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# 2023 BOATING SPECIAL EDITION

# PONTOON

## BUYERS GUIDE

# C

### BOATING CERTIFIED TESTS

- 31 **VIAGGIO** LAGO 20U
- 32 **AVALON** 2185  
LSZ ELITE
- 35 **SUNCHASER** GENEVA  
SPORT 23 FISH
- 36 **PRINCECRAFT**  
VECTRA 23 XT
- 37 **BENNINGTON**  
22L SWINGBACK
- 40 **VIAGGIO**  
DIAMANTE 23B
- 41 **BENNINGTON**  
23 SX QUAD BENCH
- 42 **QWEST** E-CLASS 822  
SPLASH PAD LTZ
- 44 **MANITOU** CRUISE 22 MAX  
SWITCHBACK
- 45 **STARCRAFT**  
SLS 3 Q DH
- 46 **SYLVAN** L5  
DLZ BAR
- 48 **MANITOU** EXPLORE 26  
NAVIGATOR
- 50 **HARRIS** SOLSTICE 230
- 52 **MANITOU** EXPLORE  
24 MAX NAVIGATOR
- 54 **AVALON** 2585  
CATALINA ENTERTAINER
- 56 **BARLETTA** LUSSO  
25 MERIDIAN LOUNGE
- 58 **BENNINGTON**  
26 LX SPORT SWINGBACK
- 60 **BENNINGTON**  
25 Q FASTBACK
- 63 **BENNINGTON** 27 RX  
SPORT SWINGBACK
- 64 **PLAYCRAFT**  
POWERTOON X-TREME  
3010

# S

### BOATING BUYERS SPOTLIGHT

- 30 **SEA-DOO** SWITCH  
21 SPORT
- 34 **G3** SUNCATCHER FUSION  
324 SL
- 38 **SILVER WAVE** SW5  
2410 CLS
- 61 **MONTARA** NAXOS
- 62 **CREST** CONTINENTAL NX  
270 SLRC TWIN

## DEPARTMENTS

### 8 Editorial

Welcome to the evolution of pontoon boats that advance and inspire.

### 10 Watersports

The first rule of watersports is to focus on your feet.

### 13 The Boat Doctor

Chargers, anodes, restoring outboards and sterndrives, and more.

- P. 13 Q&A
- P. 16 Weekend Workbook
- P. 18 Quick Study
- P. 20 Boat Doc Special



### 66 Motorhead

Indmar's EcoJet, Mercury's JPO and understanding torque.

### 82 Off My Dock

Therefore, by the grace of God, goes the unqualified captain.

### ON THE COVER

Manitou Explore 24 MAX Navigator  
Photo by Bill Doster



## FEATURES



## 70 SPRING FLING

38 tips that will get your boat ready for the new season.

BY ED SHERMAN



## 76 TRIPLE THREATS

Check out these amazing three-person inflatables for more fun on the water.

BY JEFF HEMMEL

## SEE VIDEOS!

Watch our editorial experts walk through the boats to highlight some of their most important and outstanding features, as well as get a quick rundown of each boat's performance data at [boatingmag.com](http://boatingmag.com).





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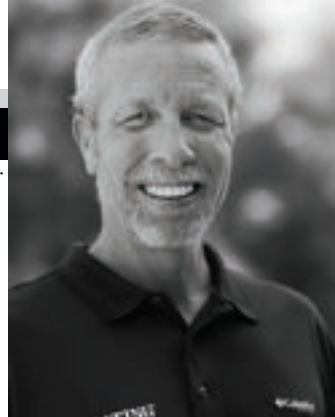




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# WELCOME TO THE EVOLUTION!

Pontoons boats continue to advance and inspire.

If you are a boat owner, you already know that pontoon boats reign as one of the hottest-selling segments on the market. If you are new to boating, welcome to the evolution! More than just racking up sales numbers, a lot of research and development money continues to funnel into pontoons.

Take the Manitou Cruise 22 MAX Switchback on page 44. Fitted with a new kind of outboard engine developed by Rotax, it offers a completely unobstructed rear deck and deferred maintenance. Or read about the Sea-Doo Switch 21 Sport on page 30. This pontoon features a water jet for power and steers with handlebars instead of a wheel. Weird? Maybe a little. But it's that combination of jet propulsion and handlebar steering that allows the Switch to maneuver so well around the dock. (It moves sideways and easily spins in its own length.)

Have a need for speed? Check out the 57 mph Bennington 27 RX Sport Swingback on page 63 or the 77 mph PlayCraft PowerToon X-Treme 3010 on page 64. Each boasts twin outboards for power, speed and great dockside maneuverability. Running boats like these is exhilarating.

Pontoon-boat layouts also continue to evolve. It is interesting to see how the various boat companies come up with different ways to utilize the same basic rectangle of deck space. For example, take a look at Avalon's Catalina 2585 Entertainer on page 54. It features a tremendous aft deck and has a bar inside beside the helm. SunChaser's Geneva Sport 23 Fish on page 35 offers a livewell and other fishing features. And the Starcraft SLS 3 Q DH on page 45 is a great example of a pontoon enclosing its aft deck and lounges with railings for function and safety.

Of course, many pontoon companies still offer basic models with few bells or whistles, with just enough outboard power to get a family across the lake or maybe pull a tube. If that's your kind of pontooning, you needn't feel as though you've been left behind. As much as pontoon boats evolve, it's the simple moments spent with loved ones afloat that make owning a pontoon worthwhile.

Want more pontoon content more of the time? Sign up for our new "Toon In" special e-newsletter by scanning the tag on this page. Do so, and twice per month you'll get great info about the boats, their care and feeding, and all that's fun about owning a pontoon.

Enjoy this issue of our Pontoon Buyers Guide.

If that's your kind of pontooning, you needn't feel as though you've been left behind. As much as pontoons evolve, it's the simple moments spent with loved ones afloat that make owning a pontoon worthwhile.



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Kevin Falvey, Editor-in-Chief  
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## MANITOU





**BALANCING** on the board requires evenly distributing your weight through your feet.

eyes on the boat, looking just above the windshield. This will get you to stop looking at the water or the boat's wake. Then think about your feet while skiing or riding, asking yourself whether your body weight is focused on the heels or evenly spread over your feet from heels to toes.

If you are heel-heavy, let your feet, ankles, shins and calves relax, and bring your feet under your knees while simultaneously raising your seat up until it is directly over the middle of your feet. Think of a stacked position with your feet under your knees and hips, and your hips and head directly over the middle of your feet. Imagine a vertical line running from your

## STAYING UP

The first rule of watersports is to focus on your feet.

**Most people who try to water-ski, wakeboard or wakesurf think they don't have good balance. That's because they fall for no apparent reason during the start or once up, or they sense that riding skis or a board feels slippery.**

However, the problem is not a matter of having good balance. If you can stand up from a chair and walk, then you have the balance to do any of the popular wake sports.

The real problem is how you stand on the skis or board and where your body weight is focused on your feet. Typically, almost all wake-sports enthusiasts, even the competitive types, tend to have too much body weight focused on the heels of their feet.

The problem occurs when you push your feet in front of your knees toward the boat. Most do this to some extent because it's a defensive

reaction from getting pulled by the boat on top of the surface of the water. The line and handle complicate matters because most riders pull against the handle to some degree. Pulling the handle toward you also causes you to push your feet in front of your knees toward the boat. When that happens, your seat pushes back over the tail of the ski or board. It can also make you break at the waist. These common body-position mistakes will limit your progress, give a slippery feeling, or cause you to fall either on your back or face.

The remedy is to exhale and allow your body to relax during the start. Your hands should be relaxed with a light grip on the handle. This technique will reduce the chance of pulling on

the handle during the start or once up. The purpose of the handle is to just tow you along and not to support any of your body weight. Instead, your feet should support all of your body weight no matter what the wake sport.

During the start and once up, you need to develop an awareness of where exactly your weight is over your feet. Most don't ever think of this because they are focused on what they are looking at. To develop an awareness of where the weight is on your feet, first focus your

head to the middle of your feet.

Once in the stacked position, develop an awareness of where your weight is over your feet. By flexing your ankles and knees, you can direct pressure to specific points on your feet. This will allow you to control the ski or board much better, and it gives you the balance you need to improve and learn a lot while practicing your favorite wake sport.

Remember that it's all in the feet and the balance will follow—and so will your skill level and enjoyment.

**TIP** | When learning to wakesurf, think of your feet as the pedals in a car. Put weight on your forward foot for the gas and on your back foot for the brake.



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## HEARTBEAT

Batteries are crucial to a boat's operation. Make sure they are charged and connections are clean and tight.



# CHARGER QUESTION

**Q:** Hello, Doc. I purchased a used 2020 Crest Continental 250 tri-toon powered by a 250 hp Mercury Verado engine. The boat has a built-in charger for the dual-battery system. I want to find out the type, make and output of this charger. My dealer did not know.

Dan Vaughn

Via email

**A:** Editor-at-Large Randy Vance reached out to Crest, and here is what the company had to say:

*Good afternoon. This boat would have had a ProSport12 12-amp dual-bank battery charger installed at the factory. It would be located in the port rear seating group inside a seat.*

*For the most accurate information on this product's capabilities, I would contact the manufacturer for any information it can provide. Here is the link to its website: [promariner.com/en/p/44012](http://promariner.com/en/p/44012).*

Vance added that he owned that same charger and left it plugged in 24/7 to manage his batteries while the boat sat idle. It can be set to manage all types of batteries.



PHOTOS: (FROM TOP) COURTESY WEST MARINE, COURTESY PROMARINER

**WHEN TO REPLACE YOUR ANODES** The sacrificial anodes protecting your boat's underwater metals should be changed when they have lost half their mass. This can often be difficult to tell by looking because the anode may erode through pinholes or on its back side, losing mass yet still keeping its dimensions. How is a boater to know what to do?

If you have a new anode in hand, remove the one on the boat and weigh both to compare. (A kitchen scale works.) Often you will be able to tell the difference without the use of a scale because it will be great enough to tell simply by handling each anode.

If at all in doubt, I advise changing the anodes. It is cheap insurance against corrosion, which can wreak havoc surprisingly quickly when protection is reduced or removed.

On a closing note, remember to check your anodes monthly while the boat is in the water. A new boat next to yours at the dock, a problem with marina wiring, faulty electrical work from a nearby waterfront home—all these and more can suddenly change the corrosion potential of your boat's slip. —Kevin Falvey



**SEALING HOLES**

**Q:** Dear Boat Doctor, I had a new transom-mount transducer installed aboard my boat. The installer simply drilled a hole through the transom, ran the cable through, and then filled the hole with silicone or some kind of caulk. Is this acceptable? The hole is above the waterline.

John Robinson  
Pinellas Park, Florida

**A:** It would not be acceptable in my book. There are all kinds of ways to seal a cable pass-through, from shop-fabricated solutions to off-the-shelf cable glands and pass-through fittings. Any of these would provide a more secure, longer-lasting and more aesthetically appealing way to seal the hole.

In your case, if the hole is well above the waterline, you might cover it with a mini clamshell vent. This will improve the aesthetics and can be done without pulling and rerunning the transducer cable. A waterproof gland, on the other hand,

needs to be installed before the cable is passed through and sized to account for the connector.

**LOOSE SCREWS**

**Q:** Dear Boat Doctor, some of the screws that hold down hatch hinges on my boat are loose. They just spin when I turn them. What is a good way to address this?

Timothy Kohlman  
Madison, Wisconsin

**A:** First, I would try a longer screw of the same diameter. Make sure you have the depth on the back side before you go this route.

Or if you can, replace the screws with machine screws (bolts) and nuts.

You can also keep the screw length, but go up in diameter to reach a bite. Doing so means you will have to drill out and countersink the hole in the hinge because the larger screw's head probably won't fit as is. (Or you might try a pan-head screw.)

If there's room and aesthetics are not primary, you can drill out the loose hole to at least four times its diameter. Fill with epoxy filler, then redrill for the original screw and reinstall.

I hope one of these four options works for you.

**CLEANING THE BILGE**

**Q:** Dear Boat Doctor, my bilge is nasty with black mold and grunge. My only access is through two round deck plates. Any suggestions for how to clean this?

Donn McBride  
Kings Park, New York

**A:** Load a spray bottle with a powerful cleaner, such as 409 or Spray Away, or mix a solution of trisodium phosphate (TSP) and water, spray it on the surfaces and let it soak. After a while, use more of the spray or solution and scrub with a stiff, long-handled brush. Remove the drain plug, of course, and flush with a lot of water. Repeat as required.



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# WE TEST STUFF

## FLEA FLICKER

**Q:** My trailer lights often flicker. What causes this, and how can I prevent it?

James Santangelo  
Carroll, Texas

**A:** Flickering trailer lights often indicate a bad ground connection. Check the white wire from your trailer harness attached on your trailer tongue. Look for corrosion or a loose fit and correct what you find. The lights are grounded via the trailer frame; through this wire, the frame connects to the tow vehicle via a harness. You can achieve a more secure ground connection by running individual ground wires back to each taillight from the ground wire on the trailer side of the harness.

## ASK THE DOCTOR

Send questions to Mick with your name and address to [boatdr@boatingmag.com](mailto:boatdr@boatingmag.com) or The Boat Doctor, *Boating*, 555 Winderley Place, Suite 300, Maitland, FL 32751.

## INFINITY X1 5,000-LUMEN LED FLASHLIGHT

There are certain tools that adventurous boaters must have aboard at all times. That includes a powerful flashlight like the Infinity X1 5,000-lumen model. This big torch reminds me of the ol' Maglites, but it's even better thanks to LED technology with three levels of brightness, extreme optical clarity, and a beam that adjusts infinitely from spotlight to floodlight with a turn of the lens housing. The spotlight carries for more than 200 yards. Hybrid power technology enables using a nine

AA-battery cartridge or a rechargeable cell with a built-in USB cord so you can charge it on the boat. Both provide five hours of use. Four blue LED indicator lights keep you posted on remaining battery capacity. An aircraft-grade, waterproof aluminum housing features a nonslip knurled grip. I use this flashlight all the time when boating at night or to peek into the bilge to make sure all is shipshape. I would never leave the dock without it. \$89; [infinityx1.com](http://infinityx1.com)

—Jim Hendricks



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## DIY

+ Weekend  
Workbook

## SKILL LEVEL



2 OF 5

## FINISH TIME

Approx. 3-5 days

TOOLS AND  
SUPPLIES

- ColorRite Aerosol Complete Repair Package; includes three 12-ounce spray cans (one each of primer, color coat and clear coat), Prep-Wipes towelettes, sandpaper pack, tack cloth, masking tape, and 2-ounce bottle of light-cut polishing compound (\$91.95; colorrite.com)
- Microfiber towels
- Goggles for eye protection (\$3.99 for three-pack; harborfreight.com)
- Respirator mask (\$35.47; homedepot.com)
- Rubber gloves
- Water bowl for wet sanding

# HOW TO RESTORE DAMAGED PAINT FINISHES ON OUTBOARDS AND STERNDRIVES

With ColorRite's refinishing kits, like-new paint repairs on outboards and sterndrives are easy DIY projects.

To paraphrase one of my best buddies, there are a thousand ways to mess up a boat engine. I've witnessed my share, including scratched, scuffed, scraped or sun-faded finishes on outboard engines and sterndrive units. Many times it's the gear housing or skeg that suffers paint damage, the result of unwelcome encounters with shoals or submerged objects. Other times it's the outboard hood or lower cladding that's blemished from bumping docks, seawalls, pilings or even other boats.

Of course, you can touch up minor scratches with color-matched paint, but restoring the finish to the kind of quality you see on

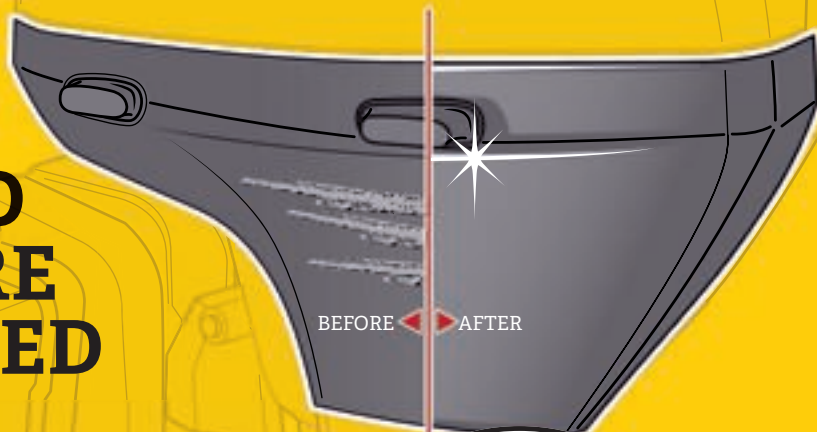
new motors and drives requires a bit more time and work. Yet it is well within the skill level of most DIY-competent boat owners, thanks to the refinishing kits from ColorRite designed for metal or plastic exterior marine-engine surfaces.

Our project focused on refinishing the severely scratched left side of a two-piece apron on a seven-year-old Suzuki Marine DF 9.9 hp outboard. The widespread damage occurred from accidentally sliding around in the bed of a truck. To refinish the 12-by-18-inch piece of plastic cladding, we chose ColorRite's Aerosol Complete Repair Package, which includes three

12-ounce spray cans (one each of primer, Suzuki Shadow Black color coat and clear coat), as well as Prep-Wipes towelettes, a sandpaper pack, a tack cloth, masking tape, and a 2-ounce bottle of light-cut polishing compound.

To get started, we unbolted the damaged half of the apron from the engine, then removed parts that did not require paint such as the hood latch and rubber seals. We also did a spray test to ensure the color was a good match (see "Spray-Out Test"). For painting, we chose a warm, windless day and sprayed outdoors well away from boats, cars and structures to prevent overspray.

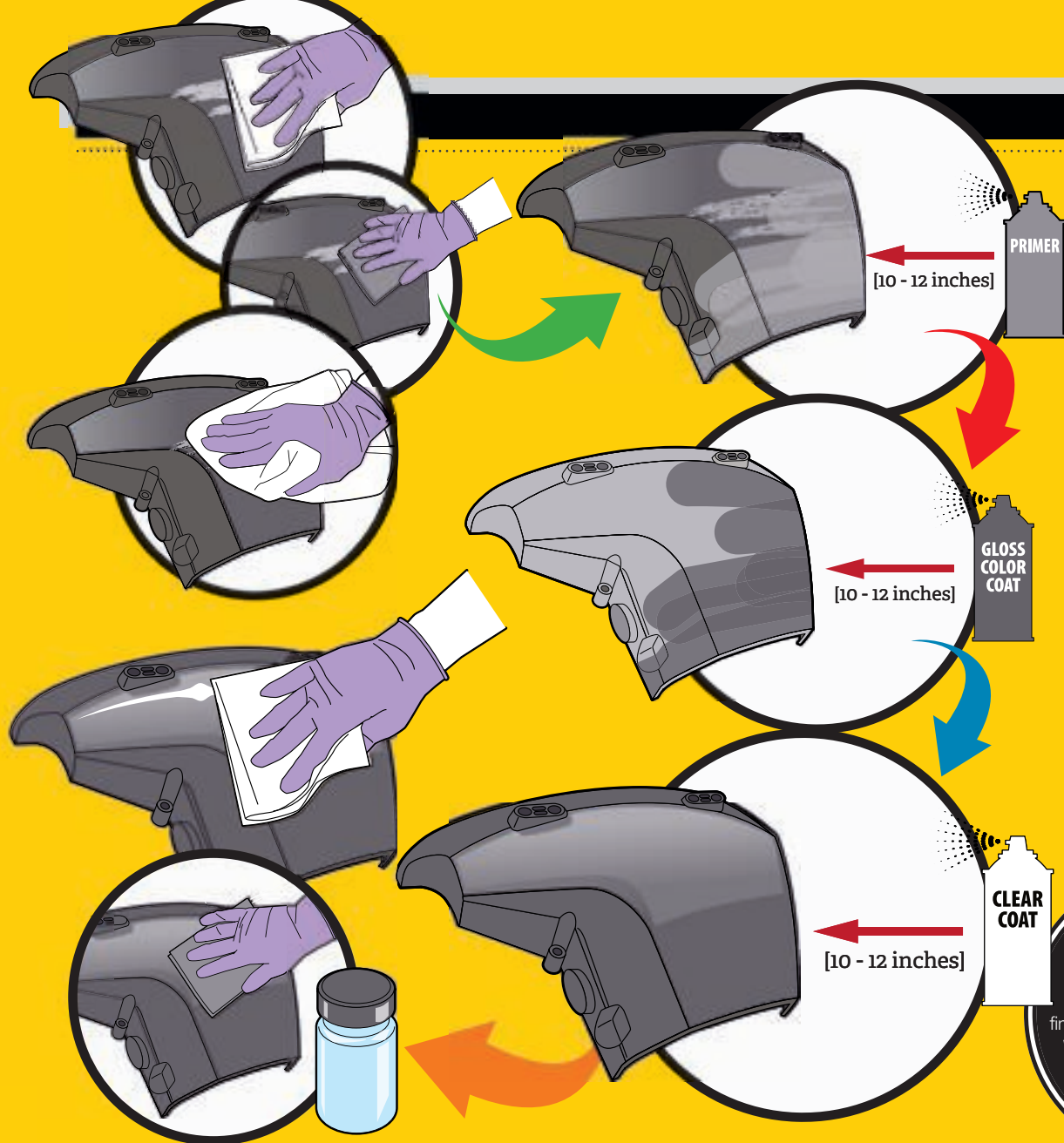
—Jim Hendricks



## TIP

Be sure to wear eye protection and use a respirator when applying spray paint. This is especially important with metal-flake paints that contain microscopic glitter particles that can adhere to your corneas or the lining of your respiratory system and create vision or breathing issues.





