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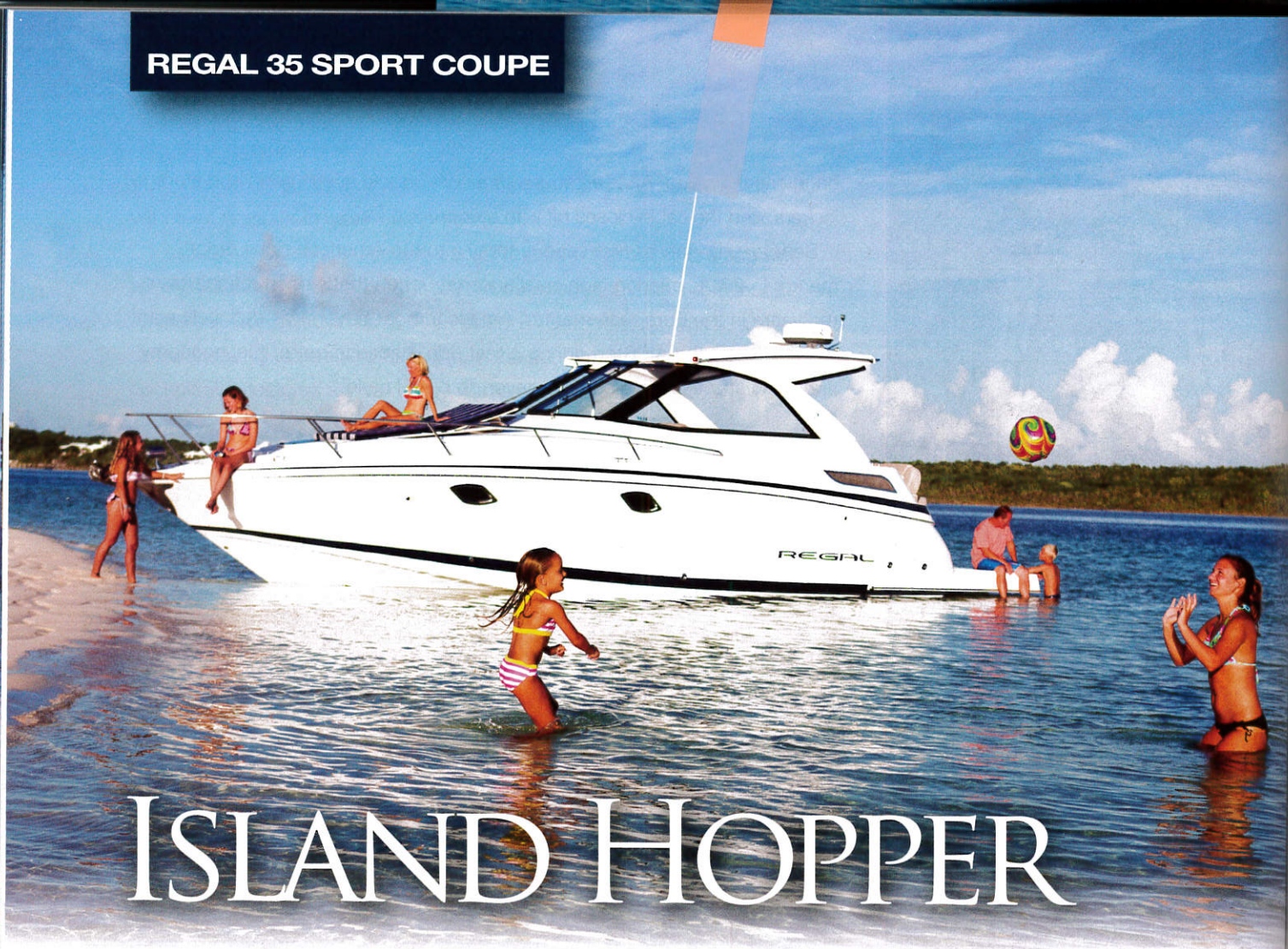
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# ISLAND HOPPER

**A huge watersports platform, shallow draft and easy maneuverability makes this a great boat for The Bahamas.**

**The** Bahamas' Sea of Abaco is like a second home to Duane Kuck, President and CEO of Orlando, Florida-based Regal Boats. His wife, Cindy, hails from there, and they bring their children back to the island chain by boat each summer to enjoy the spectacularly clear waters, abundant marine life, charming towns and unspoiled natural setting. So it's no wonder that Regal Boats builds a line of cruisers that are ideally suited to cruising to and through the Abacos—particularly the 2011 Regal 35 Sport Coupe (SC).

