



Buying a Used Boat Guide

They say the best two days of boat ownership are the day you buy it and the day you sell it. We tend to think there is quite an enjoyable bit in the middle too. Though this does depend somewhat on purchasing the right boat to start with and avoiding some of the pitfalls that can empty your purse/wallet quicker than you can say “how much!?”

The following are some things to consider when buying a used vessel:

Where to buy from?

Broker or direct from the owner are really the two options with second hand vessels. The former is by far the most common for mid size vessel upwards and gives you more confidence with somewhere to go back to in the event things weren't quite as anticipated (though do note that most boats come with limited legal recourse (think 'sold as seen') and will often carry a waiver that they do not offer any guarantees. Brokers do have experience of the paperwork and processes involved (more on this later) and it is rather nice to have a third party involved in the transaction - especially if they have an office and coffee. Dealing directly with the owners can also be nice of course and does often speed the purchase up, but do go prepared with questions and a list of anticipated paperwork.

Where to buy from - literally, where do I look?

With our totally partisan hats on. Here, on the www.boatquay.co.uk website, that's where. We list thousands of used vessels, including the contact details of sellers/brokers. So that's option one (and two and three really).

If you must go elsewhere, then try one of the large boat classified sites out there - particularly our friends at Boats and Outboards, but also Boat Shed, Boat Shop 24, Apollo Duck or Yacht World. If, like us, you like a browse, then why not try them all.

Otherwise, you can try your local brokers websites who will list their stock (including those across the group if your local brokerage happens to be bigger than a shed by the water). These will often feature on the classified sites as well of course (like ours - worth another mention!). Indeed, you may find yourself finding the same boat 3 or 4 times.

Failing that, for the smaller boats, fixer-uppers or those with a gambling mentality, then local paper classifieds or ebay also have some options. As the responsible pillar of the marine industry that we are, we would recommend the first few options (did we mention our own directory!?).

Ok, so what kind of boat do we want?

Clearly a 100 foot Motor Yacht with 5 cabins, jacuzzi and enough wine to sink a rib would be the first choice for most of us, but failing that, perhaps it's worth considering the following:

Where will I be taking it? - rivers, sea, under bridges/through narrow waterways (size becomes an issue here!) or just for a little circumnavigation foray around the world.

How much will I be using it? - will you usually be sitting at the marina quaffing pimmis, or pulling the kids around the bay attached to the back with a rope and floating thing ('toys' incidentally being the official vernacular for those brightly coloured inflatables).

How many people will typically be coming? - clearly a family of 5 is going to get a little fed up in a 17ft speedboat, whereas 2 people might be just as comfortable in a 30 footer than a 50 footer and you'll save a pretty penny on costs too.

What kind of space and equipment do I want? - if you are just doing runs around the river/bay on a sunny day, then a bow-rider (open fronted) may suit. If you fancy a cuppa when you're out, then you'll need a galley (kitchen). If you plan to be more adventurous and stay aboard (when berthed or anchored) then you'll be needing a cabin or two (or at least a cuddy (small cabin at the front of a boat) with some seating that converts into a bed). Do you want an open top with removable canvas cover (known as 'camper covers' - as distinct to tonneau covers; being the flat covers to just keep the rain out/off the deck), or a hard/solid top (better for rough seas and easier to clean the seagull droppings off).

Single or Twin Engines, Petrol or Diesel, Shaft or Outdrives? - some of these choices will already be limited based on your considerations to the other questions. That said, these are important elements in their own right. Most motor boats under 26 foot (and almost all sailing boats) are single engined and very often petrol. If this is the size and type of vessel you are considering then all well and good (though we would recommend always carrying an auxiliary engine with you - and some fuel for it.....you can imagine!). Single engined boats are generally more economical and you only have one lump to service/repair/worry about. It is worth noting though that single inboards (engine hidden near the back, but not hanging off it, as in the case with outboards) are a little trickier to handle at close quarters. Typically from 28 foot upwards, motor boats will have 2 inboard engines (though there is a trend with newer boats to go with outboards). The question then would be petrol or diesel. The answer will depend on you, but should be fairly straight-forward; Petrol engined boats are cheaper to buy, easier to maintain and less expensive to service or replace, but are considerably more difficult to sell and will use more fuel. Diesels are the opposite; more expensive, costlier to service and replace but cheaper to run and easier to sell.