## + SPRAY-OUT TEST

A spray-out test helps determine how much paint you need to match an existing finish. ColorRite supplies a spray-out card and instructions on how to apply a test finish using the entire application process outlined below, including the glossy clear coat. Compare the color on a completed spray-out test to the existing finish to ensure it matches. If too pale, retest using more color coats; if too dark, use fewer color coats until you get a good match.

## TIP

Even after clear-coating, the finish might still look a tad rough. Within a few hours, the coats tend to blend and "flow out," creating a smoother appearance.

### WIPE, SAND, CLEAN

Before sanding, wipe the entire engine surface with ColorRite Prep-Wipes towelettes to remove any grease or wax. Follow this up by wiping the entire surface with a soft, absorbent cloth such as a microfiber towel. Then sand by hand with 600-grit wet/dry sandpaper and water. Do not use solvent or reducer. After sanding, use a dry cloth to wipe away residual moisture and sanding slurry. Next, and immediately prior to step two, use the tack cloth to remove any dust and tiny dirt particles.

**APPLY PRIMER** Because some scratches went down to the bare plastic, we needed to apply the ColorRite primer, which is gray in color. We sprayed three light but even coats, keeping the nozzle 10 to 12 inches away from the surface. We allowed each coat to dry 10 to 15 minutes before spraying the next coat. Not only did the primer provide a consistent base shade for the color coat, but it also filled in minute scratches in the surface of the old finish and underlying plastic, helping ensure a smooth final finish.

**COLOR COAT** We let the final primer coat dry for 15 minutes before starting to apply the color coat. As with the primer, we sprayed three even coats, allowing each to dry for 10 to 15 minutes before applying the next. We kept each application light, with the spray nozzle about 10 to 12 inches from the surface to prevent runs or drips, and covered the entire surface with each application for consistent color. The finish might initially appear a bit rough or stippled in texture, but this will smooth out after steps four and five.

**CLEAR COAT** We let the final color coat dry for about 45 minutes. Then we sprayed on three light, even and full-coverage applications of the ColorRite glossy clear coat, waiting about 10 minutes between coats, and again keeping the nozzle about 10 to 12 inches from the surface to help prevent sags or drips. The clear coat not only creates a glossier finish, but also helps fill in and even out the color coat's slightly rough texture, if any. After clear-coating, let the finish cure for three to five days in a dry, undisturbed place.

**WET-SAND AND POLISH** After five days, we used 1,200-grit wet/dry sandpaper and water to lightly sand the apron surface by hand. We avoided oversanding the ridges to prevent wearing through. This process resulted in a smooth but slightly hazy finish. Then we used microfiber cloths to apply and buff out the ColorRite light-cut polishing compound to bring out the color and replicate the factory sheen. After bolting the apron back on, it was identical in color and gloss to the surrounding parts.

# FLUSHING MOTORS

How to run inboard, outboard and sterndrive engines on land.

The need for marine engines to run on a clean source of fresh water is common. Saltwater boaters should regularly flush their engines with fresh water to stave off internal corrosion. Also, the ability to run the engine in the driveway or elsewhere on land is handy for repair and service such as winterization. Check out these tips on flushing and running your marine engine, whether it is in the water or out. —Rick Shackleton

## INBOARDS AND STERNDRIVES

Inboard engines usually have a through-hull cooling-water pickup, as do some stern-drive engines (even if your boat's engine is freshwater-cooled, aka closed-cooled). A grate or strainer often covers this intake.

One way to connect the through-hull cooling-water pickup to a hose is to attach the cup of a plunger—a plumber's helper—to a hose by drilling out the handle recess and replacing the handle with a section of pipe in the

right diameter. The cup presses up against the hull intake, the hose connects to the pipe, the water turns on, and the engine starts. Make sure water begins coming out of the exhaust within a minute or so. If it does not, shut down the engine and look for a blockage.

Another way to flush an engine with a through-hull intake is to disconnect the intake hose on the inside and connect that to a hose. Perko, Groco and other makers offer special permanent flushing valves (pictured right) you can add to allow attaching a hose for quick and easy flushing without needing tools.

## OUTBOARDS AND STERNDRIVES

Outboards and most sterndrive

engines feature cooling-water intakes on the gear case—the lower unit—typically located on the side of the case and sometimes on the gear-case torpedo (to allow for higher mounting and trim angles without losing cooling water). For these, a motor flusher (aka earmuffs, pictured above) typically is used. I recommend the more costly type that allows

water to flow into both sides of the muffs.

To flush your engine with a motor flusher, push the flusher on from the front of the gear case, ensuring the cups cover the intake grates. The frame of the flusher acts like a spring to hold it in place. If your engine or drive has low-water pickups, tape

these closed with duct tape during the flushing so the engine does not suck in air. Turn on the water to medium high and start the engine. If water does not discharge through the exhaust or telltale after a minute, shut down and look for a blockage.



**FLUSH VS. RUN** Many outboards feature one or more built-in flushing ports (pictured left). These are intended for flushing the engine of salt and sediment. They are not intended to run the engine on them, such as during winterizing or other service.



# KEEP IT MOVING

How to care for your outboard's trim-and-tilt system.

Outboard trim-and-tilt systems require regular service. I suggest the following procedures be included in an outboard owner's maintenance routine and that boaters also familiarize themselves with the procedure for adding fluid to the trim-and-tilt system. —Rick Shackleton

## GREASED RAMS

So simple: Squeeze some grease on your fingertips and apply a healthy dollop to the tips of the trim rams. This inhibits wear and quiets the screeching sound that can occur when grease wears off.

## GREASE THE TILT TUBE

Look for the tilt tube at the front of your engine, where it connects to the transom. Use a grease gun to apply waterproof grease to the zerk fittings. Watch for the new grease pushing out the old grease, your indication to stop squeezing the grease gun. Wipe off excess.

## STATIONARY SUPPORT

Always use the tilt support bracket while the boat is docked or moored with the engine tilted up. This is a swing-down support found on top of the engine mounting bracket. Tilt the engine all the way up, deploy the support, trim the engine down until it rests on the support, and then continue pressing the trim switch until the rams are fully retracted. This inhibits corrosion and fouling on the rams.

## ADDING HYDRAULIC FLUID

The trim-and-tilt system is electrohydraulic and sometimes may need

fluid added, often indicated by failure to trim fully or "slipping down" after tilt-up. The fill cap is a hex-headed or slotted screw on top of the hydraulic reservoir. The cylindrical reservoir is located between the uprights of the engine mounting bracket. Due to this location right at the waterline, the boat should be on land in a bow-down attitude to level the reservoir, which is at the same negative 13- to 15-degree angle relative to the transom. Arrange this by cranking down the trailer's tongue jack. Don't have a trailer? Borrow one, or seek a boatyard for this job.

Greasing the ram tips (above right) is easy. Deploying the support bracket (right) allows full retraction of the rams. The hydraulic fill (below) is near the waterline.

1. Tilt up the outboard and put the support bracket in place. An engine falling on you or your hands can be catastrophic.
2. Remove the screw.
3. Fill to just overflowing. Wipe excess.
4. Tilt the engine up and down to bleed air out.
5. Add more fluid (if it will take some).
6. Repeat steps 4 and 5 as needed.
7. Reinstall the screw.

Topping off the fluid is often a temporary fix. Even though a leak might not be evident, you may have one and need to take your engine to a pro to fix it.

## TRIM VS. TILT

Trim is the range of motion available while the engine is running. Tilt is the range of operation allowing the engine to rotate clear of the water.

**MANUAL TILT** If the tilt system is inoperative, look for a screw on the side of the engine bracket at the height of the hydraulic reservoir. This is the hydraulic release screw. Unscrew it a turn or two, grab the engine by the gear case, and lift it up. (Know your limit.) Deploy the engine support bracket. If the engine will not lift, you might need to loosen the release screw a bit more.

# TIPS FOR BOATING WITH NEW BOATERS

On a recent fishing trip, I welcomed aboard two crewmembers who arrived ill-prepared for the brisk, damp late-autumn weather at sea. Both were lulled into poor planning by an Indian summer that had warmed inland areas.

# A

cold mist and wind pierced their light jackets, leaving both chilled to the bone.

It led me to conclude that a skipper is responsible for the comfort as well as safety of crewmembers because boating is more enjoyable when everyone feels comfortable. If even one guest starts to feel ill at ease, the trip goes south quickly. Case in point: Two years ago, I took my wife (who never developed sea legs), son, daughter-in-law and three granddaughters out for a day of local fishing. Winds and sea conditions were calm, and the fish were biting. The kids were having a great time, but my wife's ashen face told me that she was teetering on the edge of seasickness. We reeled in and headed back to port.

So, what else can a

captain do to help ensure the comfort of those new to boating? Here are a few tips.

## PROTECTED WATERS

I learned long ago not to venture too far out to sea with guests who are unfamiliar with boating. Breezy weather, steep waves and a heaving deck—conditions old salts might take for granted—can leave the unseasoned feeling uncomfortable and lead to

seasickness. It's better to stay inside, cruise the Intracoastal Waterway, tour the harbor or bay, and keep the outing short, perhaps stopping at a shoreside eatery along the way.

**SPARE JACKET** I carry a spare rain jacket on the boat. It's mostly for me,

but more than once I have offered it to a guest who hadn't anticipated the coastal chill. It keeps them warm and happy, rather than miserable, cold and praying for a merciful end to the trip.

## EXTRA SEATING

Today's new boats incorporate comfy seating for crew, but some older craft—especially center-consoles like mine—woefully lack guest seating. For comfort's sake, I now carry a couple of beanbag chairs. They are comfy, and easier to stow than folding chairs.

## ABUNDANT HYDRATION

Many times, crewmembers forget to bring drinks, or simply assume I will have water and other beverages on board. Now I ice-down plenty of bottled water, sports drinks and sodas (no alcohol) so we always have a b u n d a n t hydration.

**MARINE HEAD** Having adequate accommodations for those times when nature calls is an important facet of making guests feel comfortable. That's why I have a portable marine toilet inside the step-down center console. While not exactly spacious, the interior provides a modicum of privacy, and that adds to the sense of comfort. If the boat doesn't have a head, ask your crew to take care of things before leaving the dock, and clearly spell out the rules to them before you're already out on the water.

## SPARE SUNGLASSES AND HAT

This might sound odd, but a bright sun glaring off the water can wear on a crewmember, leading to eyestrain and discomfort. So I carry an extra pair of cheap polarized sunglasses and a cap to loan out when someone forgets their shades or lid. The trick is getting your accoutrement back from your guests at the end of the day.

**SUNSCREEN** There's few things more painful than a bad sunburn. Aboard a boat, you're subject to a double threat: rays from above and reflected UV light below. So I carry sunscreen and encourage all crewmembers to layer it on to help avoid discomfort while on board, as well as the days afterward. —Jim Hendricks





NEW IN 2023

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The Bennington way is to elevate your boating experience by delivering premium luxury and style. We've included features that matter on the LX Sport list of standards, an elevated helm for clear sight lines and the 7" multi-function display to keep maps, speed and depth readings at your fingertips. The premium Corvina steering wheel, glass windscreen and sleek LX Sport furniture elevate not only the look of the interior but also the comfort.



Tinted Glass Windscreen



LX Sport Furniture



Raised Helm

# LITTLE THINGS

A new movie called *The Little Things*, a neo-noir crime thriller starring Denzel Washington, emphasizes the importance of paying attention to minute details. The same general principle applies to boating, as I was reminded during a recent evening while fishing aboard a friend's boat.

In the course of events, I asked to use his onboard flashlight. "I don't have one," he responded. I was dismayed. This is a captain who is meticulous, but he hadn't thought to stash away a flashlight.

This led me to think about the little things that make a big difference in terms of convenience and safety afloat, both day and night. I am thinking about gear other than the required safety equipment. Here are some little things that can often make a big difference, each available for less than \$10.

**FLASHLIGHT** I always carry two LED flashlights as well as spare batteries for each. You can get an LED flashlight for as little as \$7.99 at harborfreight.com.

**GLOVES** A pair of gloves is handy in a variety of chores, such as weighing

anchor or handling a spiny fish. I never venture to sea without a pair of gloves, available for a pittance—a mere \$6.47 at homedepot.com.

**TOWEL** Any old towel will keep your hands dry or wipe up a grimy deck. Microfiber towels are gentler for wiping clear vinyl and sunglasses. You can pick up the microfiber variety for \$4.99 per set at amazon.com.

**PAD AND PENCIL** I keep a pad and pencil at the helm to jot down reminders about maintenance chores and repairs. Rite in the Rain all-weather pads sell for \$5.95; riteintherain.com.

**BUNGEE CORDS** An assortment of bungee cords can help secure items such as coolers or

keep beanbag seats tied down on the hardtop. You'll pay \$4.97 for four cords at walmart.com.

**SCISSORS** Just about every boat has a knife, but scissors are quicker and safer for cutting line, opening packages, chunking bait, etc. Plan on spending \$6.97 for 9-inch stainless-steel scissors at walmart.com.

**ZIP TIES** Use zip ties to temporarily batten loose

canvas or quickly repair a torn landing net. You can get a package of 100 for \$4.49 at target.com.

**CUTTING BOARD** A plastic cutting board prevents guests from using your teak covering boards for chopping bait. Budget \$5.87 for a board at amazon.com.

**DUCT TAPE** Every boat should have a roll of duct tape to temporarily mend hoses or patch a

tear in the canvas. Pick up a roll for \$9.35 at granger.com.

**ZIP-CLOSE BAGS** A box of quart-size zip-close bags is handy to stash small items, or store fresh fish fillets in the cooler. Buy a box of 19 for \$5.29 at target.com.

**HAND SANITIZER** A small bottle of hand sanitizer is nice for cleaning your hands before enjoying an onboard meal. You'll spend only \$9.97 for an 8-ounce bottle at amazon.com.

**MOIST TOWELETES** Use these to clean your hands or any spilled food or drink after a meal. At \$8.99 for 100 wipes at quill.com, maybe you should have a bunch.

**TOILET PAPER** Steal a roll from the household supply and stow it in a zip-close bag to keep dry. —Jim Hendricks







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**HONDA**  
**MARINE**

Always wear a personal flotation device while boating and read your owner's manual.

# LIFTOFF

The Hydrofin Super Fly foil system gives wings to pontoons.

# H

ydrofin has set out to improve the performance and efficiency of the original multihull boat—the pontoon. An Innovation Award Winner at the 2021 IBEX boatbuilder trade show, Hydrofin's patented Super Fly hydrofoil system enhances lift at speed, especially on bi-toon boats.

Designed by Morrelli & Melvin Design and Engineering for single-outboard 'toons, the Super Fly system consists of wings that install under the boat on the inner walls of the sponsons, says Jason Minor, founder and CEO of Hydrofin based in Grapevine, Texas.

Engineered to carry 40 percent of the boat's weight while underway, the wings lift the front of the boat 4 to 8 inches to reduce drag, Minor says. He envisions the system as an OEM option or dealer-installed upgrade. The aircraft-grade

aluminum wings feature vertical struts that extend upward and connect to reinforced plates on the underside of the deck structure to resist water pressure pushing upward at speed. Replaceable breakaway pins at the strut and fin attachment points help prevent damage to the boat should the wings strike a submerged object.

I had a chance to experience the Hydrofin in action on the waterways of Tampa, Florida, in late

was no discernible effect on performance. However, the wings began to generate lift at about 15 mph. I could feel the boat begin to levitate as we approached top speed, experiencing the greatest lift at wide-open throttle at 5,500 rpm and 37.5 mph. That's a 19 percent increase in top speed versus 31.5 mph for the Misty Harbor without the Hydrofin Super Fly system, Minor

the Hydrofin-equipped Misty Harbor responded well to judicious outboard trim at top speed, helping to lift the bow even more.

Any concerns about possible handling quirks vanished as I aggressively carved sharp turns at speed. The Hydrofin-equipped Misty Harbor cornered with V-hull-like characteristics, taking turns with a comforting

data supplied by Minor supports the assertions of improved fuel efficiency with the Hydrofin. Miles per gallon climbed from 2.6 with a bare hull to 3.5 with the Super Fly at 31.5 mph. It climbed from 3.1 mpg to 3.7 mpg at 25 mph.

As of this writing, no pontoon builders had opted to partner with Hydrofin to offer the system as an OEM option on new models, though the Hydrofin has been engineered to work with more than a dozen pontoon brands, according to the company's website.

For the aftermarket, Minor highly recommends installation by a qualified dealer. The bi-toon system sells for \$1,995, plus installation costs ranging from \$1,500 to \$1,800. The Hydrofin Super Fly system carries a one-year warranty against defects in manufacturing and a 30-day money-back-guarantee product refund if you're not pleased with the performance. —Jim Hendricks

The wings of the Hydrofin Super Fly foil system attach to the inside of the pontoon logs, lifting the bow 4 to 8 inches to reduce drag while underway.



The Hydrofin's wings install just forward of the center of gravity via struts connecting to plates under the deck to resist upward water pressure.

2021 with five people aboard a Misty Harbor 2528 pontoon with a dry weight of 2,300 pounds, powered by a Mercury Marine 150 hp Four-Stroke outboard.

At idle speeds, there

points out.

I worried that the Hydrofin might lift the propeller out of the water too high, but that did not occur because the wings primarily lift the bow. I also found that

inward lean. I did need to trim down slightly during hard lateral acceleration, something you would expect to do with any outboard or sterndrive boat.

The comparison-test





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# DRIVING TIPS FOR WATERSPORTS

All good tow-boat drivers know the basics: Always designate a spotter. Make sure the rider and spotter understand hand signals to communicate. Choose a safe path, maintain a safe speed, and avoid hazards that could endanger your crew. Keep a downed rider in view at all times by approaching on the driver's side.

# A

Always turn off an outboard or sterndrive, or make certain an inboard is in neutral, before a rider approaches the stern. Never drive under the influence of alcohol or drugs.

With experience, the game gets upped. As long as the rider indicates they're OK, slow to neutral after a fall, then return at idle to avoid kicking up rollers. Focus on the water ahead, but keep a roving eye on speed and the rearview mirror. Should a rider bobble, slow down to allow them time

to recover before resuming your normal speed.

The best watersports boat drivers, however, take it up yet another notch by tailoring their driving to each

discipline. Here's a few of their insider tips.

**TUBING** For a fun, safe ride, watch your speed. A mere 8 mph is best for children,

**WAKE** A straight, smooth-water tow best serves wakeboarders. Pick a landmark to help you maintain a steady course.

and 15 to 18 mph is plenty for adults. To send the inflatable skidding outside the wake, initiate a series of controlled S-turns to push the tube over the wakes in each direction. Avoid cranking random sharp turns at high speed; in addition to a chaotic, potentially dangerous ride, the towrope will often go slack, then jerk riders as it snaps taut.

