

Yachts

by Miriam Cain

BACK TO ROOTS

Whether you are looking for a day boat, a weekender or a superyacht tender, J Craft's iconic Torpedo is the optimal all-around vessel.

Right in the heart of Viking country on the Swedish island of Gotland, the J Craft workshops' brand-new facility could not be in a location more steeped in the aura of traditional boat building. The master craftsmen of the stunning J Craft fleet are direct descendants of the Vikings who settled in the area in the 12th century — the same Vikings who built the warships that first conquered the American continent. Indeed, many of J Craft's craftsmen could easily pass for Vikings, sporting the big, bushy beards one associates with the Vikings. Sadly, however, the Viking giants are now the only remaining boatbuilders on the island. To put this into context, just 15 years ago there were more than 300 full-time boatbuilders working on Gotland. Today, there are six craftsmen at J Craft — so this is a vanishing craft worth saving.

The unique history of the place was something King Carl XVI Gustaf of Sweden recognized when he commissioned J Craft to build its first vessel in 1999. The 38-ft *Polaris* remains in service today as the king's boat of choice when cruising in the Mediterranean. Since then, J Craft have built 26 more hulls, each of which has been handcrafted by local craftsmen and



takes more than 8,000 man-hours to produce — so it's no surprise there's a waiting list. Nineteen of these are the brand's signature model, the 42-ft Torpedo series. The entire build process is an unhurried and exacting artisanal method, something that everyone in the shipyard takes great pride in maintaining; this is quality in its most traditional form.

Nature provides the primary raw materials, with solid wood running through the Torpedo's core, but master artisan Nicklaus Jacobsson is responsible for turning the raw material into a luxury product. Having grown up on the island, he has boats in his blood. "Both my father and grandfather were trawlermen, and my father was also a master carpenter," he says. In fact, all of the masters here have an in-depth

knowledge of natural woods; they select the best timber and work meticulously with the grain. The Torpedo's glossy woodwork is sustainably sourced West African mahogany (none of which comes from naturally growing forests). The graceful, curved lines of the solid wood are manipulated using a steam-bending technique that has hardly changed since the Vikings were building longships.

Which isn't to say that the Torpedo is an old-fashioned boat. On the surface she is elegant, reminiscent of the classic boats of the 1950s and '60s, with highly varnished mahogany, and leather and stainless steel finishes. Beneath the surface, however, the Torpedo is built with modern power and efficiency. Fitted with latest-generation engines that allow for a top speed of 47 knots, the 19th model in the series is a perfect showcase of what J Craft's master craftsmen can create.

From \$1.5m. Contact Johan Hallén, head of sales, sales@j-craftboats.com, +46 709 920 009, j-craftboats.com



Clockwise from top

J Craft's hulls take more than 8,000 man-hours to produce; the signature Torpedo; the master craftsmen