The majority of mid sized motor vessels will have outdrives (essentially part of the engine in the water) whereas larger vessels and other more specialist craft will have shaft drive (only the shafts and propellers are in the water, with the engine sat further forward in the boat). The better option is contentious amongst the boating fraternity, though in brief Outdrives offer better reversing control, can tilt to lessen the draft of the boat and provide better performance, however are more expensive to look after and mean more machinery is exposed to that rather corrosive element; water. Shaft drives give greater control and more stability and as mentioned, are what you'll find on bigger boats of all varieties.

How old is old and shouldn't we go as new as possible? - It's best to think about a boat in parts. The principal 2 components being the hull and the engine(s). The former is less important (provided it cuts the mustard with a surveyor/doesn't leak/have 4 inches of water sitting in the bottom of the boat) the latter is important. Marine engines will often have a lifespan of 10-15 years or so before requiring major surgery. So a 20 year old boat that was re-engined 5 years ago is likely a much better bet than a 10 year old boat with original motors. Engine hours are a very important consideration (like mileage on a car). Typical engine use

for a boat is 50 - 100 hours per year. As a rule of thumb, expect Petrol engines to last for 1000 - 1500 hours before requiring some major work and diesels perhaps twice that long. A word of caution here though, if a boat has very low engine hours relative to their age, then this isn't always a good thing. There are few things worse than an underused and therefore potentially not cared for vessel.

What am I going to do with the thing when not sailing/motoring about? - there are only really two options. Either buy a boat that's small enough (generally under 25 foot) to stick on a trailer (don't forget you'll need one of those - and probably a tow bar too - not to mention the obligatory Range Rover to shift it). Or, a permanent mooring/berth i.e. a floating buoy you tie on to (cheaper - but you'll need a tender (small boat) to get out to it, or a space next to a load of pontoons (floating wooden things) that you can rent from either the Council/Harbour or a private Marina. Check out the costs for the size of boat you are considering prior to purchase and crucially the availability for spaces. In Harbours where space is cheaper, spaces are often hard to come by.

Ok, picked the boat, now what?

1. Make a checklist, not limited to, but including:

- Can the seller demonstrate ownership and confirm they can provide 'clear title' to you (ie they own the boat and can legally sell it to you).
- Has the VAT been paid on the boat (and do they have a certificate to prove it - you'll be needing that if you travel abroad)
- Do they have service and maintenance records covering a reasonable period of time?
- If there is finance owing on the vessel, and how will it be cleared prior to purchase completion?
- What equipment is included in the sale? (note particularly electronic equipment, fenders, warps, ropes etc)

2. Arrange a Viewing

3. Arrange Finance if required (BoatQuay can help with this - www.boatquay.co.uk/finance.php)

4. Make an Offer

5. Agree a Price and a contract of purchase

The contract side will be arranged for you if using a broker - if not, the Royal Yachting Association have some templates and can also help with legal guidance in certain cases.

6. Put down a deposit (typically 10-20%), conditional on survey (if you're having one) and a sea trial.

Do note here that if the boat needs putting on the water for your sea trial, you as the buyer will more than likely be expected to foot the crane charges (this will depend on the Harbour/Marina, but expect £100-200). If you are looking for a marine surveyor, our services page will point you in the right direction - <http://www.boatquay.co.uk/Services.html>

7. Arrange a Survey and Sea Trial

These are quite separate things and if the boat is currently out of the water it may make sense, considering cost and logistics, for the Survey to be done first. If the boat is in the water, it can be good to do the Sea Trial on the day of viewing.

When conducting the Sea Trial, consider taking an engineer or surveyor with you. If not, ensure the engines are being started from cold (when engines are warm, they tend not to smoke), check throttle responses, steering and handling at all speeds, if it's a motor cruiser or speedboat how quickly it will go onto the plane (there is a speed at which the boat will level off and become much more efficient - we could explain hydrodynamic lift here, but to save on a further 10 pages, if you're interested have a gander at [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Planing_\(boat\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Planing_(boat))) and the general stability given the conditions on the water. It's also a good opportunity to check electronic gadgets (GPS/Fish Finder/Speedo/Depth Finder/Radar etc) and other devices such as the Horn, Wipers, Running and Anchor Lights etc. After taking the boat out, have a look in the engine bay for any oil, coolant or fluids on or around the engine. Check the oil (don't want it to be too thick or black). The general advice here is that the engine bay and engines should look clean and tidy as this demonstrates both care and everything working as it should.

8. Assuming all is well, you will then transfer the balance of payment to the owner/broker

9. Get some insurance. BoatQuay can help here - <http://www.boatquay.co.uk/Services.html>

10. Arrange delivery/collection with the broker or seller and open a bottle of wine.