Whips can be fun, but proceed with care. Even when under 20 mph, a tube can accelerate to far greater speeds,



**TUBE** A speed between 15 and 18 mph is plenty fast for tubing. Towing small children or frail adults? Go slower.

PHOTOS: TOM KING



increasing the chance of injury. Never punch the throttle, and be prepared to back off the speed and turn should the tube accelerate too much. Apply the same thought process to wakes; gentle can be fun, but large at high speed can be dangerous.

**WATER-SKIING AND WAKEBOARDING** Skiers and board riders appreciate smooth water, straight passes, a steady speed, and clean, symmetrical wakes.

Drive in a pattern that will dissipate your rollers. Make a straight pass in one direction, a smooth turn at the end of the run, and retrace your original path. For riders who like to roam, break a curving shoreline into longer, straighter segments with brief turns. Use a visual target onshore to maintain as straight a path as possible.

Use speed control if available. If not, keep a gentle hand on the throttle and make small adjustments while watching the tach or



speedo. Vary your acceleration to the rider's size and choice of ski or board during deepwater starts. Wakeboards don't need aggressive acceleration thanks to their larger surface area; a child on two skis requires less force than an adult on a slalom ski.

For both disciplines, anticipate the pull a rider can exert, such as a slalom skier accelerating out of a turn or a wakeboarder progressively cutting toward the wake. Be ready to throttle up ever so slightly to compensate for the pull, then back off as the

skier sets up for the next turn or the rider gets airborne.

**WAKESURFING** A gradual, smooth acceleration is all that's needed to pull a wake-surfer atop the water. Once at the target speed (10 to 11 mph), let speed control take over if possible. Nonplaning speeds, significant ballast loads and wake-enhancing hardware can make it challenging to maintain speed manually. Be prepared for significant bow rise; raise the helm seat, flip up a seat bolster or add seat cushions

**WAVE** Wakesurfing means the boat's bow will be high. Maintain visibility by raising the helm seat or via other means.

to ensure you maintain good visibility forward, and stay on the alert for boat traffic or other obstructions.

Underway, run a straight path. Deep water is preferable; shallow water can decrease the wake size.

Because wakes can be massive, stay well away from the shoreline and other boats, and be careful when turning back for a downed rider. Shift to neutral, allow wakes to spread, then turn tightly and proceed back toward the rider at idle to avoid swamping the bow or taking water over the gunwales. —Jeff Hemmel



## SALUTE!

In many jurisdictions, boaters engaged in watersports must display a red or orange 12-by-12-inch flag—known as a skier-down or watersports flag—when ever loading riders or towed equipment into the water or picking them up. Don't fly it while underway. Other boats must not operate within 50 yards of a boat flying this flag. The suction-mount flag pictured is by Airhead. \$7.99; overtos.com —Kevin Falvey



If there's one thing a pontoon boat can offer that other boats can't, it's everything. Pontoons combine elements of performance, watersports and dayboats, and have layouts designed to keep a crowd entertained on the water. Depending on the model, you could take a 70 mph joy ride, beach at the local sandbar, tow tubers all day long, or bring a group of friends out for a dance party. Oh yeah, you can fish too. Here are 25 pontoon boats that can get you on the water, whether you're looking for an entry-level boat that won't break the bank or a luxury model with the finest amenities.

**THE VIAGGIO LAGO 20U** offers generous amenities, a great layout and a competitive price. Read the full review!



PHOTO: BILL DOSTER



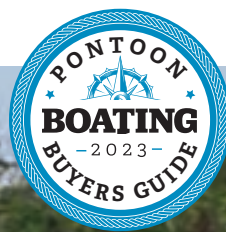


- 30 **SEA-DOO** SWITCH 21 SPORT
- 31 **VIAGGIO** LAGO 20U
- 32 **AVALON** 2185 LSZ ELITE
- 34 **G3** SUNCATCHER FUSION 324 SL
- 35 **SUNCHASER** GENEVA SPORT 23 FISH
- 36 **PRINCECRAFT** VECTRA 23 XT
- 37 **BENNINGTON** 22L SWINGBACK
- 38 **SILVER WAVE** SW5 2410 CLS
- 40 **VIAGGIO** DIAMANTE 23B
- 41 **BENNINGTON** 23 SX QUAD BENCH
- 42 **QWEST** E-CLASS 822 SPLASH PAD LTZ
- 44 **MANITOU** CRUISE 22 MAX SWITCHBACK
- 45 **STARCRAFT** SLS 3 Q DH
- 46 **SYLVAN** L5 DLZ BAR
- 48 **MANITOU** EXPLORE 26 NAVIGATOR
- 50 **HARRIS** SOLSTICE 230
- 52 **MANITOU** EXPLORE 24 MAX NAVIGATOR
- 54 **AVALON** 2585 CATALINA ENTERTAINER
- 56 **BARLETTA** LUSO 25 MERIDIAN LOUNGE
- 58 **BENNINGTON** 26 LX SPORT SWINGBACK
- 60 **BENNINGTON** 25 Q FASTBACK
- 61 **MONTARA** NAXOS
- 62 **CREST** CONTINENTAL NX 270 SLRC TWIN
- 63 **BENNINGTON** 27 RX SPORT SWINGBACK
- 64 **PLAYCRAFT** POWERTOON X-TREME 3010



# SEA-DOO

## SWITCH 21 SPORT



S

BOATING  
BUYERS  
SPOTLIGHT



Price: \$40,399 (base)

### HIGH POINTS

- ▶ Jet power gives the Switch 21 Sport a shallower draft than comparable outboard or sterndrive pontoons.
- ▶ Modular decking system lets you configure seating and amenities to your liking, and you can change them around on every trip.
- ▶ iBR (intelligent brake and reverse) system makes handling the boat in close quarters much easier and safer.
- ▶ Clear side panels give the boat an open and airy feel, and help improve the captain's vision from the helm.

**SPECS:** LOA: 20'4" BEAM: 7'8" DRAFT: 1'8" (max) DRY WEIGHT: 2,426 lb. (without engine) SEAT/WEIGHT CAPACITY: 10/1,485 lb. FUEL CAPACITY: 29 gal. AVAILABLE POWER: Single Rotax jet to 230 hp

If you're looking for the largest performance version of our 2022 Boat of the Year, you'll find it in the Switch 21 Sport. It has all of the features that made us fall in love with the Switch concept, paired with a 230 hp Rotax engine. Like all Switch models, the 21 Sport features a handlebar steering system at the helm that helps this tri-toon steer like its PWC relatives, with super-responsive handling and Sea-Doo's iBR system for close-quarters operation.

The Switch 21 Sport is ideally suited to tow sports, with features such as a driver's seat flip-up bolster, a rearview mirror, an

inflatable holder, and a programmable ski mode at the helm. Capable of holding a crew of 10, the Switch 21 Sport also has backrest modules with cup holders for the bow area that will surely be popular. The beauty is they can move.

One advantage that the 21 Sport has over traditional boats is its Rotax engine powers a jet, so there's no prop to worry about when tubers, skiers and boarders are getting in and out of the boat at the stern.

Although the 21 Sport is a pontoon, you won't find any aluminum tubes or panels on the boat. Instead, its hull is made from PolyTec, Sea-Doo's proven durable, lightweight blend of polypropylene and fiberglass reinforcement. Rather than aluminum perimeter fencing, the Switch has clear vinyl panels that give the boat an open, airy feel and allow the captain to have a great view of the dock or a downed watersports rider in the water.

The Switch's floor plan is the lineup's bread and butter, and the 21 Sport takes full advantage of its modular system. There's no other pontoon boat we know



**SEA-DOO**  
Valcourt, Quebec, Canada; 888-272-9222; sea-doo.com

of with this much layout flexibility—and it can change any time you want. By using a unique set of tiles for the deck surface, owners can move furniture almost anywhere they desire, setting up the boat for a tow session, cruising, or lounging at anchor. It can be switched at any time. Multiple accessories can be added to the layout, from corner and pedestal tables to various storage boxes, coolers and even fuel caddies. It truly is one of the most versatile boats we've seen on the water—and it's a lot of fun.





## HIGH POINTS

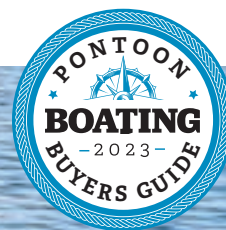
- Despite its smaller size, the Lago delivers performance and value on par with larger rigs.
- Luxury furniture features acrylic-coated vinyl seats for long life.
- MarineMat at the base of the captain's console gives secure footing.

## SEE THE VIDEO

To watch our video review of the Viaggio Lago 20U, scan this tag or visit [boatingmag.com/bbg23/viaggiolago20u](http://boatingmag.com/bbg23/viaggiolago20u).



# VIAGGIO LAGO 20U



# C

BOATING  
CERTIFIED  
TEST  
RESULTS



Price: \$69,874

**SPECS:** LOA: 21'2" BEAM: 8'6" DRAFT: 1'6" DRY WEIGHT: 2,614 lb. SEAT/WEIGHT CAPACITY: 10/2,144 lb. FUEL CAPACITY: 58 gal.

**HOW WE TESTED:** ENGINE: Mercury FourStroke 150 hp DRIVE/PROP: Outboard/Mercury Enertia 15" x 15" 3-blade stainless steel GEAR RATIO: 2.08:1 FUEL LOAD: 58 gal. CREW WEIGHT: 250 lb.

**V**iaggio's Lago series entices buyers with high-quality, ample power and generous amenities at a competitive price. Rigged with a 150 hp Mercury, it delivers 40 mph speeds, and a zero-to-30 mph punch in 8 seconds. It won't break the fuel budget, thanks to a most economical cruise of 16-plus mph, which yields 4.3 mpg (3.8 gph).

The Viaggio's strong build and warranty are high points. The welded superstructure comes with a lifetime warranty from the deck down, and Viaggio offers a five-year stem-to-stern warranty

on everything above the deck. The triple 25-inch-round pontoons all boast lifting strakes plus full shielding under the deck, both of which enhance efficiency.

Outside, the black anodized perimeter railings are part of a standard package that coordinates the railings, trim and side skirting. Coupled with the deep-red metallic-and-white accent in the surrounding fencing, the effect is subtle and crisp. A standard folding, extra-large 10-foot Bimini top shades most of the deck.

Inside, bow seating features twin curved, facing lounges, each with high-density foam and lovely upholstery. An optional bow filler bench connects the two lounges.

The all-fiberglass helm console features a Rockford Fosgate sound system, along with analog engine instruments and a low, smoke-tinted Lexan windscreen. Hydraulic steering with a tilt helm is standard, and our boat featured optional power-assist hydraulic steering. Twin medium-back captain's chairs tilt, swivel and slide. The optional Lakeport Plank flooring makes for a solid look with easy

cleanup. We suggest you opt for the in-floor storage locker and the stainless-steel watersports tow bar.

The aft conversation pit is a mirror image of the bow, with twin curved, facing lounges. In back, an optional extended swim deck provides more than enough room for swimming, watersports prep or sandbar gabbing. Optional stainless-steel fold-down cleats are positioned at all four corners. A retracting, folding stainless-steel boarding ladder is standard.

| SPEED |       |      | EFFICIENCY |           |           |              | OPERATION    |       |             |
|-------|-------|------|------------|-----------|-----------|--------------|--------------|-------|-------------|
| rpm   | knots | mph  | gph        | naut. mpg | stat. mpg | n. mi. range | s. mi. range | angle | sound level |
| 1000  | 3.6   | 4.2  | 0.9        | 4.0       | 4.6       | 216.4        | 249.0        | 1     | 72          |
| 1500  | 5.3   | 6.1  | 1.4        | 3.8       | 4.4       | 204.5        | 235.3        | 1     | 73          |
| 2000  | 6.8   | 7.9  | 2.1        | 3.2       | 3.7       | 175.4        | 201.9        | 2     | 74          |
| 2500  | 10.4  | 12.0 | 3.0        | 3.5       | 4.0       | 187.7        | 216.0        | 3     | 74          |
| 3000  | 14.2  | 16.4 | 3.8        | 3.7       | 4.3       | 201.9        | 232.3        | 2     | 77          |
| 3500  | 18.6  | 21.5 | 5.3        | 3.5       | 4.0       | 189.9        | 218.5        | 2     | 79          |
| 4000  | 22.9  | 26.4 | 7.1        | 3.2       | 3.7       | 174.5        | 200.8        | 2     | 80          |
| 4500  | 26.9  | 31.0 | 9.0        | 3.0       | 3.4       | 161.4        | 185.7        | 2     | 81          |
| 5000  | 30.4  | 35.0 | 11.2       | 2.7       | 3.1       | 146.4        | 168.5        | 2     | 84          |
| 5500  | 35.0  | 40.3 | 14.8       | 2.4       | 2.7       | 127.8        | 147.0        | 1     | 88          |

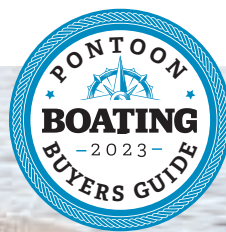
MOST ECONOMICAL CRUISING SPEED

VIAGGIO PONTON BOATS  
Bristol, Indiana; 574-622-0490; [viaggiopontoonboats.com](http://viaggiopontoonboats.com)



# AVALON

## 2185 LSZ ELITE



C

BOATING  
CERTIFIED  
TEST  
RESULTS



Price: \$81,800

### HIGH POINTS

- Optional Smart 80 touchscreen MFD.
- High-back, plush, reclining Sport captain's chairs.
- Deluxe seat-frame underpinnings allow air circulation to reduce mold and mildew in storage.

### SEE THE VIDEO

To watch our video review of the Avalon 2185 LSZ Elite, scan this tag or visit [boatingmag.com/bbg23/avalon2185lszelite](http://boatingmag.com/bbg23/avalon2185lszelite).



**SPECS:** LOA: 22'6" **BEAM:** 8'6" **DRAFT:** NA **DRY WEIGHT:** 2,200 lb. **SEAT/WEIGHT CAPACITY:** 12/1,710 lb. **FUEL CAPACITY:** 38 gal.

**HOW WE TESTED:** **ENGINE:** Suzuki APX four-stroke 175 hp **DRIVE/PROP:** Outboard/Suzuki 15 1/4" x 19" 3-blade stainless steel **GEAR RATIO:** 2.50:1 **FUEL LOAD:** 34 gal. **CREW WEIGHT:** 250 lb.

Avalon's sporty 2185 LSZ Elite paired with a torque-laden Suzuki DF175 outboard features 43 mph top-end performance and 4.7 mpg (3.2 gph) fuel-sipping economy at a most economical cruise speed of 15 mph at 3,000 rpm. With the 38-gallon tank full, expect a range of over 250 miles at cruise speed for this Avalon pontoon. It's quick too; we clocked 7.3 seconds from a dead stop to 30 mph. The triple-toon hull with lifting strakes is responsible for the competitive performance and dry, stable ride, even in windblown chop. Test conditions were not

friendly to most lake craft, but the Avalon cut off the wave tops like a boss, carving turns flat and stable.

Avalon boats offer a unique look, harkening back to art deco designs popularized in the architecture, art and transportation of the early 20th century. Our test rig featured a subtle green and tan motif complemented by a two-tone tan and dark-gray interior, and a railing design resonant with echoes of the cubism that spawned art deco. Recessed chrome bow lights offer a custom look.

In front, the 2185 LSZ Elite's layout features facing lounges, which will seat two guests each, curving in at the bow to surround a broad entry gate. Amidships, the pilot's console features a low windscreen made from Lexan, and a complete dash layout with a digital information screen, Fusion stereo and Garmin graph. A tilt helm, hydraulic steering and custom steering wheel complete a crisp, businesslike helm station, with plenty of legroom under the dash, even for taller pilots. A manual Bimini top is standard. In-floor storage provides room for water

| SPEED |       |      |      | EFFICIENCY |           |              |              | OPERATION |             |  |
|-------|-------|------|------|------------|-----------|--------------|--------------|-----------|-------------|--|
| rpm   | knots | mph  | gph  | naut. mpg  | stat. mpg | n. mi. range | s. mi. range | angle     | sound level |  |
| 1000  | 3.6   | 4.1  | 0.7  | 5.1        | 5.9       | 274.8        | 316.3        | 0         | 58          |  |
| 1500  | 4.8   | 5.5  | 1.2  | 4.0        | 4.6       | 215.1        | 247.5        | 1         | 62          |  |
| 2000  | 6.3   | 7.2  | 1.9  | 3.3        | 3.8       | 177.8        | 204.6        | 2         | 63          |  |
| 2500  | 7.3   | 8.4  | 2.6  | 2.8        | 3.2       | 151.6        | 174.5        | 3         | 72          |  |
| 3000  | 13.1  | 15.1 | 3.2  | 4.1        | 4.7       | 220.7        | 254.0        | 2         | 73          |  |
| 3500  | 16.4  | 18.9 | 4.3  | 3.8        | 4.4       | 206.3        | 237.3        | 1         | 79          |  |
| 4000  | 19.5  | 22.5 | 5.8  | 3.4        | 3.9       | 181.6        | 209.0        | 1         | 79          |  |
| 4500  | 22.9  | 26.4 | 7.2  | 3.2        | 3.7       | 172.1        | 198.0        | 2         | 82          |  |
| 5000  | 27.8  | 32.0 | 8.8  | 3.2        | 3.6       | 170.4        | 196.1        | 2         | 87          |  |
| 5500  | 31.2  | 36.0 | 12.3 | 2.5        | 2.9       | 137.1        | 157.8        | 2         | 89          |  |
| 6000  | 35.6  | 41.0 | 14.1 | 2.5        | 2.9       | 136.3        | 156.8        | 2         | 90          |  |
| 6300  | 37.1  | 42.8 | 15.3 | 2.4        | 2.8       | 131.1        | 150.9        | 2         | 90          |  |

MOST ECONOMICAL CRUISING SPEED

#### AVALON PONTOONS

Alma, Michigan; 800-334-2913; [avalonpontoons.com](http://avalonpontoons.com)



toys and vests.

Aft, a portside love seat faces the tilting driver's seat. Just behind in the stern, an L-shaped lounge dominates the layout, surrounded by the perimeter railing with a gate to provide access to the aft deck. Back there, the Suzuki 175 is well-rigged, with clean detailing and a beefy transom to hold it. This is a solid ride and a great value. At just under \$82,000, the Avalon provides all the amenities, power, style and ride you'd expect.



# PRINCECRAFT®

**DOMINATE THE WATERS®**



BRUNSWICK  
Boat Group

[www.PRINCECRAFT.com](http://www.PRINCECRAFT.com)

#### About Brunswick

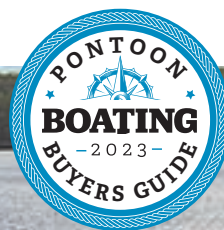
Headquartered in Melville, IL, Brunswick Corporation's leading consumer brands include Mercury Marine outboard engines; Mercury Mercruiser stern drive and inboard packages; Mercury global parts and accessories including propellers and SmartCraft electronics; Navico Group, which includes industry-leading brands like MotorGuide, Attwood, MasterVolt, Blue Sea Systems, CZone, Land 'N' Sea, BIA, Payne's Marine, Kellogg Marine, and Lankhorst; Jaseleer marine parts distribution; Mercury and Quicksilver parts and oils; Bayliner, Boston Whaler, Crestliner, Cypress Cay, Harris, Heyday, Lowe, Lund, Princecraft, Quicksilver, Rayglass, Sea Ray, Thunder Jet and Uttern boats; Boating Services Network, Freedom Boat Club and Boat Class. For more information, visit [brunswick.com](http://brunswick.com).