Last summer, Duane invited me to join him and his family on a 35 SC for an annual ritual—one they share with hundreds of other families from Florida and The Bahamas—the start of lobster season. Each year, beginning on August 1<sup>st</sup>, when The Bahamas opens season on the spiny critters, the Abacos become a hotspot for cruisers hunting the tasty “bugs,” which hide amid the rocks and coral reefs.

My Abaco experience began with a relaxing stay at the Abaco Beach Resort in Marsh Harbour—which overlooks the Sea of Abaco, one of the best-known resorts in the region—and helped me decompress and reset my inner clock to “Bahamas time.” I whiled away some pleasant hours on the wide beach, at the pool with swim-up bar, and in the lovely waterfront Anglers Restaurant.

The next morning, the Kucks met me at the dock in Boat Harbour, the resort's 190-slip, full-service marina, which offers convenient customs check-in and fuel. As we got under way, we deployed one of the boat's most innovative features—the convertible hardtop—since there were rain showers in the area. Introduced by Regal on its 46 SC model, the top incorporates a unique electric

**By LOUISA BECKETT**



sunroof that slides back to expose the helm and part of the cockpit seating to sun and wind, or forward to shelter the driver and passengers from the same.

"We are really the only U.S. builder that's doing it. Most of them are staying with a traditional sunroof," Duane said.

The height of the hardtop gave the bridge an airy feeling and our boat also featured Regal's optional Cool Cockpit ventilation system, which kept things comfortable in the hot and humid summer weather.

The 35 SC's helm area is ergonomically designed and exceptionally well-equipped. Regal sources most of its marine electronics from Garmin and our boat featured a Garmin GPSMAP 5208 chart plotter, VHF 100 radio and GMR 24HD radome. Tunes were provided by the Fusion stereo system with iPod dock and waterproof cockpit speakers. "They are designed specifically for the marine industry," Duane said. "They are still



ABACO BEACH RESORT PHOTO

*The Abaco Beach Resort & Marina in Marsh Harbour, Bahamas*

going to be working 10 years from now."

Our boat also had an upgraded propulsion package consisting of Volvo Penta 5.7Gi sterndrives with a Volvo joystick control mounted on the driver's armrest. A joystick option is available on the 35 SC with a compatible EVC engine package from either Volvo or MerCruiser. Most owners seem to feel that the added maneuverability it provides is well worth the upgrade. "All the ones we've built so

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At rest or in motion, the 35 SC has a sleek and sporty profile. Right and far right: A well-appointed head compartment and galley round out a list of features that make this an ideal day or weekend boat. Right bottom: Bahamian-style street signs.

far have had the joystick control," Duane confirmed.

I used the stick to steer us through the small and crowded harbor of Man O' War Cay where we called in for lunch, and I was grateful for the handling dexterity it provided, as well as its quick reaction time.

As always, our interlude on Man O' War was like stepping back in time. We walked along its narrow streets—where no cars

are allowed—admiring the flowers blooming in profusion by the porches of small, colorfully hued cottages on either side. The island has been a Bahamas boatbuilding hub for decades, and you can still watch through the open door as the Albury Brothers build runabouts by hand in their small shop on the harbor.

Back at the marina, we enjoyed conch burgers at the aptly named Dock & Dine Restaurant.



## SOUTHERN GATEWAY TO THE ABACOS

Fish the fertile and bountiful waters off South Abaco – including the famed Hole in the Wall and pristine back country flats with our Black Fly Lodge – all just a short distance from this new traditional harbour village – Schooner Bay. A newly built safe harbour conveniently located between Eleuthera, Nassau, Berry Islands and only 185nm from Florida. In 2012 the harbour will

be offering dockage for vessels up to 65ft., gas/diesel, ice, utilities, yacht provisioning, general store and fresh water. So, add a new waypoint, stop in and meet our warm hospitable dock attendants. Learn the secret of Schooner Bay. Rental cottages w/docks and residential lots from the \$100's



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