

Big RIB "RIB – awesome seakeeping, very popular"



LET'S GO BOATING

Getting Afloat

*In this series of articles **Paul Glatzel** will look at the things you need to think about when starting out in boating. Paul begins with a look at types of boats and what the options are in terms of where to store them and what some of the costs are likely to be.*

As I've mentioned in articles before, boating doesn't need to be an expensive pastime. Of course, if you flash the cash on the Sunseeker stand at the boat show they'll be only too happy to relieve you of your hard-won lottery winnings or the proceeds of your annual bonus, but the reality for most boaters is that they start out pretty small and have just as much fun with a smaller, cheaper boat as the chap buying his Sunseeker does.

So what makes a good first boat? Think about how you are going to use your boat ... Do you

want to ski, fish or just lounge about in it? Do you want to go out only in the summer or do you want to get afloat in the winter too? How many people do you want to carry? How old, experienced and hardy are they? Will they need the shelter that the windscreen of a sports boat or the cabin of a 'fast fisher' offers or will the 'wind in your hair' in a RIB or an open dory do the job?

Budget will always be a key issue, and of course, the harsh reality is that you never have quite enough for your 'perfect' boat. Buying new or nearly new is generally pretty straightforward as you will usually be buying a boat with a

new(ish) engine and probably with a reasonable warranty; with newer outboards these can last five years, which is great.

The most common problem I see with people buying older boats is issues with the engine, as if there are problems, fixing these can often become an almost bottomless pit for your hard-earned money. What often happens is that people spend up to their limit on the boat/engine/trailer package, then have no spare cash to buy the kit, or more likely to fix the engine/trailer issues that almost always follow with an older, cheaper craft. My own view is that if you have, say, £3,000 to £10,000 to spend, the key thing is to ensure that you get a good engine. Consider buying a smaller, newer boat but with a reliable engine rather than aiming for the biggest boat possible but sacrificing on the engine quality. After all, you might have a really Gucci-looking boat, but if you can never leave the pontoon because you are always breaking down there's not much point in having it, really! If you are considering an engine that you are not 100% sure about, get a marine engineer to assess it. This will cost about £200 – £300 but will be money really well spent.

So what's the minimum cost that you can get afloat for? There are some great second-hand SIBs (small inflatable boats) in the 3 – 4 m range with 15 – 30 hp outboards that can either be trailed or rolled up and put on the roof rack or in the boot for £1,000 – £2,000. You may not be able to ski with them but you can get afloat, you won't use much fuel, insurance will be cheaper, and you'll find a good SIB really easy to sell if you upgrade. I often find that people tend to want a bigger boat because they reckon they will immediately start doing long cruises once they are afloat, when the reality is that almost all boaters stay pretty close to their launch site/marina in their first couple of years. A 'dayboat' that is more reliable, coupled to a decent B&B, may prove far more fun and better value than an older, larger boat with a cabin that you never stay on, don't travel far on anyway and spend a small fortune on keeping running.

Also, don't forget that immediate family aren't always blessed with the same enthusiasm for your new projects, so getting them into boating gently and when the weather is great will be worth it in the longer term if you don't want complaining kids, dog and partner! In short, have reasonable ambitions for the first



Dory "Open dories - make great starter boats from a few thousand to much more"



SIB "Small inflatables – a great cheap way to get afloat"



Small cabin boat "Cabin boat - Great for the British weather! Fast and flexible!"



Semi displacement launch "Launch - Sedate, cost effective way to boat"

couple of years.

One of the best ways to start to get a feel for the boats around is to wander down to a boatyard where a range of boats are for sale and see what you like. Speak to plenty of people about what they think. Check out the forums too, but do remember, as with anything online, that alongside some great advice and views you will get your fair share of rubbish and people talking complete twaddle.

So where are you going to store your boat?

This will depend on a mixture of what sort of boat you have and how much you want to spend. Many of us started out with a boat on a trailer stored in the front garden and then trailed down to the coast whenever we wanted to go afloat. This gives you great flexibility and to an extent may keep the costs down, but trailing can be a real fuff and you need to keep the trailer in tip-top condition so it's safe and legal. Wear and tear on your car and increased fuel costs also add up. Marinas offer a range of options, from 12 months in the water, to keeping your boat on a 'rack and launch' system, through to allowing you to keep your boat on a trailer and launch down their slipway. Given the competitive nature of the market in recent years, you will find it pretty easy to negotiate deals where you can keep your trailer/boat in the marina for a few months and in the water whenever you want.

So what are the typical costs? An 18ft boat valued at about £8,000 – £12,000 in a typical

marina on the south coast will cost about £2,500 – £3,000 to store in the water or on a rack. An annual slipway pass could be about £300 – £500, while some marinas may offer a summer boat park option with six months' 'store & slip' for about £1,200 for that same 6m boat.

Insurance will probably be about £250 – £400, and you should budget about £1,000 – £1,500 per annum for servicing, fixing the odd issue, buying kit etc.

Don't forget too that if you are under the age of about 35 (depending on when you passed your test) and want to trail your boat you may need an extra endorsement on your driving licence.

When I started boating, while RYA powerboat courses may have existed, taking a course was far less common and it certainly wasn't the norm to invest in some training as you started out. Getting around was usually by 'trial and error', and certainly as we boated in Poole Harbour we learnt where the shallow bits were from the propellers we repeatedly trashed through the season. Today, insurance companies are likely to insist that those new to boating take some training, while the fact that there is a far more developed training and health and safety mindset means taking a course is the norm, as well, of course, as being a great way to enhance your understanding and enjoyment of what you are doing.

In another article we'll look at courses in more detail; however, for those boating in powerboats up to about 30ft the course to take is the RYA Powerboat Level 2. The course is aimed both at

those new to boating and those who have been around boats a bit and want to learn more and refine their skills and knowledge. Alongside the Level 2 course you should really take your VHF Radio course as the VHF is a key item of safety kit in coastal regions. There is plenty of information online about these courses.

In the next issue we'll start to look at some of the kit you should carry.

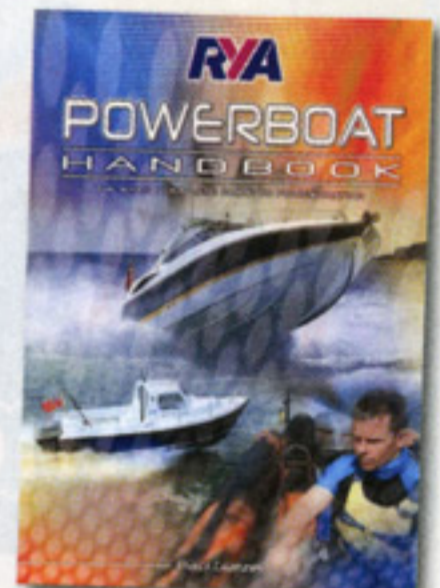
Paul Glatzel is an RYA powerboat trainer and wrote the RYA Powerboat Handbook. He runs Powerboat Training UK in Poole.

www.powerboattraininguk.co.uk

MUST HAVE



The RYA Powerboat Handbook contains many more useful insights into how to make handling your boat a whole lot easier. It is available for £15.50 from the RYA website or on Amazon. It will also soon be available as an e-book using the RYA app.



4 berth family cruiser "Cruiser - Great for families – some buy as a first boat"



Sportsboat "Sportsboat – good layout, sheltered for younger boaters"