#### About Princecraft Boats Inc.

Since 1954, Princecraft® Boats Inc., headquartered in Princeville, Quebec, Canada, creates unparalleled experiences on the water for fishing and boating enthusiasts with "professionally rigged and ready" packages of aluminum fishing boats, pontoon boats, and deck boats. Its commitment is borne out of a deeply rooted heritage of unmatched craftsmanship, incomparable performance, and the promise of years of trouble-free boating. More fishermen, families, and dealers than ever join the Princecraft® family and create some of the best moments of their lives. For more information, visit [www.Princecraft.com](http://www.Princecraft.com)



## SUNCATCHER FUSION 324 SL



S

BOATING  
BUYERS  
SPOTLIGHT

Price: \$67,531 (with Yamaha F150)

HIGH  
POINTS

- ▶ Stern lounge has several combinations for crew comfort, including an adjustable rear- or forward-facing backrest and a fully reclined sun lounge.
- ▶ Handling is exceptional thanks to Yamaha electric steering.
- ▶ Tons of storage space swallows up all the gear you'd want to bring aboard.
- ▶ Insulated built-in cooler in the starboard bow sofa keeps food and refreshments chilled all day.

**SPECS:** LOA: 23'11" **BEAM:** 8'6" **DRAFT:** NA **DRY WEIGHT:** 3,105 lb. **SEAT/WEIGHT CAPACITY:** 12/2,500 lb. **FUEL CAPACITY:** 46 gal. **AVAILABLE POWER:** 90 to 250 hp Yamaha VF250 outboard

**S**unCatcher, the pontoon arm of Yamaha's G3 boat company, has come out with an all-new Fusion 324 SL, a family pontoon with plenty of amenities and several upgrades for 2023. Black-painted rails are a stylish option and give this boat an eye-catching look. The faux-teak flooring is easy to clean and feels super-comfortable underfoot. This pontoon features one of the most popular options: a couch storage system that allows you to customize the boat the way you want to use it. The all-new insulated cooler built into the forward starboard sofa adds

more family-friendly amenities. Now you don't have to take up precious deck space with a carry-on cooler. There's also tons of storage underneath the couches in the roto-molded plastic seat bases fore and aft.

Seating is the name of the game aboard the Fusion 324 SL, especially the stern lounge that gives the boat its "SL" designation. Located aft of the portside passenger captain's seat (which matches the captain's chair at the helm), the stern lounge features adjustable backrests that can change the layout to multiple configurations, from a rear-facing or forward-facing lounge to a full-on sun pad. It will easily be one of the most popular places to hang out on the boat, whether having a chat or catching some rays. The bow is another great socialization point, with opposing couches and a pedestal-table insert that make it a great conversation pit. All told, the Fusion 324 SL can hold up to 12 passengers, so it's a great platform for a cruise with friends or extended family.

The Fusion 324 SL is available with Yamaha engines from an F90 to a VF250. We don't have performance numbers for



## G3 BOATS

Lebanon, Missouri; 800-588-9787; [suncatcherpontoon.com](http://suncatcherpontoon.com)

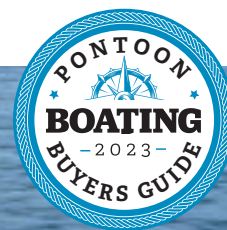
this model yet, but another Fusion 324 model we tested recently (the 324 SS) broke the 40 mph mark and felt smooth and predictable from the helm. The triple-toon package features three 25-inch-diameter tubes that provide a stable, solid platform. The captain will enjoy the view from the helm, which features an inset Garmin EchoMap display, a Jensen stereo system and Yamaha digital gauges. There's definitely something for everyone in your crew aboard G3's new SunCatcher Fusion 324 SL.





# SUNCHASER

## GENEVA SPORT 23 FISH



**BOATING  
CERTIFIED  
TEST  
RESULTS**

### HIGH POINTS

- ▶ Upgraded sea-weave vinyl flooring looks sharp and is easy to clean.
- ▶ Power canopy works with the push of a button.
- ▶ Loaded fishing station abaft easily doubles as a cocktail table.

### SEE THE VIDEO

To watch our video review of the Geneva Sport 23 Fish, scan this tag or visit [boatingmag.com/bbg23/sunchaser-genevasport-23fish](http://boatingmag.com/bbg23/sunchaser-genevasport-23fish).



**Price: \$65,290 (as tested)**

**SPECS:** LOA: 22'10" BEAM: 8'6" DRAFT: NA DRY WEIGHT: 2,061 lb. SEAT/WEIGHT CAPACITY: 11/1,500 lb. FUEL CAPACITY: 60 gal.

**HOW WE TESTED:** ENGINE: Mercury FourStroke 150 hp DRIVE/PROP: Outboard/Mercury Mirage Plus 15 1/4" x 15" 3-blade stainless steel GEAR RATIO: 2.08:1 FUEL LOAD: 45 gal. CREW WEIGHT: 250 lb.

**A** pontoon boat aimed at anglers? SunChaser's Geneva Sport 23 Fish is a family party boat that offers a center-mounted fillet table aft, a built-in fish scale (that doubles as a cocktail table), molded-in rod holders, and a 30-gallon aerated livewell. Two swiveling, high-back fishing chairs make casting easy while doubling as comfy lounge seats. Aft of there, dual rear gates provide great access to the stern deck, which is plenty wide and deep for family swimming, sunning, and watersports prep—and landing fish, of course.

Amidships, the port side features a long lounge with facing angled end cushions that can seat three comfortably. The helm station features a high-back plush chair bolted directly behind the console. It offers excellent access to the instruments and the tilt wheel, which commands hydraulic steering. A Jensen stereo is standard, as is a Lexan windscreen. In front, twin facing loungers flank a center forward entry door.

Rigged with a Mercury 150 FourStroke outboard (rated for up to 300 hp if you boat with a large crew or desire higher speeds), the Geneva Sport 23 Fish hit nearly 37 mph, and it accelerated from zero to 30 mph in under 9 seconds. It's also a fuel-sipper. We logged just 3.3 gph and 4.7 mpg at 15.6 mph, its most economical speed. You can cruise and fish all day long.

A tri-toon, the Geneva Sport 23 Fish also proves stable and predictable in chop and when turning, and it delivers an overall pleasant ride. Lift, handling, turning and acceleration all benefit from the Xtreme Performance Package, with strakes on the outsides of the outer tubes and both sides of the center tube.

The overall appearance is sleek yet subdued; the standard blackout railing finish coupled with the dark-gray perimeter panels complements the two-tone pillow-top upholstery. The standard power Bimini top sports a black powder-coated frame to match the boat's railings, and is easy to lower and raise with the push of a button for easier trailering and navigating under bridges. Overall, this pontoon provides boaters with a fantastic platform for cruising, fishing and overall family fun.

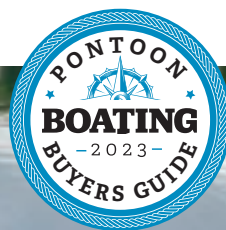
| SPEED |       |      | EFFICIENCY |           |              |              | OPERATION |             |    |
|-------|-------|------|------------|-----------|--------------|--------------|-----------|-------------|----|
| rpm   | knots | mph  | naut. gph  | stat. mpg | n. mi. range | s. mi. range | angle     | sound level |    |
| 1000  | 4.3   | 5.0  | 1.0        | 4.3       | 5.0          | 232.3        | 267.3     | 1           | 59 |
| 1500  | 6.1   | 7.1  | 1.5        | 4.1       | 4.7          | 220.5        | 253.8     | 2           | 65 |
| 2000  | 7.9   | 9.1  | 2.3        | 3.4       | 4.0          | 185.7        | 213.7     | 2           | 68 |
| 2500  | 13.6  | 15.6 | 3.3        | 4.1       | 4.7          | 221.8        | 255.3     | 2           | 70 |
| 3000  | 16.6  | 19.1 | 4.3        | 3.9       | 4.4          | 208.4        | 239.9     | 1           | 72 |
| 3500  | 20.4  | 23.5 | 5.9        | 3.5       | 4.0          | 186.5        | 214.6     | 1           | 75 |
| 4000  | 23.4  | 27.0 | 7.7        | 3.0       | 3.5          | 164.2        | 189.0     | 2           | 77 |
| 4500  | 26.2  | 30.1 | 9.8        | 2.7       | 3.1          | 144.1        | 165.9     | 2           | 78 |
| 5000  | 30.7  | 35.4 | 13.2       | 2.3       | 2.7          | 125.7        | 144.6     | 1           | 80 |
| 5300  | 31.7  | 36.5 | 14.2       | 2.2       | 2.6          | 120.6        | 138.8     | 2           | 82 |

**MOST ECONOMICAL CRUISING SPEED**

**SUNCHASER BOATS**  
New Paris, Indiana; 574-831-2103; [sunchaserboats.com](http://sunchaserboats.com)

# PRINCECRAFT

## VECTRA 23 XT



C

BOATING  
CERTIFIED  
TEST  
RESULTS



Price: \$40,334 (base MSRP with Mercury 115 Pro XS)

### HIGH POINTS

- Optional pedestal table lets crew enjoy snacks in the bow area.
- Molded-in drink holders abound.
- Optional storage area under the helm console.
- Bimini top offers plenty of shade.

### SEE THE VIDEO

To watch our video review of the Princecraft Vectra 23 XT, scan this tag or visit [boatingmag.com/bbg23/princecraftvectra23xt](http://boatingmag.com/bbg23/princecraftvectra23xt).



**SPECS:** LOA: 23'6" **BEAM:** 8'5" **DRAFT (MAX):** 1'0" **DRY WEIGHT:** 1,900 lb. (with power) **SEAT/WEIGHT CAPACITY:** 12/1,623 lb. **FUEL CAPACITY:** 27 gal.

**HOW WE TESTED:** **ENGINE:** Mercury 115 Pro XS **DRIVE/PROP:** Outboard/Spitfire 13" x 31" 4-blade stainless steel **GEAR RATIO:** 2.33:1 **FUEL LOAD:** 25 gal. **CREW WEIGHT:** 500 lb.

**F**eature-rich, stylish, sporty and affordable, Princecraft's Vectra 23 XT rates as a must-see for families looking to spend quality time on the water. Construction includes durable, corrosion-resistant 5052-H36 marine-grade aluminum pontoons with 2½-inch heavy-duty extruded Z-aluminum cross channels.

Full-length extruded aluminum keels and a V-shaped aluminum engine pod provide directional stability, while lifting strakes enhanced speed. Our boat had V-hull-like handling thanks to the Sport configuration that includes a

bow-central half third log with lifting strakes and a spray shield.

Topside, we found three gates in the 1¼-inch anodized aluminum perimeter rail to ease boarding, one each at the stern, bow and port side, each with lift and lock hinges.

Plush facing loungers in the bow and aft areas provide plenty of room for family and friends to kick back, with tons of storage below each of them. The captain and co-pilot settle into a pair of deluxe, swiveling bucket seats, part of the Silver Premium Classic Edition package that also includes metallic color accents, raised chrome Princecraft logos, chrome dock lights, LED lighting under the helm, an upgraded steering wheel and more.

The roomy aft swim platform, known as the Fun Zone, adds a pair of rear-facing recliners for relaxing while on the anchor, sandbar or beach. There's cavernous stowage under each. The Fun Zone also includes a stainless-steel telescoping boarding ladder to starboard, and an optional ski pylon can be added to enjoy watersports. A ski locker is available with

| SPEED |       |       |       | EFFICIENCY |           |              |              | OPERATION |       |       |
|-------|-------|-------|-------|------------|-----------|--------------|--------------|-----------|-------|-------|
| rpm   | knots | mph   | gph   | naut. mpg  | stat. mpg | n. mi. range | s. mi. range | angle     | level | sound |
| 1000  | 3.04  | 3.50  | 0.50  | 6.08       | 7.00      | 148          | 170          | 0         | 68    |       |
| 1500  | 4.34  | 5.00  | 0.80  | 5.43       | 6.25      | 132          | 152          | 2         | 69    |       |
| 2000  | 5.21  | 6.00  | 1.40  | 3.72       | 4.29      | 90           | 104          | 5         | 71    |       |
| 2500  | 6.95  | 8.00  | 2.10  | 3.31       | 3.81      | 80           | 93           | 5         | 76    |       |
| 3000  | 9.56  | 11.00 | 2.80  | 3.41       | 3.93      | 83           | 95           | 6         | 73    |       |
| 3500  | 13.90 | 16.00 | 3.60  | 3.86       | 4.44      | 94           | 108          | 5         | 79    |       |
| 4000  | 16.51 | 19.00 | 5.40  | 3.06       | 3.52      | 74           | 86           | 2         | 86    |       |
| 4500  | 19.99 | 23.00 | 6.70  | 2.98       | 3.43      | 72           | 83           | 0         | 87    |       |
| 5000  | 22.16 | 25.50 | 7.90  | 2.80       | 3.23      | 68           | 78           | 0         | 89    |       |
| 5500  | 26.07 | 30.00 | 10.20 | 2.56       | 2.94      | 62           | 71           | 0         | 90    |       |
| 5800  | 28.24 | 32.50 | 11.10 | 2.54       | 2.93      | 62           | 71           | 0         | 91    |       |

MOST ECONOMICAL CRUISING SPEED

**PRINCECRAFT**  
Princeville, Quebec, Canada; 800-395-8858; [princecraft.com](http://princecraft.com)

the Sport or Performance configurations to stow skis, towropes and more.

Need music? Crank up the optional Kicker KMC 100 stereo in the helm console. It pumps out 200 watts through four speakers.

Our 23 XT came with a Mercury 115 Pro XS FourStroke outboard that launched this tri-toon from zero to 20 mph in 8 seconds, reaching 30 mph in 11.5 seconds and accelerating to a top speed of 32.5 mph. The boat banked comfortably into turns and smoothly skimmed across the waves.





# BENNINGTON

## 22L SWINGBACK

### HIGH POINTS

- Speakers, cup holders and charging ports are found in the lumbar pocket.
- Standards include a stowable sculpted wood-grain trapezoid table that floats, tilt steering, and smooth or textured fence panels.

### SEE THE VIDEO

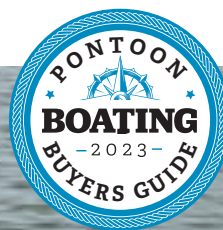
To see our video review of the Bennington 22L Swingback, scan this tag or visit [boatingmag.com/bbg23/bennington22lswingback](http://boatingmag.com/bbg23/bennington22lswingback).



**Price: \$99,527 (with Mercury 200)**

**SPECS:** LOA: 23'9" DRAFT (MAX): 2'7" DRY WEIGHT: 2,555 lb. SEAT/WEIGHT CAPACITY: 12/2,992 lb. FUEL CAPACITY: 32 gal.

**HOW WE TESTED:** ENGINE: Mercury 200 DRIVE/PROP: Outboard/Mercury Enertia 15" x 15" 3-blade stainless steel GEAR RATIO: 1.85:1 FUEL LOAD: 29 gal. CREW WEIGHT: 160 lb.



**BOATING  
CERTIFIED  
TEST  
RESULTS**



**B**ennington's 22L Swingback brings much of the same upscale style and quality we've come to expect from this brand's pontoon boats to an appealing, midrange price point. The attractive interior upholstery is Simtex vinyl, which is both supple and soft, with contrasting diamond-pattern panels. The helm looks clean and classy, with Bennington's classic wood-grain accent panels installed in designer shades. The stereo remote at the stern is the same full-size head unit you'll find at the dash. (No need to learn how to use two devices.) Even the obvious

cost-conscious examples, like exposed roto-molded seat bases, are color-matched so well, they almost go unnoticed.

As the Swingback name implies, the 22L features the popular convertible lounge aft with a pivoting backrest. Tilted aft, it creates a comfortable couch for both running at speed or socializing with other passengers in the main cockpit. Tilted forward, the emphasis switches to kicking back on the adjoining sun pad. Individual cushions at the tail end of the pad can also easily prop upward to add additional backrests if desired, or serve as a place to prop your feet. A stainless-steel keeper rail with a starboard gate provides security in order to use the space while underway and maintain an open and airy feel at the back of the boat.

Elsewhere, twin captain's chairs can pivot back to join the social scene behind or provide a secure perch when underway. Forward, a familiar couch layout is perfect for those who like a little more wind in their hair. Relax, recline, or pack in friends and family. Seat occupants will find the lumbar cutouts add a welcome

touch of room, whether laying out or sitting up straight.

Our test boat rode atop Bennington's SPS Performance Package, a trio of 25-inch-round pontoons fitted with performance strakes. They carried the 22L smoothly across the water in varying water conditions while displaying a subtle inside lean in the corners. With a Mercury 200 hp FourStroke providing the power, we found the boat planed almost instantly and passed the 30 mph mark in 5.9 seconds. Top speed was 42.5 mph.

| SPEED |       |       | EFFICIENCY |           |           |              | OPERATION    |       |             |
|-------|-------|-------|------------|-----------|-----------|--------------|--------------|-------|-------------|
| rpm   | knots | mph   | gph        | naut. mpg | stat. mpg | n. mi. range | s. mi. range | angle | sound level |
| 1000  | 4.00  | 4.60  | 1.00       | 4.00      | 4.60      | 115          | 132          | 0     | 62          |
| 1500  | 5.21  | 6.00  | 1.50       | 3.48      | 4.00      | 100          | 115          | 0     | 77          |
| 2000  | 7.65  | 8.80  | 2.50       | 3.06      | 3.52      | 88           | 101          | 3     | 68          |
| 2500  | 11.90 | 13.70 | 2.70       | 4.41      | 5.07      | 127          | 146          | 1     | 69          |
| 3000  | 14.34 | 16.50 | 3.60       | 3.98      | 4.58      | 115          | 132          | 1     | 75          |
| 3500  | 20.07 | 23.10 | 5.10       | 3.94      | 4.53      | 113          | 130          | 2     | 80          |
| 4000  | 23.81 | 27.40 | 6.50       | 3.66      | 4.22      | 105          | 121          | 2     | 79          |
| 4500  | 28.50 | 32.80 | 8.70       | 3.28      | 3.77      | 94           | 109          | 1     | 85          |
| 5000  | 31.63 | 36.40 | 10.40      | 3.04      | 3.50      | 88           | 101          | 1     | 82          |
| 5500  | 35.28 | 40.60 | 14.80      | 2.38      | 2.74      | 69           | 79           | 1     | 85          |
| 5800  | 57.27 | 42.50 | 16.30      | 3.51      | 2.61      | 101          | 75           | 1     | 85          |

**MOST ECONOMICAL CRUISING SPEED**

**BENNINGTON MARINE**  
Elkhart, Indiana; 574-264-6336; [benningtonmarine.com](http://benningtonmarine.com)



# SILVER WAVE

## SW5 2410 CLS



S

BOATING  
BUYERS  
SPOTLIGHT



Price: \$56,736 (base)

### HIGH POINTS

- Fiberglass fence panels look great compared to the aluminum fencing on other boats and add storage in the bow sections.
- Hatches and doors that match the console and floor give this pontoon boat a finished, automotive look in the interior.
- Tons of features come standard—such as a sun top and a stereo with 6.5-inch speakers—but adding the Platinum Package will max out luxury.

**SPECS:** LOA: 23'10" **BEAM:** 8'6" **DRAFT:** 1'6" **DRY WEIGHT:** 1,950 lb.; 2,240 lb. (tri-toon) **SEAT/WEIGHT CAPACITY:** 12/2,409 lb.; 14/3,130 lb. (tri-toon) **FUEL CAPACITY:** 27 gal. **AVAILABLE POWER:** Single outboard engine to 150 hp (300 hp for tri-toon)

The distinctive Silver Wave sheerline results from the use of molded fiberglass fencing, opposed to the aluminum surround competitors use. Aboard the SW5 2410 CLS, the layout's function and versatility result from a well-thought-out design.

Order the SW5 2410 CLS with the Platinum Package (\$5,337) and you can really ramp up the luxury. It comes with Platinum upgrades such as soft-touch upholstery, a luxury steering wheel, a raised helm with a matching floor mat, storage in the bow fencing, a polished stainless-steel

railing, and the new storage locker lid with a matching flooring cover.

The CLS (which stands for Corner Lounge) layout maximizes seating with huge curved lounges fore and aft. Taken with the standard swiveling helm seats, this produces three distinct socializing areas in the boat—four if you consider the extended aft deck.

