down to a couple things on the boat that I was involved in. I wasn’t the skipper, but I was the number two guy in the boat and the sailmaker and the sail trimmer. One job was to secure all non-essential people and equipment below,” said Marshall. “And there were some guys that were so scared on the boat that they were non-functional on deck. And that just becomes a liability. I said, ‘You guys go down below.’ And then I kept with me on deck three guys who I told, ‘We need to do something.’”

In our case, the Swift Trawler was full of people with levels of experience unknown to him, and he decided that it was better to wait for calmer weather. My colleagues and I pressed him on his uncanny ability to hold the line when pressure mounted to adhere to a strict schedule.

“I think the answer is being realistic with the owner; I’ve never had a problem being late. I just explain it as paying me for an extra day is inexpensive insurance against a potential problem. Our job is to really look after their possession, their pride and joy, as if it were our own. So, in situations where we’ve run into a bunch of bad weather I call ‘em up, explain the situation, tell ‘em exactly what the forecast is,” Marshall explains. “And fortunately, my weather forecasting capabilities are pretty good because I’m also an airplane pilot. So, I lay it out and say, ‘Here’s the risk-to-reward ratio.’ You don’t want to be high on the risk. You want to be high on the reward.”

Sitting on the flybridge the following morning, blasting atop a gentle swell at about 20 knots with the sun and wind on our faces, the reward was high.

Once a week, on Tuesday mornings, my fellow editors and I jump on a Microsoft Teams call where we chat about media, what we’re working on and the industry at large—a sort of forced water cooler session meant to help keep the team together despite dispersing to the far corners of the country at the onset of the pandemic. The calls serve their purpose, but after just 10 minutes of shouting over the wind on the way to Bimini, I felt more connected to my colleagues than I would have after 100 video calls. I remember thinking: Now *this* is how you have a meeting.

Crossing the Gulf Stream to Bimini in many ways feels like traveling back in time. Shipwrecks, payphones and weathered lighthouses dot the landscape.

After arriving in Bimini, a force stronger than the Gulf Stream stood between us and island living ... Bahamian Customs. Waiting for what felt like hours while watching guests gorge themselves with conch fritters and Kalik at the Bimini Big Game Club as we waited for our documents to be processed was a practice in patience.

I used this chance to acquaint myself with our crew: Beneteau’s Justin Joyner, his brother, Jonathan, and his dad, John, were fulfilling a long-time dream of Justin’s by taking his 1989 Formula across the Gulf Stream. Born from the Aronow racing lineage, this particular boat was a long way from its previous home on Lake Winnepesaukee and then the Chesapeake. Together, the father and sons were a sight to behold crossing the Stream. While we cruised in blissful comfort—we could have been sipping cappuccinos aboard—the Joyners blasted atop wave after wave. I liked to imagine they were jamming to the Kenny Loggins hit “Highway to the Danger Zone.” Surely Don Aronow would be looking down on this crossing with an approving smile.

I approached the elder Joyner and asked how he enjoyed making a trip like that with his sons. He couldn’t hide his happiness.

“This is living,” he said with a grin. “This is how you know you’re alive. I used to work a lot, but I would see the boys on weekends. Justin sent us a text that he was thinking of doing this trip. We immediately responded: I’m in!”

Jonathan echoed the sentiment. “You can’t miss these opportunities to go on the water with Pops and your brother,” he said. “This is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity you can’t miss.”

Our banjo-string tight photo/video shoot and Bahamian Customs are both forces to be reckoned with. Moser, Van Hemmen and myself, well, we were just along for the ride at this point. We tagged along—doing our best to stay out of the way as we made our way to a remote anchorage. There, a pair of models smiled for hours while paddle boarding, diving from the boat, swimming with stingrays and showing off the creature comforts of the boat. I gained a new appreciation for how tiring it must be to look relaxed on video.

After bobbing along in the Formula for hours, my face was starting to hurt from watching the models smile endlessly. Hot and bored, Moser eventually decided he couldn’t take it anymore and dove off the drifting chase boat. He needn’t twist mine or Van Hemmen’s arm too hard; we were right in there with him minutes later.

Refreshing doesn’t do our short swim justice. Just like that, the salty sea washed away the anxiety of the trip. The flights, Covid tests, the time crunch, the rough seas—they were all forgotten. While treading water I looked over at the models splashing on the swim platform on the Swift Trawler. That morning we were waiting in line for coffee in a chain supermarket in Ft. Lauderdale, and by the afternoon we were bobbing in the water 100 feet from white sand and manta rays, soaking up the best of Bimini. Not many boats allow you to make a trip like this with such comfort and speed. That’s a feeling that’s hard to capture even with the best smiling models.

Boats are a compromise. Want one that goes 60 knots? You have to be willing to stomach a stiff fuel bill. Want all the comforts of home? You’ll likely have to sacrifice speed or aesthetics. The Swift Trawler 48 blends so many desirable elements of a boat. Plenty of social spaces. Three staterooms and two heads. The option to drive with the wind in your hair or protected from the elements below. Able to bruise through big seas like a trawler but then hop up and sprint when conditions are right so you can get to Bimini in time for lunch. Not a bad compromise in my book.

It is said that time is the most precious commodity—the older I get, the more I realize how true that is. There are factors constantly fighting for our time and attention. Work deadlines, youth sports, family obligations. Two days for a magazine story, a Gulf Stream crossing, a photo shoot and a narrowing weather window. It was the kind of trip that leaves you feeling whiplashed. Still, it proved enough time for work colleagues to form and rekindle friendships and for a father to make memories with his sons. I think that’s the magic of the Swift Trawler line and why the 48 will appeal to so many.

Beneteau Swift Trawler 48 Specifications:

LOA: 48'4"

Beam: 14'9"

Draft: 3'10"

Displ: 27,958 lbs.

Fuel: 510 gal.

Water: 169 gal.

Power: 2/380-hp Cummins QSB6.7

This article originally appeared in the August 2022 issue of *Power & Motoryacht* magazine.

Product Recommendations

Here are some supplies and products we find essential. We may receive a commission from sales referred by our links; however, we have carefully selected these products for their usefulness and quality.



Men's Costa del Mar hat

[Shop now at Amazon.com](#)



Helly-Hansen Ocean Dry Bag

[Shop now at Amazon.com](#)



Dive computer watch

[Shop now at Amazon.com](#)