Silver Wave provides many standards that other builders offer as options. These include a helm fitted with a rearview mirror, two wireless phone chargers, a storage door matching the fiberglass console, and a 7-inch Garmin EchoMap UHD 73sv multifunction display showing integral engine data. The attractive furniture sports quilted trim and woven kick-panel accents. In-seat stowage is raised to enhance drainage. A Wet Sounds stereo head with an RGB remote and 6.5-inch speakers also comes standard. The rear boarding ladder is stainless steel, and a sun top with a boot and LED lights is also standard.

Construction consists of cross members located on 16-inch centers, a water-deflection shield, and the use of both



**SILVER WAVE PONTOONS**  
Seminole, Oklahoma; 405-241-1133; silverwavepontoon.com

Z- and hat-channel members to ensure a stout foundation. The deck is secured by elevator bolts, and the 25-inch-diameter tubes are reinforced. Watertight Deutsch connectors—the best—are used for wiring.

Silver Wave offers this pontoon in a variety of tri-toon versions. Power ratings for these triple toons go up to 300 hp. You have your choice of a Mercury, Suzuki or Yamaha outboard.

Seeking style, standards and luxury? Check out Silver Wave's SW5 2410 CLS with the Platinum Package.





# LEAVE IT ALL BEHIND



## BUILDING BOATS FOR OVER 49 YEARS

Take your getaways to the next level with PlayCraft's X-Treme Series, where we throw limitations overboard. You get the power, speed and handling PlayCraft is known for, plus, there is no shortage of luxury on the X-Treme Series. This boat features stylish designs, overstuffed seats and ample lounging areas for anyone looking to kick back and enjoy the beauty of the lake. So whether it's a relaxing day, or a heart-racing day, the X-Treme will give you a day you will never forget.

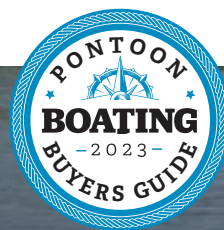


[PLAYCRAFTBOATS.COM](http://PLAYCRAFTBOATS.COM)



# VIAGGIO

## DIAMANTE 23B



C

BOATING  
CERTIFIED  
TEST  
RESULTS



Price: \$98,211 (with Suzuki 200)

### HIGH POINTS

- ▶ Triple-toon hull offers SeaStar hydraulic steering and drag-reducing underdeck shielding.
- ▶ Luxe seats with dry storage.
- ▶ Standards include Rockford Fosgate PMX-2 audio, chrome docking and nav lights, woven vinyl flooring.

### SEE THE VIDEO

To see our video review of the Viaggio Diamante 23B, scan this tag or visit [boatingmag.com/bbg23/viaggiodyamante23b](http://boatingmag.com/bbg23/viaggiodyamante23b).



**SPECS:** LOA: 23'10" **DRAFT (MAX):** 1'6" **DRY WEIGHT:** 3,162 lb. **SEAT/WEIGHT CAPACITY:** 11/2,345 lb. **FUEL CAPACITY:** 58 gal.

**HOW WE TESTED:** **ENGINE:** Suzuki DF200 **DRIVE/PROP:** Outboard/Suzuki 16" x 18.5" 3-blade stainless steel **GEAR RATIO:** 2.29:1 **FUEL LOAD:** 56 gal. **CREW WEIGHT:** 160 lb.

Just like the name (the Italian word for voyage or journey), Viaggio's Diamante 23B has its own unique style. Find it in the perimeter rails—heavy-duty 3-inch-wide aluminum extrusions with precise angled corners meant to evoke the angles of the letter V. See it in flat-panel aluminum walls that combine an attractive matte finish with the subtle pop of metallic flake. Note that blackout isn't an optional package name but the standard finish to metalwork abovedecks.

Step aboard and accommodations build on that initial impression. Lounges

feature angular corners and a clean, minimalist color scheme, with vinyl wrapping the seat bases all the way to the floor. Roto-molded seat bases feature water-diverting channels to keep water at bay. Two-part hinges allow cushions to pivot down and perpendicular, making it easier to access gear. There's also impressive attention to detail. Seat-base-mounted speakers are covered in housings, wiring wrapped in conduit, and screws covered with protective plastic tips.

At the helm, a standard Simrad Go9 dominates the dash, keeping GPS positioning and engine data front and center. Aircraft-style toggles for lights, the horn, the bilge and the like are grouped to the left and right of the wheel. Aft, the layout is highlighted by a slender bar. Enjoy drinks seated on one of three stools featuring gleaming stainless-steel backrests. Drink holders smartly hold both cans and stemware. There's also designated can and bottle storage, a bottle opener and USB charging. Note how the design smartly angles aft midway along its length to maintain easy stern access. Opposite,

| SPEED |       |       |       | EFFICIENCY |           |              |              | OPERATION |             |  |
|-------|-------|-------|-------|------------|-----------|--------------|--------------|-----------|-------------|--|
| rpm   | knots | mph   | gph   | naut. mpg  | stat. mpg | n. mi. range | s. mi. range | angle     | sound level |  |
| 1000  | 4.00  | 4.60  | 0.80  | 5.00       | 5.75      | 270          | 311          | 0         | 52          |  |
| 1500  | 4.69  | 5.40  | 1.20  | 3.91       | 4.50      | 211          | 243          | 1         | 67          |  |
| 2000  | 6.26  | 7.20  | 1.80  | 3.48       | 4.00      | 188          | 216          | 2         | 64          |  |
| 2500  | 8.52  | 9.80  | 2.60  | 3.28       | 3.77      | 177          | 204          | 3         | 65          |  |
| 3000  | 14.34 | 16.50 | 3.40  | 4.22       | 4.85      | 228          | 262          | 1         | 74          |  |
| 3500  | 17.90 | 20.60 | 4.80  | 3.73       | 4.29      | 201          | 232          | 1         | 78          |  |
| 4000  | 21.29 | 24.50 | 6.70  | 3.18       | 3.66      | 172          | 197          | 2         | 74          |  |
| 4500  | 24.59 | 28.30 | 7.90  | 3.11       | 3.58      | 168          | 193          | 2         | 74          |  |
| 5000  | 28.07 | 32.30 | 9.90  | 2.84       | 3.26      | 153          | 176          | 2         | 79          |  |
| 5500  | 32.50 | 37.40 | 14.00 | 2.32       | 2.67      | 125          | 144          | 1         | 78          |  |
| 6000  | 35.50 | 40.80 | 18.50 | 1.92       | 2.21      | 104          | 119          | 1         | 82          |  |

MOST ECONOMICAL CRUISING SPEED

VIAGGIO PONTON BOATS  
Bristol, Indiana; 855-842-4446; [viaggiopontoonboats.com](http://viaggiopontoonboats.com)

add a trio of passengers on another comfy couch, or stretch out solo against an aft-facing backrest.

Our test boat's Suzuki 200 was noticeably quiet, registering only 52 dB(A) at idle and 82 dB(A) at the boat's 40.8 mph top speed. Optional triple 25-inch pontoons with performance-minded lifting strakes produced sharp handling while retaining more of a pontoon's classic, flatter-turning personality. An efficient cruise was noted at 3,000 rpm and 16.5 mph, a combo that burned a minimal 3.4 gph.





## HIGH POINTS

- Optional extended aft deck for sand-bar gathering or watersports prep.
- Quad bench layout provides two distinct conversation pits.
- Duraframe seat bases feature self-draining channels and ventilation.

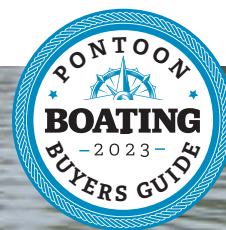
## SEE THE VIDEO

To watch our video review of the 23 SX Quad Bench, scan this tag or visit [boatingmag.com/bbg23/bennington23sxquadbench](http://boatingmag.com/bbg23/bennington23sxquadbench).



# BENNINGTON

## 23 SX QUAD BENCH



**BOATING  
CERTIFIED  
TEST  
RESULTS**



**Price: \$98,956 (as tested)**

**SPECS:** LOA: 23'11.5" BEAM: 8'6" DRAFT: 14"/31" DRY WEIGHT: 3,108 lb. SEAT/WEIGHT CAPACITY: 12/3,108 lb. FUEL CAPACITY: 32 gal.

**HOW WE TESTED:** ENGINE: Yamaha four-stroke 150 hp DRIVE/PROP: Outboard/Yamaha Reliance 14.5" x 15" 3-blade stainless steel GEAR RATIO: 2.00:1 FUEL LOAD: 20 gal. CREW WEIGHT: 250 lb.

**D**ecked out in deep Monaco blue offset with metallic white, Bennington's 23 SX had a 39 mph top speed, the 150 hp Yamaha turning 5,800 rpm. Acceleration proved spirited as well, hitting 30 mph in just 6.7 seconds—quick and powerful enough for watersports and hauling a big crew. This package is on plane at just 12.6 mph. Triple 25-inch tubes with the SPS Performance Package help the boat get off the line quickly and handle rough water, thanks to the lifting stakes on both sides of the center 'toon and the outsides of the outer 'toons.

Even so, it's fuelishly conservative, delivering a most economical cruise of nearly 5 mpg (3.4 gph) at 3,000 rpm, where the GPS indicated just shy of 17 mph. That's a great evening cruise speed, and conversation at normal voice levels was easy with 69 dB(A) at the helm.

This Bennington's deck layout offers a great party platform. The bow boasts an extended foredeck, great for doing a little fishing or just helping the captain dock, anchor or land straight on the trailer. The perimeter panels are textured, and the rails are smartly contoured and styled, featuring subtly curved aluminum rails. A matching optional curved-frame Bimini top can reside overhead, and the swim ladder handles water access. Both bow and stern seating are curved U-shaped lounges that comfortably seat four each, with an optional gate filler seat. A movable and stowable sculpted cocktail table can be fitted fore or aft. Simtex high-grade vinyl upholstery, in Carbon Metallic aboard our tester, creates the SX pillow-top benches and seatbacks, with an attractive diamond

pattern heat-pressed into the vinyl.

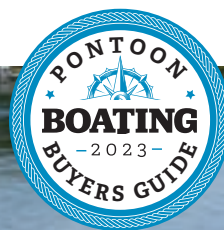
You and your mate command this Bennington from plush reclining and swiveling high-back captain's chairs. The sweptback helm features zebrawood trim, with optional hydraulic steering and Yamaha digital instrumentation. Cup holders and a phone holder complement an optional locking glove box in the lower console. A Rockford Fosgate audio system, custom-tuned for Bennington Marine, offers big fidelity for high times on the water.



| SPEED |       |      | EFFICIENCY |       |        |        | OPERATION |       |       |
|-------|-------|------|------------|-------|--------|--------|-----------|-------|-------|
|       |       |      | naut.      | stat. | n. mi. | s. mi. |           | sound |       |
| rpm   | knots | mph  | gph        | mpg   | mpg    | range  | range     | angle | level |
| 1000  | 4.1   | 4.7  | 0.8        | 5.1   | 5.9    | 275.7  | 317.3     | 1     | 58    |
| 1500  | 5.5   | 6.3  | 1.4        | 3.9   | 4.5    | 211.2  | 243.0     | 1     | 63    |
| 2000  | 7.0   | 8.1  | 1.9        | 3.7   | 4.2    | 198.8  | 228.8     | 1     | 64    |
| 2500  | 11.1  | 12.8 | 2.6        | 4.3   | 4.9    | 230.1  | 264.8     | 2     | 67    |
| 3000  | 14.4  | 16.6 | 3.4        | 4.2   | 4.9    | 229.1  | 263.6     | 1     | 69    |
| 3500  | 18.0  | 20.8 | 4.6        | 3.9   | 4.5    | 211.7  | 243.6     | 1     | 75    |
| 4000  | 21.6  | 24.9 | 6.2        | 3.5   | 4.0    | 188.1  | 216.4     | 1     | 76    |
| 4500  | 24.4  | 28.1 | 7.8        | 3.1   | 3.6    | 169.0  | 194.5     | 2     | 77    |
| 5000  | 27.9  | 32.1 | 10.9       | 2.6   | 2.9    | 138.0  | 158.8     | 2     | 82    |
| 5500  | 31.2  | 35.9 | 13.0       | 2.4   | 2.8    | 129.6  | 149.1     | 2     | 83    |
| 5800  | 33.9  | 39.0 | 14.8       | 2.3   | 2.6    | 123.7  | 142.3     | 2     | 84    |

**MOST ECONOMICAL CRUISING SPEED**

**BENNINGTON MARINE**  
Elkhart, Indiana; 574-264-6336; [benningtonmarine.com](http://benningtonmarine.com)



C

BOATING  
CERTIFIED  
TEST  
RESULTS

Price: \$72,729

HIGH  
POINTS

- Competitive price.
- LTZ option packs upgraded stereo, high-back recliners, USB outlets, and upgraded lighting and graphics.
- Forward lounges double as sleeper seats.

SEE THE  
VIDEO

To watch our video review of the E-Class 822 Splash Pad LTZ, scan this tag or visit [boatingmag.com/bbg23/qwest822splashpad](http://boatingmag.com/bbg23/qwest822splashpad).



**SPECS:** LOA: 24'1" **BEAM:** 8'0" **DRAFT:** NA **DRY WEIGHT:** 2,845 lb. **SEAT/WEIGHT CAPACITY:** 13/1,775 lb. **FUEL CAPACITY:** 45 gal.

**HOW WE TESTED:** **ENGINE:** Suzuki four-stroke 200 hp **DRIVE/PROP:** Outboard/Suzuki 16" x 20" 3-blade stainless steel **GEAR RATIO:** 2.50:1 **FUEL LOAD:** 30 gal. **CREW WEIGHT:** 200 lb.

The Qwest E-Class 822 Splash Pad LTZ we tested featured a Suzuki DF200. A great choice, it zipped us to 30 mph in 6.3 seconds and topped at 44 mph. At its most economical cruise speed of 14 mph, the Suzuki sipped fuel at just 2.5 gph, netting 5.6 mpg. With its 45-gallon tank, 300 miles of range is possible, leaving 10 percent in the tank as reserve. The Qwest will handle and ride; the triple 25-inch pontoons with lifting strakes and underdeck underskin give swift and stable performance over late-afternoon lake chop and boat wakes, and

when turning hard over. Extra baffles are welded in the tubes to help handle rougher water.

The outside perimeter fencing features a blacked-out railing with gray and cayenne red accent panels. It's an excellent color contrast and gives an attractive look without overstatement.

In front, two long, facing curved loungers offer expanded seating for a larger group. Even cooler, the optional sleeper seats fold down to form a complete bed across the entire bow section. The pilot's console features a 7-inch graph flanked by control switches for all boat functions, a neat little pocket phone charger pad, and a Clarion premium Bluetooth sound system with LED-lit speakers. Twin high-back reclining chairs await the captain and mate. The portside forward-lounge aft end cap features a built-in flip-up table and storage cubby. A folding 9-foot Bimini top is standard.

The aft seating arrangement is where this boat gets its name. The Splash Pad is a three-quarter-width lounge seat with a multiposition reversible backrest.

| SPEED |       |      |      | EFFICIENCY |           |              |              | OPERATION |             |  |  |
|-------|-------|------|------|------------|-----------|--------------|--------------|-----------|-------------|--|--|
| rpm   | knots | mph  | gph  | naut. mpg  | stat. mpg | n. mi. range | s. mi. range | angle     | sound level |  |  |
| 1000  | 3.8   | 4.4  | 0.7  | 5.5        | 6.3       | 295.0        | 339.4        | 1         | 56          |  |  |
| 1500  | 5.7   | 6.6  | 1.2  | 4.8        | 5.5       | 258.1        | 297.0        | 1         | 66          |  |  |
| 2000  | 7.6   | 8.8  | 1.8  | 4.2        | 4.9       | 229.4        | 264.0        | 2         | 64          |  |  |
| 2500  | 12.1  | 13.9 | 2.5  | 4.8        | 5.6       | 260.9        | 300.2        | 2         | 66          |  |  |
| 3000  | 15.8  | 18.2 | 3.4  | 4.7        | 5.4       | 251.2        | 289.1        | 2         | 72          |  |  |
| 3500  | 19.6  | 22.6 | 4.8  | 4.1        | 4.7       | 220.9        | 254.3        | 2         | 73          |  |  |
| 4000  | 24.2  | 27.8 | 6.6  | 3.7        | 4.2       | 197.7        | 227.5        | 2         | 71          |  |  |
| 4500  | 28.2  | 32.5 | 8.2  | 3.4        | 4.0       | 186.0        | 214.0        | 2         | 73          |  |  |
| 5000  | 31.6  | 36.4 | 10.0 | 3.2        | 3.6       | 170.8        | 196.6        | 2         | 75          |  |  |
| 5500  | 35.2  | 40.5 | 14.0 | 2.5        | 2.9       | 135.7        | 156.2        | 2         | 75          |  |  |
| 6000  | 38.3  | 44.1 | 19.0 | 2.0        | 2.3       | 108.9        | 125.3        | 2         | 74          |  |  |

MOST ECONOMICAL CRUISING SPEED

## APEX MARINE

St. Louis, Michigan; 989-681-4300; [qwestpontoons.com](http://qwestpontoons.com)

This makes for another complete bed-like pad when both backrests are folded flat. Alternatively, riders can lounge facing forward or aft, depending on how the backrests are positioned—a versatile arrangement.

Aft of the rear perimeter fencing, an extended swim deck features a stainless-steel boarding ladder. The Splash Pad is packed with useful and innovative features; coupled with the performance, construction and price point, it commands attention.



# STARCRAFT<sup>TM</sup>

## MARINE

60<sup>TH</sup>  
ANNIVERSARY

FIBERGLASS  
BOAT BUILDING  
EXCELLENCE



CSI  
award

LIFE 6 TIME

NMMA  
CERTIFIED  
BY ABYC



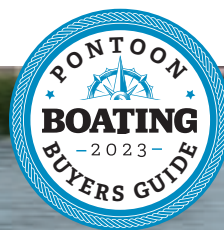
## THE ALL-NEW SVX OB. MORE AFFORDABLE FUN.

The all-new SVX series proves that fun on the water doesn't have to come with a big price tag. Available in models from 17' to 23', all offer sporty performance with an all-new deck and hull design that features higher sides for greater comfort and a V-pad running surface for better performance and fuel economy.



SCAN QR CODE  
TO BUILD YOUR  
STARCRAFT

SEE OUR 2023 PRODUCT LINE-UP AT [STARCRAFTMARINE.COM](https://www.starcraftmarine.com)



### HIGH POINTS

- ▶ Sport Bimini raises with one hand, and it's speed-rated up to 55 mph.
- ▶ LinQ integrated attachment points secure accessories.
- ▶ Rotax outboard needs no service for five years or 500 hours and self-winterizes.

### SEE THE VIDEO

To see our video review of the Cruise 22 MAX Switchback, scan this tag or visit [boatingmag.com/bbg23/manitoucruise22maxswitchback](http://boatingmag.com/bbg23/manitoucruise22maxswitchback).



**Price: \$57,645 (with Rotax S150)**

**SPECS:** LOA: 24'4" **BEAM:** 8'5" **DRAFT (MAX):** NA **DRY WEIGHT:** 3,532 lb. **SEAT/WEIGHT CAPACITY:** 11/1,551 lb. **FUEL CAPACITY:** 43 gal.

**HOW WE TESTED:** **ENGINE:** Rotax S150 **DRIVE/PROP:** Outboard/BRP Rogue 13.5" x 17" 4-blade stainless steel **GEAR RATIO:** 2.08:1 **FUEL LOAD:** 34 gal. **CREW WEIGHT:** 380 lb.

**M**anitou changed the shape of pontoons. The all-new Cruise 22 MAX Switchback model features the expansive MAX Deck that unlocks 38 square feet of unobstructed space for lounging, angling or toting a big tube. It's unobstructed because the new and exclusive Rotax outboard lives below the deck. The motor's 1.9-liter three-cylinder, two-stroke powerhead is oriented horizontally and enclosed in a watertight case. The point is to offer outboard power without having to see or play around the motor. The Rotax outboard trims below the platform; when tilted

clear of the water, it raises a hinged center section of the MAX Deck. The Rotax is available in 115 and 150 hp, and features standard digital controls, power steering and automatic trim. The Rotax S150 option powered our test boat to a top speed of 35 mph with a light load. The Manitou V-Toon tri-toon hull responds instantly to steering input and carves neat turns at speed.

The eye-catching Cruise profile is created by forming the sides of sheet aluminum in a process similar to that of pressing automobile bodywork. This technique enables the formation of complex shapes and the integration of forward lighting. The boat looks like a Tesla skimming over the water, and the sides are lighter than those formed from fiberglass. The aluminum panels are finished with a durable powder coat.

The interior design is clean and modern. The seats, covered in premium Simtex vinyl, have a contemporary shape and crisp colors that complement the exterior. Drink holders and speaker enclosures are integrated into molded inwale panels. Switchback loungers pivot forward and

| SPEED |       |       |       | EFFICIENCY |           |              |              | OPERATION |             |  |  |
|-------|-------|-------|-------|------------|-----------|--------------|--------------|-----------|-------------|--|--|
| rpm   | knots | mph   | gph   | naut. mpg  | stat. mpg | n. mi. range | s. mi. range | angle     | sound level |  |  |
| 1000  | 2.95  | 3.40  | 0.30  | 9.85       | 11.33     | 381          | 439          | 0         | 62          |  |  |
| 1500  | 4.52  | 5.20  | 0.60  | 7.53       | 8.67      | 291          | 335          | 0         | 70          |  |  |
| 2000  | 5.91  | 6.80  | 1.20  | 4.92       | 5.67      | 191          | 219          | 1         | 71          |  |  |
| 2500  | 7.04  | 8.10  | 2.10  | 3.35       | 3.86      | 130          | 149          | 3         | 75          |  |  |
| 3000  | 8.04  | 9.25  | 3.50  | 2.30       | 2.64      | 89           | 102          | 5         | 77          |  |  |
| 3500  | 13.64 | 15.70 | 4.40  | 3.10       | 3.57      | 120          | 138          | 3         | 78          |  |  |
| 4000  | 16.99 | 19.55 | 6.00  | 2.83       | 3.26      | 110          | 126          | 3         | 80          |  |  |
| 4500  | 19.99 | 23.00 | 7.70  | 2.60       | 2.99      | 100          | 116          | 3         | 80          |  |  |
| 5000  | 24.29 | 27.95 | 9.60  | 2.53       | 2.91      | 98           | 113          | 3         | 80          |  |  |
| 5500  | 28.68 | 33.00 | 11.50 | 2.49       | 2.87      | 97           | 111          | 3         | 82          |  |  |
| 5700  | 30.59 | 35.20 | 13.80 | 2.22       | 2.55      | 86           | 99           | 3         | 83          |  |  |

**MOST ECONOMICAL CRUISING SPEED**

**MANITOU PONTOONS**  
Lansing, Michigan; [manitoupontoonboats.com](http://manitoupontoonboats.com)

aft. At the helm, all critical information is presented on a 7-inch Garmin touchscreen multifunction display. Our boat featured the Signature Bundle (\$2,500) and included lighted center-tube storage, a helm seat bolster, LED docking and flooring lights, a second battery with a Smart Switch, a privacy station curtain and a dinette table. The optional 12-foot Sport Bimini (\$3,140) is supported by a tubular aluminum arch. This pontoon is a real shape-shifter, providing many opportunities for fun and comfort.





# STARCRAFT

## SLS 3 Q DH

### HIGH POINTS

- ▶ Seat-base-mounted JL Audio system speakers are protected with covers to keep stowed gear from damaging them.
- ▶ Extended aft deck with stainless-steel railing makes a perfect sandbar lounge.

### SEE THE VIDEO

To watch our video review of the Starcraft SLS 3 Q DH, scan this tag or visit [boatingmag.com/bbg23/starcraft/sls3qdh](http://boatingmag.com/bbg23/starcraft/sls3qdh).



**Price: \$85,216 (as tested)**

**SPECS:** LOA: 24'8" **BEAM:** 8'6" **DRAFT:** NA **DRY WEIGHT:** 2,750 lb. **SEAT/WEIGHT CAPACITY:** 12/1,695 lb. **FUEL CAPACITY:** 60 gal.

**HOW WE TESTED:** **ENGINE:** Yamaha SHO four-stroke 250 hp **DRIVE/PROP:** Outboard/Yamaha Saltwater Series II 15 $\frac{3}{4}$ " x 15" 3-blade stainless steel **GEAR RATIO:** 1.75:1 **FUEL LOAD:** 45 gal. **CREW WEIGHT:** 250 lb.



# C

**BOATING  
CERTIFIED  
TEST  
RESULTS**



Starcraft's SLS 3 Q DH evinces high quality for a moderate price. Our test boat featured Yamaha's 250 SHO four-stroke, a high-performance outboard that delivered a 47 mph top speed and shot us from zero to 30 mph in a leopard-quick 5.3 seconds. As expected from a boat featuring triple 25-inch tubes and the Xtreme Performance Package (XPS) with its lifting strakes on all three tubes, the SLS 3 Q DH easily handled wakes and windblown chop. It turned with aplomb, even in the tight, decreasing-radius arcs we engage in as part of our test regimen.

The Starcraft's middle-of-the-market price belies its top-drawer equipment. Check these notable highlights: A power Bimini top provides shade. Black powder-coated exterior railings make for a cool look. Optional black painted 'toons complete the stealth appearance. A stainless-steel stern enclosure keeps riders safe when lounging on the standard extended aft deck. The aft lounge seat for two features a reversible multiposition backrest to accommodate facing forward or aft, and sitting up or lying down.

Amidships, twin high-back plush reclining captain's chairs slide and swivel, and feature deep cushions. The extensive helm features a tilt wheel, hydraulic steering, a JL Audio system, and a full complement of engine instruments and accessory switches. Center-tube in-floor storage is optional and well worth the extra cash. The flooring is woven teak vinyl for a contemporary look with easy maintenance and cleanup. Our boat featured a tan floor and upholstery, which looked great; an attractive gray theme is also available.

The twin curved loungers fit two or three people comfortably per side in the bow area in front, making for a great conversation pit. Conveniently, a pop-up privacy changing room stores within the portside seat for a quick change to go swimming. Starcraft installs USB chargers at every seat location, a necessity these days. Experienced boat owners will appreciate the roto-cast seat bases for their durability and long-term good looks. Their internal drains also keep stowed geared dry.



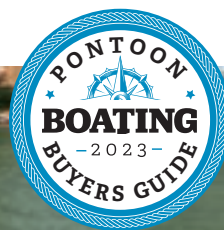
| SPEED |       |      |      | EFFICIENCY |       |        |        | OPERATION |       |  |
|-------|-------|------|------|------------|-------|--------|--------|-----------|-------|--|
|       |       |      |      | naut.      | stat. | n. mi. | s. mi. | angle     | sound |  |
| rpm   | knots | mph  | gph  | mpg        | mpg   | range  | range  |           | level |  |
| 1000  | 4.2   | 4.8  | 1.2  | 3.4        | 3.9   | 183.1  | 210.7  | 1         | 59    |  |
| 1500  | 6.3   | 7.3  | 2.2  | 2.9        | 3.3   | 154.6  | 178.0  | 3         | 65    |  |
| 2000  | 7.4   | 8.6  | 3.7  | 2.0        | 2.3   | 108.4  | 124.8  | 3         | 70    |  |
| 2500  | 14.7  | 16.9 | 5.6  | 2.6        | 3.0   | 141.6  | 163.0  | 2         | 70    |  |
| 3000  | 18.6  | 21.5 | 7.1  | 2.6        | 3.0   | 141.8  | 163.1  | 2         | 73    |  |
| 3500  | 23.2  | 26.7 | 8.4  | 2.8        | 3.2   | 149.2  | 171.6  | 2         | 75    |  |
| 4000  | 26.0  | 30.0 | 11.2 | 2.3        | 2.7   | 125.5  | 144.4  | 2         | 78    |  |
| 4500  | 30.3  | 34.9 | 14.7 | 2.1        | 2.4   | 111.2  | 128.0  | 2         | 83    |  |
| 5000  | 33.0  | 38.0 | 17.8 | 1.9        | 2.1   | 100.0  | 115.1  | 2         | 84    |  |
| 5500  | 37.4  | 43.1 | 23.0 | 1.6        | 1.9   | 87.8   | 101.1  | 2         | 87    |  |
| 6000  | 41.1  | 47.4 | 24.2 | 1.7        | 2.0   | 91.8   | 105.7  | 1         | 89    |  |

**MOST ECONOMICAL CRUISING SPEED**

**STARCRRAFT MARINE**  
New Paris, Indiana; 574-831-2103; [starcraftmarine.com](http://starcraftmarine.com)

# SYLVAN

## L5 DLZ BAR



### HIGH POINTS

- Stylish black railing maintains an open feel aft, and incorporates a boarding gate and raised ski-tow connection.
- Power Bimini top takes the hassle out of ups and downs.
- Standards include high-back chairs, pop-up changing room and black exterior rails.

### SEE THE VIDEO

To watch our video review of the Sylvan L5 DLZ Bar, scan this tag or visit [boatingmag.com/bbg23/sylvanl5dlzbar](https://boatingmag.com/bbg23/sylvanl5dlzbar).



**Price: \$107,187** (as tested with Mercury 300 XL Verado)

**SPECS:** LOA: 25'10" **DRAFT (MAX):** 1'0" (drive up) **DRY WEIGHT:** 2,471 lb. **SEAT/WEIGHT CAPACITY:** 14/1,905 lb. **FUEL CAPACITY:** 60 gal.

**HOW WE TESTED:** **ENGINE:** Mercury 300 XL Verado **DRIVE/PROP:** Outboard/Mercury Enertia 14 1/2" x 17" 3-blade stainless steel **GEAR RATIO:** 1.85:1 **FUEL LOAD:** 30 gal. **CREW WEIGHT:** 160 lb.

Sylvan's L5 DLZ Bar brings the party to this pontoon with a stern bar, complete with four pedestal stools to seat a thirsty crew. It's a cool feature, though not always a practical one. Floor space is valuable when boat drinks aren't on the menu. Sylvan creatively solves this conundrum by pivoting each half of the split-lengthwise bar to the floor when not in use. Cushioned backsides, hidden in bar configuration, reveal to form a sun pad that gets even bigger if you flip over the backrest on the adjoining L-shaped lounge. Drink up, then wind down on a rear-facing,

doublewide chaise. Removable bar stools stow away along the starboard rail, so you really can have it both ways.

Not that the L5 needs a bar to be a party barge. That L-shaped lounge can likewise be complemented with a pedestal table. Across, a small galley includes a hard-surface countertop with more cup holders up top and storage below. Smaller forward couches fit up to four more passengers. Like the seating aft, all are wrapped in comfy soft-touch vinyl. There's also plenty of storage in the roto-molded seat bases. Extra points for the speaker covers within. They provide better sound while protecting the more delicate parts and wiring from the gear you might store inside. At floor level, recessed toe kicks add to the cockpit space and make it easier to load gear.

The sculpted fiberglass helm featured an optional Simrad display flanked by a chrome-bezeled tach and speedometer, with rocker switches below. All are set into two-tone panels with no visible fasteners, completing the upscale look. The JL Audio head unit is located to the left

|      | SPEED |       |       | EFFICIENCY |      |             |             | OPERATION |        |             |
|------|-------|-------|-------|------------|------|-------------|-------------|-----------|--------|-------------|
|      | rpm   | knots | mph   | gph        | mpg  | naut. range | stat. range | n. mi.    | s. mi. | sound level |
| 1000 | 4.17  | 4.80  | 1.30  | 3.21       | 3.69 | 173         | 199         | 0         | 57     |             |
| 1500 | 5.65  | 6.50  | 2.00  | 2.82       | 3.25 | 153         | 176         | 0         | 61     |             |
| 2000 | 7.56  | 8.70  | 3.00  | 2.52       | 2.90 | 136         | 157         | 0         | 61     |             |
| 2500 | 11.04 | 12.70 | 3.80  | 2.90       | 3.34 | 157         | 180         | 1         | 67     |             |
| 3000 | 15.90 | 18.30 | 5.30  | 3.00       | 3.45 | 162         | 186         | 0         | 67     |             |
| 3500 | 18.42 | 21.20 | 6.90  | 2.67       | 3.07 | 144         | 166         | 0         | 68     |             |
| 4000 | 20.86 | 24.00 | 10.50 | 1.99       | 2.29 | 107         | 123         | 0         | 69     |             |
| 4500 | 23.11 | 26.60 | 13.90 | 1.66       | 1.91 | 90          | 103         | 1         | 68     |             |
| 5000 | 27.03 | 31.10 | 17.40 | 1.55       | 1.79 | 84          | 97          | 0         | 72     |             |
| 5500 | 42.10 | 38.10 | 20.50 | 2.05       | 1.86 | 111         | 100         | 1         | 74     |             |
| 5900 | 39.10 | 45.00 | 24.50 | 1.60       | 1.84 | 86          | 99          | 1         | 78     |             |

**MOST ECONOMICAL CRUISING SPEED**

**SYLVAN MARINE**  
New Paris, Indiana; 574-831-2950; [sylvanmarine.com](https://sylvanmarine.com)

of the wheel. To the right is a phone nook, with USB and 12-volt ports directly below.

Belowdecks, the SPX PR25 Performance Package is now standard for 2023. It mates a trio of 25-inch pontoons with performance strakes to deliver faster planing and agile handling, with a hint of inside lean when cornering. Paired with a 300 hp Mercury Verado outboard, our test boat powered directly onto plane and reached 30 mph in 6.9 seconds. Top speed peaked at 44.8 mph. Underway or at rest, it's a seriously fun ride.





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# MANITOU

## EXPLORE 26 NAVIGATOR



### HIGH POINTS

- Powder-coated black pontoons, skirting and Bimini frame look great.
- Sport Bimini is rated for up to 55 mph.
- Standards include 9-inch Garmin Echo-Map, Fusion audio with four speakers, and 12 USB charging ports.

### SEE THE VIDEO

To see a video review of the Explore 26 Navigator, scan this tag or visit [boatingmag.com/bbg23/manitouexplore26navigator](http://boatingmag.com/bbg23/manitouexplore26navigator).



**Price: \$166,410** (with twin Mercury 300 Verados and Joystick Piloting)

**SPECS:** LOA: 26'0" **DRAFT (MAX):** 2'0" **DRY WEIGHT:** 4,175 lb. **SEAT/WEIGHT CAPACITY:** 12/1,692 lb. **FUEL CAPACITY:** 90 gal.

**HOW WE TESTED:** **ENGINES:** Twin Mercury 300 Verados **DRIVE/PROPS:** Outboard/Mercury Rev 4 14½" x 21" 4-blade stainless steel **GEAR RATIO:** 1.85:1 **FUEL LOAD:** 86 gal. **CREW WEIGHT:** 340 lb.

**T**he Explore 26 Navigator offers bold new styling and a pair of potent 300 hp Mercury Verados. Go ahead. Slam that throttle down. The Explore responds by jumping onto plane in a scant 3.5 seconds, the same amount of time it takes to cross the 30 mph threshold. Keep those throttles pinned and run out to a 60.7 mph top speed.

Things belowdecks haven't changed. Manitou's patented V-Toon technology still provides handling response reminiscent of a V-hull sportboat by pairing 25-inch outer pontoons with a larger 27-inch

center tube that sits 5¼ inches lower in the water. Power into a turn and the boat responds with an intuitive inside bank, just like a sportboat. Keep cranking and it stays hooked up, leaving a pontoon boat's stodgy reputation bobbing in its wake. Low-speed maneuvering doesn't suffer, especially when those twin Mercs are paired with joystick steering. Even with a fierce crosswind, we maneuvered into a crowded dock space with utter confidence.

That topside makeover, however, can't be missed. Formed aluminum wall panels combine to give a futuristic, one-piece look to the sleek exterior. Accent details at the panel's termination point aft flow directly upward into the overhead sport Bimini. The beefy bow gate blends almost seamlessly into the perimeter wrap, and opens and shuts like a car door. Integrated LED docking and navigation lights peek out from a bold black bezel, much like you'd see on a modern luxury sedan.

While the floor plan isn't radical—twin couches fore and aft are complemented by matching captain's chairs—the execution offers unique touches. Switchback seats

|      | SPEED |       |       | EFFICIENCY |      |             |             | OPERATION |        |             |
|------|-------|-------|-------|------------|------|-------------|-------------|-----------|--------|-------------|
|      | rpm   | knots | mph   | gph        | mpg  | naut. range | stat. range | n. mi.    | s. mi. | sound level |
| 1000 | 4.74  | 5.45  | 2.70  | 1.75       | 2.02 | 142         | 164         | 1         | 64     |             |
| 1500 | 6.69  | 7.70  | 4.50  | 1.49       | 1.71 | 120         | 139         | 3         | 67     |             |
| 2000 | 11.69 | 13.45 | 6.60  | 1.77       | 2.04 | 143         | 165         | 3         | 77     |             |
| 2500 | 17.81 | 20.50 | 8.30  | 2.15       | 2.47 | 174         | 200         | 2         | 79     |             |
| 3000 | 23.42 | 26.95 | 10.70 | 2.19       | 2.52 | 177         | 204         | 2         | 81     |             |
| 3500 | 28.94 | 33.30 | 14.50 | 2.00       | 2.30 | 162         | 186         | 1         | 84     |             |
| 4000 | 33.33 | 38.35 | 18.00 | 1.85       | 2.13 | 150         | 173         | 1         | 83     |             |
| 4500 | 38.71 | 44.55 | 22.90 | 1.69       | 1.95 | 137         | 158         | 0         | 85     |             |
| 5000 | 43.54 | 50.10 | 27.30 | 1.59       | 1.84 | 129         | 149         | 0         | 86     |             |
| 5500 | 47.53 | 54.70 | 36.50 | 1.30       | 1.50 | 105         | 121         | 0         | 86     |             |
| 6000 | 52.80 | 60.70 | 47.60 | 1.11       | 1.28 | 90          | 103         | 0         | 86     |             |

**MOST ECONOMICAL CRUISING SPEED**

#### MANITOU PONTON BOATS

Lansing, Michigan; 800-999-9788; [manitoupontoonboats.com](http://manitoupontoonboats.com)

aft pivot the backrest to focus attention forward or aft. Modular bases include individual storage compartments and cup holders. Speakers are integrated to be heard but not seen. Finally, consider the versatility of the Trifold bench. Take out the center cushion and it converts to face-to-face seating. Fold out the table hidden under the center seat and break out the hors d'oeuvres. It's one of the many unique ways that Manitou capitalizes on design elements to maximize space and amplify the fun.







THE GOLDEN AGE OF AVALON HAS BEGUN



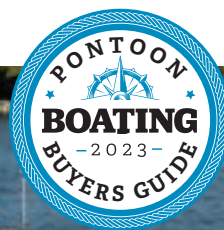
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# HARRIS

## SOLSTICE 230



### HIGH POINTS

- Includes a spacious 24-inch extended rear swim platform.
- CZone digital switching controls onboard electronics and allows for customized setups.
- Standards include Simrad Go7 with VesselView.

### SEE THE VIDEO

To watch our video review of the Harris Solstice 230, scan this tag or visit [boatingmag.com/bbg23/harris-solstice230](http://boatingmag.com/bbg23/harris-solstice230).



**Price: \$117,684 (with Mercury 250 and Level 3 Performance Package)**

**SPECS:** LOA: 26'2" **DRAFT (MAX):** 1'9" **DRY WEIGHT:** 3,716 lb. **SEAT/WEIGHT CAPACITY:** 12/2,430 lb. **FUEL CAPACITY:** 63 gal.

**HOW WE TESTED:** **ENGINE:** Mercury 250 Verado **DRIVE/PROP:** Outboard/Mercury Enertia 14.7" x 16" 3-blade stainless steel **GEAR RATIO:** 1.85:1 **FUEL LOAD:** 52 gal. **CREW WEIGHT:** 160 lb.

**H**arris' Solstice 230 receives a welcome refresh for 2023. It starts at the fence line, where fewer perimeter rails provide a more modern, streamlined appearance. An updated logo badge does double duty, incorporating both docking and nav lights. Redesigned furniture features attractive accent textures and a pronounced bolster at seat edges, a nod to both comfort and security for occupants underway. Lumbar cutouts in the bow lounges include cup holders and combination USB-A and USB-C charging ports. The sleek helm offers style, plus extra

legroom for the captain.

The floor plan on our test boat with a single aft lounge and dual helm chairs results in individual seating areas with their own unique personalities. Those dual bow couches are perfect for entertaining or stretching out. The twin seats amidships can pivot to join in the conversation with those on the aft bench. The latter's adjustable backrest pivots into multiple positions to form a forward-focused couch, aft-facing recliner, flat sun pad or, with aft cushions propped on kickstands, a forward-facing recliner. A stainless-steel perimeter rail neatly incorporates fender holders and allows occupants to enjoy the lounge at rest or underway.

Take the helm and crank a few tight turns, and you'll feel the confident stance and agile maneuverability provided by Harris' Level 3 Performance Package. A triple-tube configuration, it opts for 25-inch pontoons to port and starboard, but a larger 27-inch pontoon down the center. That middle 'toon is dropped an inch lower in the water. Lifting strakes are added to both sides of that center tube as well

| SPEED |       |       |       | EFFICIENCY |       |        |        | OPERATION |       |       |
|-------|-------|-------|-------|------------|-------|--------|--------|-----------|-------|-------|
|       |       |       |       | naut.      | stat. | n. mi. | s. mi. | angle     | level | sound |
| rpm   | knots | mph   | gph   | mpg        | mpg   | range  | range  |           |       |       |
| 1000  | 4.08  | 4.70  | 1.30  | 3.14       | 3.62  | 178    | 205    | 0         | 57    |       |
| 1500  | 5.39  | 6.20  | 2.00  | 2.69       | 3.10  | 153    | 176    | 0         | 62    |       |
| 2000  | 6.17  | 7.10  | 3.00  | 2.06       | 2.37  | 117    | 134    | 1         | 65    |       |
| 2500  | 10.60 | 12.20 | 3.60  | 2.94       | 3.39  | 167    | 192    | 1         | 69    |       |
| 3000  | 14.51 | 16.70 | 4.70  | 3.09       | 3.55  | 175    | 201    | 0         | 69    |       |
| 3500  | 19.12 | 22.00 | 6.50  | 2.94       | 3.38  | 167    | 192    | 0         | 69    |       |
| 4000  | 22.25 | 25.60 | 8.30  | 2.68       | 3.08  | 152    | 175    | 0         | 74    |       |
| 4500  | 26.76 | 30.80 | 11.30 | 2.37       | 2.73  | 134    | 155    | 0         | 76    |       |
| 5000  | 31.20 | 35.90 | 15.50 | 2.01       | 2.32  | 114    | 131    | 1         | 78    |       |
| 5500  | 34.76 | 40.00 | 18.60 | 1.87       | 2.15  | 106    | 122    | 0         | 76    |       |
| 5900  | 38.80 | 44.60 | 22.80 | 1.70       | 1.96  | 96     | 111    | 0         | 76    |       |

**MOST ECONOMICAL CRUISING SPEED**

#### HARRIS

Fort Wayne, Indiana; 260-432-4555; [harrisboats.com](http://harrisboats.com)

as the insides of each outer pontoon. The on-water result is a mix of stability, agility, and a touch of inside lean when cornering. Paired with a Mercury 250 outboard, the configuration got the Solstice onto plane in just over 3 seconds, reaching 30 mph in 3 seconds more. Top speed was 44.6 mph. Worth noting? The noise level at peak speed remained a low 76 dB(A), a volume that made it easy to carry on conversations with the crew. So, you get great performance and still keep a high level of entertainment.

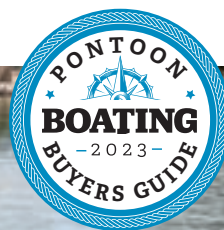




# LIKE NO ONE ELSE



## VIAGGIO THE ONE



### HIGH POINTS

- ▶ Rotax outboard unlocks more functional space.
- ▶ Revolutionary wall design is modern, sleek and functional.
- ▶ LinQ attachment system allows for quick and secure mounting of accessories.

### SEE THE VIDEO

To see our video review of the Explore 24 MAX Navigator, scan this tag or visit [boatingmag.com/bbg23/manitou-explore24max-navigator](http://boatingmag.com/bbg23/manitou-explore24max-navigator).



Price: \$84,160

**SPECS:** LOA: 26'4" **BEAM:** 8'5" **DRAFT:** NA **DRY WEIGHT:** 4,002 lb. **SEAT/WEIGHT CAPACITY:** 13/1,833 lb. **FUEL CAPACITY:** 43 gal.

**HOW WE TESTED:** **ENGINE:** Rotax S150 **DRIVE/PROP:** Outboard/BRP Rogue 13" x 17" 4-blade stainless steel **GEAR RATIO:** 2.17:1 **FUEL LOAD:** 18 gal. **CREW WEIGHT:** 250 lb.

**T**here's 38 square feet of wide-open aft deck space aboard Manitou's Explore 24 MAX Navigator. Thank the concealed Rotax outboard for that acreage. Available in 115 and 150 hp ratings, our test boat's 150 delivered a top speed of 35 mph. Acceleration? We clocked zero to 30 mph in 12.8 seconds. We noted smooth idling and living-room-quiet running from this two-stroke engine. Dynamic Power Steering (electrically assisted) is standard.

Fitted with MarineMat, the aft MAX deck's hinged center section tilts up as the Rotax outboard tilts for shallow water

or trailering. The BRP exclusive LinQ modular attachment system allows a cooler to reside securely on the port side—a nifty, well-placed feature. A telescoping boarding ladder extends from starboard.

The boat's modern fencing—bulkheading might be a more apt term—also offers unique benefits. Providing sleek looks with integrated LED docking and navigation lights, it's comprised of removable panels that hide all the boat's wiring and plumbing within the walls. The top rail, cleverly formed as a handrail, also features the LinQ system. Add fender clips, cup holders, wineglass holders and more as you see fit.

Manitou's contemporary-styled furniture proved plush and accommodating. Long bow lounges will swallow several guests per side and feature easy-opening seat bases for storage. The reversible aft Switchback loungers allow forward- or aft-facing relaxation. The aft port seats are what BRP calls a Trifold bench, which features facing seats with a flip-out table for dining, or reverses to be a filler cushion for lounging. Seat bases are roto-molded

|      | SPEED |       |      | EFFICIENCY |     |             |               | OPERATION |       |             |
|------|-------|-------|------|------------|-----|-------------|---------------|-----------|-------|-------------|
|      | rpm   | knots | mph  | gph        | mpg | naut. stat. | n. mi. s. mi. | range     | angle | sound level |
| 1000 | 3.3   | 3.8   | 0.4  | 8.1        | 9.4 | 439.9       | 506.3         | 0         | 62    |             |
| 1500 | 4.4   | 5.1   | 0.8  | 5.5        | 6.3 | 296.2       | 340.9         | 1         | 67    |             |
| 2000 | 5.6   | 6.5   | 1.2  | 4.7        | 5.4 | 254.2       | 292.5         | 1         | 70    |             |
| 2500 | 7.4   | 8.6   | 2.0  | 3.7        | 4.3 | 200.6       | 230.9         | 2         | 71    |             |
| 3000 | 11.7  | 13.5  | 3.5  | 3.4        | 3.9 | 181.0       | 208.3         | 3         | 75    |             |
| 3500 | 13.9  | 16.0  | 4.3  | 3.2        | 3.7 | 174.1       | 200.3         | 2         | 77    |             |
| 4000 | 16.2  | 18.7  | 5.3  | 3.1        | 3.5 | 165.1       | 190.0         | 3         | 81    |             |
| 4500 | 20.1  | 23.1  | 7.2  | 2.8        | 3.2 | 150.6       | 173.3         | 3         | 83    |             |
| 5000 | 24.4  | 28.1  | 8.4  | 2.9        | 3.3 | 157.0       | 180.6         | 3         | 85    |             |
| 5500 | 28.5  | 32.8  | 10.9 | 2.6        | 3.0 | 141.0       | 162.2         | 3         | 87    |             |
| 5750 | 30.2  | 34.8  | 13.8 | 2.2        | 2.5 | 118.2       | 136.0         | 2         | 87    |             |

**MOST ECONOMICAL CRUISING SPEED**

**MANITOU PONTOON BOATS**  
Lansing, Michigan; 800-999-9788; [manitoupontoonboats.com](http://manitoupontoonboats.com)



plastic, with recessed toe kicks.

The pilot and navigator sit in matching high-back chairs behind oversize consoles with low-profile Lexan windscreens. The port console features a large locking glove box with USB charging inside. The captain's console features a phone cubby with an optional wireless charge pad, a Fusion RA-210 sound system powering four speakers, a Garmin 9-inch Echo-Map, and light-touch digital switches for accessories operation. It's well set up for fun and function.



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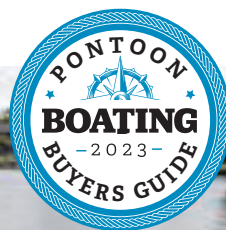


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# AVALON

## CATALINA ENTERTAINER 2585



### HIGH POINTS

- ▶ Standard power-assist hydraulic steering system.
- ▶ Bar table provides a great gathering place.
- ▶ Helm features three digital screens with information about the engine, boat, and body of water you're on.

### SEE THE VIDEO

To watch our video review of the Catalina Entertainer 2585, scan this tag or visit [boatingmag.com/bbg23/avaloncatalinaentertainer2585](http://boatingmag.com/bbg23/avaloncatalinaentertainer2585).



Price: \$116,489

**SPECS:** LOA: 26'6" **BEAM:** 8'6" **DRAFT:** NA **DRY WEIGHT:** 3,100 lb. **SEAT/WEIGHT CAPACITY:** 14/2,015 lb. **FUEL CAPACITY:** 58 gal.

**HOW WE TESTED:** **ENGINE:** Suzuki DF250 APXW four-stroke **DRIVE/PROP:** Outboard/Suzuki 16" x 18.5" 3-blade stainless steel **GEAR RATIO:** 2.08:1 **FUEL LOAD:** 43 gal. **CREW WEIGHT:** 250 lb.

**P**owered by a Suzuki DF250, Avalon's Catalina Entertainer zipped from zero to 30 mph in a swift 6.8 seconds before topping out at 44 mph at wide-open throttle. And it was quiet; we recorded just 85.5 dB(A) at full bore, and a whispering 68 dB(A) at the most economical cruise speed of 16.5 mph for 3.9 mpg. Not only can you converse at normal conversation levels aboard the Catalina Entertainer, but you'll also pass the gas dock. Quick, quiet and economical describe its performance.

Aft, there's a massive extended deck that will draw the eye of boat buyers seeking

space for watersports prep, swimming and lounging. A stainless-steel ski-tow pylon, telescoping boarding ladder and beefy transom supports dominate back there. A center-mounted locker houses the power-steering rigging, topped by a table with stainless-steel cup holders. The aft seating arrangement features a long L-shaped bench along the stern that extends up the starboard side. Just across is a cool bar with a solid-surface granite-look top, and twin reversible backrest seats fore and aft that seat two guests each. With the flip of the backrest, guests can watch the action off the transom or converse with others seated across the bar, a detail we thought was a nice touch. The bar console itself is well-designed in our view, featuring a drip channel around the tabletop's perimeter to catch spills. Underneath, there's ample storage for drinks, cellphones and gear.

The driver's console features a high-powered Fusion stereo with a subwoofer and amp, and the sounds are deep and clear as expected. The dash offers no fewer than three digital display screens, giving engine and boat information, and

| SPEED |       |      |      | EFFICIENCY |           |              |              | OPERATION |             |  |  |
|-------|-------|------|------|------------|-----------|--------------|--------------|-----------|-------------|--|--|
| rpm   | knots | mph  | gph  | naut. mpg  | stat. mpg | n. mi. range | s. mi. range | angle     | sound level |  |  |
| 1000  | 4.5   | 5.2  | 1.2  | 3.6        | 4.2       | 196.5        | 226.1        | 1         | 60          |  |  |
| 1500  | 6.7   | 7.7  | 2.0  | 3.3        | 3.9       | 180.7        | 207.9        | 1         | 62          |  |  |
| 2000  | 9.0   | 10.3 | 2.7  | 3.3        | 3.8       | 179.0        | 206.0        | 2         | 64          |  |  |
| 2500  | 14.3  | 16.5 | 4.2  | 3.4        | 3.9       | 183.8        | 211.5        | 2         | 68          |  |  |
| 3000  | 17.7  | 20.4 | 5.8  | 3.1        | 3.5       | 165.0        | 189.9        | 1         | 70          |  |  |
| 3500  | 22.2  | 25.6 | 7.7  | 2.9        | 3.3       | 156.0        | 179.5        | 1         | 71          |  |  |
| 4000  | 25.5  | 29.4 | 10.0 | 2.6        | 2.9       | 138.0        | 158.8        | 1         | 79          |  |  |
| 4500  | 30.3  | 34.9 | 14.2 | 2.1        | 2.5       | 115.3        | 132.7        | 1         | 83          |  |  |
| 5000  | 35.8  | 41.2 | 18.4 | 1.9        | 2.2       | 104.9        | 120.8        | 1         | 84          |  |  |
| 5300  | 38.5  | 44.3 | 20.0 | 1.9        | 2.2       | 103.9        | 119.6        | 1         | 86          |  |  |

**MOST ECONOMICAL CRUISING SPEED**

### AVALON PONTOONS

Alma, Michigan; 800-334-2913; [avalonpontoons.com](http://avalonpontoons.com)

body-of-water depth and mapping. Amidships, an in-floor storage locker takes advantage of the center pontoon. The bow section features twin facing, curved lounges, with a longer starboard bench that extends back to the captain's console. Seat frames are open aluminum.

A 10-year bow-to-stern warranty and lifetime hull and floor warranty make for a strong offering. The appearance of this Avalon pontoon is clean and unique inside and out, with a perimeter enclosure in a crisp combination of navy and white in an art-deco style unique to Avalon.







*SILVER WAVE*  
PONTOONS

## Meet Silver Wave Pontoons SW5 CLS

*with the Platinum Package.*

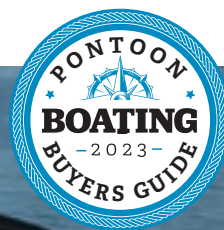


Add a touch of luxury to your Silver Wave Pontoon with the Platinum Package. The Platinum Package includes an elevated helm seat, in-deck storage, premium steering wheel, bow storage, soft-touch upholstery with diamond stitching accents, and chrome hardware throughout. Add the entire Platinum Package to your new Silver Wave Pontoon for big savings, or purchase these special upgrades individually. To elevate your boating experience, visit our Dealer Locator online to find your closest Silver Wave Pontoons dealership.



Elevated Boating since 1992 | Silver Wave Pontoons | [www.silverwavepontoons.com](http://www.silverwavepontoons.com)

## LUSSO 25 MERIDIAN LOUNGE



### HIGH POINTS

- Doggie Dock View boarding doors give pets a great view.
- Hideaway dog food and water dishes integrated into the helm.
- VIP system vibration isolation rubber pads reduce vibration, squeaking and rattling.

### SEE THE VIDEO

To see our video review of the Lusso 25, scan this tag or visit [boatingmag.com/bbg23/barletta-lusso25meridian-lounge](http://boatingmag.com/bbg23/barletta-lusso25meridian-lounge).



Price: \$169,296

**SPECS:** LOA: 27'6" **BEAM:** 8'6" **DRAFT:** NA **DRY WEIGHT:** 3,793 lb. **SEAT/WEIGHT CAPACITY:** 14/2,992 lb. **FUEL CAPACITY:** 48 gal.

**HOW WE TESTED:** **ENGINE:** Mercury Verado V-8 FourStroke 300 hp **DRIVE/PROP:** Mercury Enertia Eco 16" x 17" 3-blade stainless steel **GEAR RATIO:** 1.85:1 **FUEL LOAD:** 38 gal. **CREW WEIGHT:** 250 lb.

**B**arletta's Lusso 25 Meridian Lounge features standard triple 26-inch tubes, patented dual-stage lifting strakes, and Wave Tamer spray rails on the outsides to keep riders dry. A full underbelly skin runs from bow to stern. It delivers commanding performance with Mercury's V-8 300 Verado: 46 mph top speed, and zero-to-30 mph acceleration in just 6.3 seconds. The exterior features a contrasting matte black and white perimeter enclosure with heavy-duty top rails. Inside, soft-touch pillow-top Argento Grey vinyl with diamond stitching and charcoal

accents awaits. The bow seating features facing curved lounges with cubbies for storage, Yeti-ready oversize cup holders with RGB lighting, deep toe-kick seat bases underneath, and an automotive-style subwoofer hidden under the seats. A standard anchor locker fits in the center tube, directly behind the bow entry door. An integrated trash receptacle fits in the starboard side just before the console. A top-level Audison sound system provides awesome audio for the entire craft. Underfoot, find a standard ski locker, with a new built-in lockable storage drawer hidden beneath the deck. The helm console is raised 4 inches off the deck for better visibility and features huge legroom recess, a tilt wheel, electric-assist hydraulic steering, electronic analog gauges, plus a Simrad 7-inch touchscreen multifunction display. Overhead, the 10-foot-long power Bimini top is standard.

The Meridian lounges sit to the port and starboard sides of the boat. The port side reverses and reclines into a full lounge couch with a pop-up armrest. This creates an aft lounge pit for four, keeping everyone together but with their own full-length

| SPEED |       |      | EFFICIENCY |           |              |              | OPERATION |             |    |
|-------|-------|------|------------|-----------|--------------|--------------|-----------|-------------|----|
| rpm   | knots | mph  | naut. mpg  | stat. mpg | n. mi. range | s. mi. range | angle     | sound level |    |
| 1000  | 4.4   | 5.1  | 1.5        | 2.9       | 3.4          | 158.0        | 181.8     | 0           | 58 |
| 1500  | 6.0   | 7.0  | 2.3        | 2.6       | 3.0          | 141.8        | 163.2     | 1           | 65 |
| 2000  | 8.6   | 10.0 | 3.6        | 2.4       | 2.8          | 129.7        | 149.3     | 2           | 66 |
| 2500  | 12.3  | 14.2 | 4.3        | 2.9       | 3.3          | 154.4        | 177.7     | 3           | 68 |
| 3000  | 17.3  | 20.0 | 6.2        | 2.8       | 3.2          | 151.0        | 173.8     | 2           | 68 |
| 3500  | 22.2  | 25.6 | 8.7        | 2.6       | 2.9          | 138.1        | 158.9     | 2           | 70 |
| 4000  | 28.1  | 32.4 | 12.1       | 2.3       | 2.7          | 125.5        | 144.4     | 3           | 71 |
| 4500  | 32.6  | 37.6 | 16.0       | 2.0       | 2.3          | 110.1        | 126.7     | 2           | 82 |
| 5000  | 38.0  | 43.7 | 22.3       | 1.7       | 2.0          | 92.0         | 105.8     | 2           | 84 |
| 5500  | 40.0  | 46.0 | 24.3       | 1.6       | 1.9          | 88.8         | 102.2     | 2           | 86 |

**MOST ECONOMICAL CRUISING SPEED**

### BARLETTA BOAT COMPANY

Bristol, Indiana; 574-825-8900; [barlettapontoonboats.com](http://barlettapontoonboats.com)

lounger, with the capability to lie facing forward or aft. A center-mounted removable cocktail table folds in half to make it easier to walk by. The stern is protected by stainless-steel gates for those who want to lie facing aft while underway. Notably, the aft deck is pre-tapped to mount the wonderfully functional Lillipad boarding ladder and also has pre-tapped "ghost mounts" for a diving board or even more amenities. With its pet-friendly Doggie Dock View boarding doors and integrated dog dish, that crowd can easily include your canine friends too.







# MORE THAN JUST A GREAT BOAT

- 2020 NMMA Innovation Award winner!
- 2019 Michigan Manufacturer of the Year!
- The only pontoon manufacturer to take multiple endurance trips across some of the most challenging waterways in the world!
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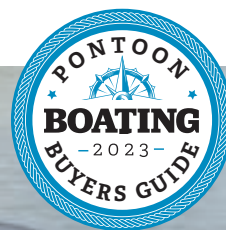
EXCELLENCE  
AWARDS



THE ART OF THE PONTOON | [WWW.TAHOEPONTOONS.COM](http://WWW.TAHOEPONTOONS.COM)

# BENNINGTON

## 26 LX SPORT SWINGBACK



### HIGH POINTS

- Rockford Fosgate audio system with six speakers and 10-inch subwoofer.
- Full-size audio heads at both the helm and Swingback.
- Blackout Luxe package adds a trendy matte finish to the metalwork.

### SEE THE VIDEO

To see our video review of the Bennington 26 LX Sport Swingback, scan this tag or visit [boatingmag.com/bbg23/bennington26lx sportswingback](http://boatingmag.com/bbg23/bennington26lx sportswingback).



Price: \$184,439

**SPECS:** LOA: 27'9" **DRAFT (MAX):** 2'7" **DRY WEIGHT:** 4,243 lb. (with ESP) **SEAT/WEIGHT CAPACITY:** 13/4,316 lb. **FUEL CAPACITY:** 45 gal.

**HOW WE TESTED:** **ENGINE:** Mercury 300 Verado **DRIVE/PROP:** Outboard/Mercury Enertia 14.7" x 16" 3-blade stainless steel **GEAR RATIO:** 1.85:1 **FUEL LOAD:** 19 gal. **CREW WEIGHT:** 400 lb.

**B**ennington's new LX Sport Swingback proves heavily influenced by its popular RX Sport. Smooth-panel aluminum dominates the exterior fencing and is affixed outside of the rails for a sleek, modern look. Paneling moves to the inside of the fence for a contrasting accent stripe that starts high at the bow before swooping to the deck amidships. High-intensity LED docking and navigation lights are integrated into the design at the bow. Aft, fencing terminates at the stern, and a gleaming stainless-steel keeper rail finishes things off. Add

a deeply tinted frameless windscreen at the helm, a swept-forward sport arch and the optional Blackout package, and the end result is a bold, masculine look—or a boat much like the RX Sport at a more affordable price point.

Step aboard and the interior continues the impression. Bennington's trademark winged logo is featured prominently on the bow gate and seatbacks. Dual couches await at the bow. Captain's and passenger seats are the plush, high-back variety, with flip-down armrests and flip-up bolsters. The aft Swingback Plus lounge offers four total positions. Use the flip-over backrest to create forward- or rear-facing lounges, a completely flat 74-by-36-inch sun bed, or variations when you add in two independent footrests. As to the helm, it's classic Bennington, with standard brushed aluminum gauges, chrome rocker switches and an upgraded Corvina tilt steering wheel. Option up to a 7-inch touchscreen display from Garmin or Simrad.

Aggressive manners match the LX Sport's aggressive looks. Belowdecks, our

| SPEED |       |       |       | EFFICIENCY |       |        |        | OPERATION |       |       |
|-------|-------|-------|-------|------------|-------|--------|--------|-----------|-------|-------|
|       |       |       |       | naut.      | stat. | n. mi. | s. mi. | angle     | sound | level |
| rpm   | knots | mph   | gph   | mpg        | mpg   | range  | range  |           |       |       |
| 1000  | 3.74  | 4.30  | 1.20  | 3.11       | 3.58  | 126    | 145    | 0         | 59    |       |
| 1500  | 5.13  | 5.90  | 1.90  | 2.70       | 3.11  | 109    | 126    | 0         | 70    |       |
| 2000  | 7.13  | 8.20  | 3.00  | 2.38       | 2.73  | 96     | 111    | 1         | 66    |       |
| 2500  | 11.82 | 13.60 | 3.60  | 3.28       | 3.78  | 133    | 153    | 1         | 73    |       |
| 3000  | 14.95 | 17.20 | 4.60  | 3.25       | 3.74  | 132    | 151    | 0         | 76    |       |
| 3500  | 19.12 | 22.00 | 6.10  | 3.13       | 3.61  | 127    | 146    | 0         | 72    |       |
| 4000  | 23.03 | 26.50 | 8.50  | 2.71       | 3.12  | 110    | 126    | 0         | 77    |       |
| 4500  | 26.94 | 31.00 | 11.00 | 2.45       | 2.82  | 99     | 114    | 0         | 78    |       |
| 5000  | 30.33 | 34.90 | 12.20 | 2.49       | 2.86  | 101    | 116    | 1         | 80    |       |
| 5500  | 35.02 | 40.30 | 17.90 | 1.96       | 2.25  | 79     | 91     | 1         | 87    |       |
| 6000  | 38.20 | 44.00 | 21.50 | 1.78       | 2.05  | 72     | 83     | 0         | 87    |       |

MOST ECONOMICAL CRUISING SPEED

**BENNINGTON MARINE**  
Elkhart, Indiana; 574-264-6336; [benningtonmarine.com](http://benningtonmarine.com)

tester had Bennington's Elliptical Sport Package (ESP), a unique pairing of round 25-inch outer tubes with an elliptically shaped 32-inch center pontoon, all outfitted with performance foils. Cut into an aggressive turn and the boat displays the inside lean of a fiberglass sportboat. Punch the throttle and the craft quickly comes onto plane. Paired with a Mercury 300 Verado, our test boat did the latter in 3.5 seconds before reaching the 30 mph mark in just 3 seconds more. Speed peaked at 44 mph.







## CONTINENTAL NX

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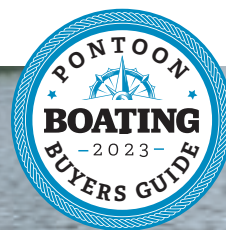


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# BENNINGTON

## 25 Q FASTBACK



### HIGH POINTS

- Yamaha 425 XTO Offshore engine makes this flagship a performance leader.
- Lillipad swim ladder makes it much easier to climb aboard after a swim.
- Optional power-folding arch creates a sleek, futuristic structure.

### SEE THE VIDEO

To see our video review of the Bennington 25 Q Fastback, scan this tag or visit [boatingmag.com/bbg23/bennington25qfastback](http://boatingmag.com/bbg23/bennington25qfastback).



Price: \$235,799 (as tested)

**SPECS:** LOA: 28'0" **BEAM:** 8'6" **DRAFT:** 16"/33" **DRY WEIGHT:** 4,243 lb. **SEAT/WEIGHT CAPACITY:** 15/4,650 lb. **FUEL CAPACITY:** 50 gal.

**HOW WE TESTED:** **ENGINE:** Yamaha four-stroke 425 hp XTO Offshore **DRIVE/PROP:** Outboard/Yamaha XTO Offshore 16 $\frac{5}{8}$ " x 19" 3-blade stainless steel **GEAR RATIO:** 1.79:1 **FUEL LOAD:** 38 gal. **CREW WEIGHT:** 250 lb.

At 28 feet long with 425 horses of Yamaha V-8 power, Bennington's 25 Q Fastback proves a head-turner. This furiously accelerating beast (zero to 30 mph in just 5.1 seconds) roared to a top speed of 53.5 mph. At full gallop, it burns 38 gph. At 20 mph, it nets 3.2 mpg while burning 6.2 gph. It runs on the Elliptical Sport Package (ESP), which features 25-inch-round outer tubes and a 32-inch elliptical center tube with lifting strakes. Its 28-foot length spans chop and wakes, while the 8-foot-6-inch beam allows it to arc through turns.

A full-on cruiser and party barge, the 25 Q Fastback is rated for a crew of 15. In front, the smooth, sweptback Rossa Red perimeter fiberglass with Metallic White accents delights the eyes. Stainless-steel docking and navigation light housings further enhance style. We noted the handy stainless-steel pop-up cleats at the fore and aft corners of the deck. The Sport interior features Simtex vinyl in Arctic Ice White with Rossa Red perforated and diamond-stitched accent panels.

The entire bow forward of the helm is one huge wraparound lounger. USB ports, beverage holders, and speakers for the Rockford Fosgate audio system are tucked into recessed pockets. Keys, wallets and phones also stow securely in these recesses. In-floor storage handles vests, covers and watersports toys.

The sleek, sweptback captain's console sits 4 $\frac{1}{2}$  inches off the deck for enhanced visibility and features a frameless tinted glass windscreen, recessed legroom and a Commander 7-inch data screen. (Upgrade to a 9- or 11-inch Garmin or Simrad MFD). A custom tilt steering wheel harnesses

| SPEED |       |      | EFFICIENCY |     |     |             | OPERATION   |       |             |
|-------|-------|------|------------|-----|-----|-------------|-------------|-------|-------------|
| rpm   | knots | mph  | gph        | mpg | mpg | naut. range | stat. range | angle | sound level |
| 1000  | 4.7   | 5.5  | 1.9        | 2.5 | 2.9 | 134.6       | 154.9       | 1     | 53          |
| 1500  | 6.6   | 7.7  | 2.8        | 2.4 | 2.7 | 128.2       | 147.5       | 1     | 60          |
| 2000  | 10.9  | 12.5 | 4.8        | 2.3 | 2.6 | 122.2       | 140.6       | 3     | 63          |
| 2500  | 17.0  | 19.6 | 6.2        | 2.7 | 3.2 | 148.0       | 170.3       | 3     | 67          |
| 3000  | 20.2  | 23.2 | 7.6        | 2.7 | 3.1 | 143.2       | 164.8       | 2     | 70          |
| 3500  | 24.8  | 28.6 | 10.9       | 2.3 | 2.6 | 122.9       | 141.4       | 2     | 74          |
| 4000  | 30.1  | 34.6 | 15.1       | 2.0 | 2.3 | 107.5       | 123.7       | 2     | 80          |
| 4500  | 34.8  | 40.1 | 18.7       | 1.9 | 2.1 | 100.5       | 115.7       | 2     | 83          |
| 5000  | 39.9  | 46.0 | 24.7       | 1.6 | 1.9 | 87.3        | 100.5       | 1     | 84          |
| 5500  | 43.5  | 50.1 | 29.8       | 1.5 | 1.7 | 78.9        | 90.8        | 1     | 91          |
| 6000  | 46.4  | 53.4 | 38.2       | 1.2 | 1.4 | 65.5        | 75.4        | 1     | 93          |

MOST ECONOMICAL CRUISING SPEED

**BENNINGTON MARINE**  
Elkhart, Indiana; 574-264-6336; [benningtonmarine.com](http://benningtonmarine.com)

power hydraulic steering, and the boat also features a killer Rockford M2 sound system with a subwoofer, eight speakers and 1,050 watts of total output. Twin reclining, swiveling and sliding captain's chairs serve the captain and first mate.

Astern, twin facing, curved lounges make up the aft conversation pit. Farther back, the aft deck features beefy mounting for the 900-plus-pound Yamaha V-8 outboard, with an extended platform for swimming and sunning. This Bennington proves worth the price of admission.





# MONTARA

## NAXOS

### HIGH POINTS

- ▶ Great ride thanks to full-length keels and three-sided lifting strakes.
- ▶ Construction uses heavy-duty cross members every 16 inches and full-length M brackets.
- ▶ Remote battery parallel switch offers ease and peace of mind.

### SEE THE VIDEO

To see our video review of the Montara Naxos, scan this tag or visit [boatingmag.com/bbg23/montaranaxos](http://boatingmag.com/bbg23/montaranaxos).



Price: \$154,900 (starting)



# S

BOATING  
BUYERS  
SPOTLIGHT

**SPECS:** LOA: 28'1" BEAM: 8'6" DRAFT: 1'5" (engine up) DRY WEIGHT: 4,863 lb. (without engine) SEAT/WEIGHT CAPACITY: 15/2,750 lb. FUEL CAPACITY: 73 gal.

**AVAILABLE POWER:** Single 300 hp Mercury Verado outboard

**A**ptly named for an exotic island in the Aegean Sea, the Montara Naxos proves feature-filled and delivers quality and luxury.

Aboard the Naxos, there's a standard 5-inch raised helm for increased visibility. A 12-inch touchscreen multifunction display to control and monitor accessory systems and engine data is standard, as is digital switching. Manage your music with the four-speaker Polk Audio sound system with four-zone control, with the option to add up to 12 speakers and two subwoofers. Depth and water temperature are in

view, and there's an emergency parallel battery switch to ensure you can always start the engine. Other options include heated and cooled cup holders and wireless phone chargers.

Montara builds the Naxos' interior functionally and luxuriously. For instance, seat bases are roto-cast so they won't rot and get soft. Plus, they are fitted with drains so stowed gear stays dry. The Naxos boasts top-notch upholstery that looks nice, feels great, and will hold up to your boating lifestyle. Seating capacity is 15. And the helm console is a worthy seat for the captain. The raised helm is made of fiberglass and ergonomically arranged to hold instrumentation.

Montara's construction schedule exceeds other pontoon builders. For starters, three tubes and a sealed, drop-in ski locker are standard. The full-length solid keel that helps it deliver an awesome ride also provides great strength. Fence panels are rugged .100-gauge, rather than the more common .60-gauge. Its 26-inch-diameter, .100-gauge tubes feature four sealed air chambers and are fitted with

.125-gauge nose cones. Sturdy quarter-inch M brackets run full length, and quarter-inch I-beam and C-channel cross members are every 16 inches.

Two optional Power Towers (our eye is on the deluxe-cast model) raise and lower at the push of a button. Forward and aft Bimini-top options are available, as are locking surfboard racks and a Lillipad Revolver ladder and diving board. Cannonball!

Seeking a luxury pontoon with exceptional construction and of true distinction? Check out Montara's Naxos.



**MONTARA BOATS**  
Loudon, Tennessee; 865-657-5158; [montaraboats.com](http://montaraboats.com)

PHOTOS: MONTARA BOATS

# CREST

## CONTINENTAL NX 270 SLRC TWIN



# S

BOATING  
BUYERS  
SPOTLIGHT



**Price: \$149,155 (base)**

### HIGH POINTS

- ▶ With the twin 400 hp Verado package, the boat hits top speeds over 65 mph.
- ▶ Twin-engine version allows for a massive 120-gallon fuel tank.
- ▶ Full wrap-around windshield protects the cockpit passengers underway.
- ▶ Stylish inset docking lights in the fiberglass bow components give the boat a sports-car feel.

**SPECS:** LOA: 28'2" **BEAM:** 8'6" **DRAFT:** 3'0" **DRY WEIGHT:** 4,944 lb. **SEAT/WEIGHT CAPACITY:** 14/1,175 lb. **FUEL CAPACITY:** 120 gal. **AVAILABLE POWER:** Twin outboard engines to 800 hp

**T**he Continental NX is Crest's most luxurious line of pontoon boats, and it shows in the level of fit-and-finish. Crest offers three floor plans in the Continental family: a portside captain's chair with opposing sofas in the stern, a Swingback mini lounge that wraps around the port side and the transom, and a layout with opposing rear-facing chaise-style lounges. All three versions feature a fiberglass helm and matching fiberglass port console adorned with a full wraparound windshield for protecting passengers from the elements. The raked fiberglass bow

features inset integrated docking lights that give the Continental a sleek, sports-car look. Also, the full windshield keeps the wind noise down in the cockpit so it's easier to have a conversation underway.

You want performance? You can rig the Continental NX with a single 300 hp or 400 hp Mercury Verado outboard, or opt for the twin-engine package featuring two 400 hp Mercury Verado outboards. With the latter package, the boat exceeds 65 mph, which is serious speed for a pontoon boat.

With the triple 26-inch tubes with dual-performance lifting strakes underneath, the Continental exhibits V-hull handling characteristics and provides a stable platform for lounging or entertaining at rest. The captain has a great view of the water and can easily access the rocker switches and Garmin display inset above the steering wheel. The adjustable high-back captain's chair has a flip-up bolster and swivels so the captain can join the conversation at rest. The same goes for the portside passenger chair. The standard Klipsch audio package provides fantastic



**CREST MARINE**  
Owosso, Michigan; 989-725-5188; crestpontoonboats.com



sounds on the water so your crew will never want to step back onto the dock.

Whichever layout you choose to please your crew, the Continental NX features plush furniture with SoftTouch upholstery that is easy to clean and doesn't pink. There's plenty of storage underneath the furniture to hold all the gear you want to bring aboard for the day as well as built-in coolers. A wireless phone charger at the helm ensures you can always stream your music and call ahead to your favorite dockside restaurant for reservations.



## HIGH POINTS

- ▶ Standards include LED nav and docking lights, wireless USB chargers, and swim-platform speakers.
- ▶ Optional joystick piloting makes docking easy.
- ▶ Twin engine 'toon with a trailerable beam width.

## SEE THE VIDEO

To watch our video review of the 27 RX Sport Swingback, scan this tag or visit [boatingmag.com/bbg23/bennington27rxsportswingback](http://boatingmag.com/bbg23/bennington27rxsportswingback).



# BENNINGTON

## 27 RX SPORT SWINGBACK



**BOATING  
CERTIFIED  
TEST  
RESULTS**



**Price: \$296,107 (with twin Mercury 300 Verados)**

**SPECS:** LOA: 28'3" DRAFT (MAX): 2'8" DRY WEIGHT: 4,791 lb. SEAT/WEIGHT CAPACITY: 15/5,000 lb. FUEL CAPACITY: 83 gal.

**HOW WE TESTED:** ENGINE: Twin Mercury 300 Verados DRIVE/PROPS: Outboard/Mercury Rev 4 14.6" x 20" 4-blade stainless steel GEAR RATIO: 1.85:1 FUEL LOAD: 69 gal. CREW WEIGHT: 160 lb.

**C**hoose the right color, and the Bennington 27 RX Sport Swingback takes on an almost menacing appearance. In this case, blame—or rather credit—an abundance of deep, glossy black. It covered our test boat's trademark smooth clad aluminum fence panels, giving the perimeter a masculine vibe. The blacked-out, steeply raked, frameless glass windshield and smoothly clad overhead Sport Arch added to the look. The stern of this racy pontoon boat showcased a powerful pair of Verado outboards in the most classic of Mercury colorways.

Add a splash of eye-searing green as the lone accent and the boat took on a '70s muscle car's powerful presence.

Unlike a Chevelle or Plymouth Hemi, the twin Mercury Verado outboards purred whisper-quiet at idle and peaked at only 88 decibels as the speedometer approached the near 58 mph top speed. In the time it took the boat to leap onto plane—4.2 seconds—it was already passing the 30 mph threshold. Throw the 27 RX Sport Swingback into a turn and you won't experience a muscle-car skid, but rather sports-car-like tracking. Bennington's Elliptical Sport Package (ESP), a unique layout of 25-inch-round outer tubes paired with a 32-inch elliptically shaped center tube, gives the boat aggressive overall handling with a spirited inside lean through the turns and nimble agility. When conditions took a turn for the worst, the pontoon configuration also proved its worth in the rough stuff, powering across whitecaps with a confident, surprisingly soft ride.

Bennington decked out the 27 RX Sport in its Swingback floor plan, a mix of

nearly 6-foot-long parallel couches at the bow, twin captain's chairs, and the namesake multiposition lounge aft. Morph the Swingback into multiple configurations focused fore and aft, including as an inviting chaise. The hinged Swingback mechanism also allows the backrest to disappear completely below the cushions, leaving a flat sun pad. A gleaming, stainless-steel keeper rail allows the use of all seating options while underway. Cup holders, an audio-system head unit and high-speed USB charging points are all within easy reach.

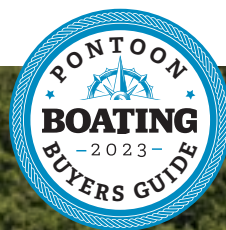
| SPEED |       |       |       | EFFICIENCY |           |              |              | OPERATION |             |  |
|-------|-------|-------|-------|------------|-----------|--------------|--------------|-----------|-------------|--|
| rpm   | knots | mph   | gph   | naut. mpg  | stat. mpg | n. mi. range | s. mi. range | angle     | sound level |  |
| 1000  | 5.30  | 6.10  | 2.80  | 1.89       | 2.18      | 141          | 163          | 0         | 65          |  |
| 1500  | 7.99  | 9.20  | 4.40  | 1.82       | 2.09      | 136          | 156          | 1         | 68          |  |
| 2000  | 13.30 | 15.30 | 6.20  | 2.14       | 2.47      | 160          | 184          | 1         | 69          |  |
| 2500  | 18.68 | 21.50 | 8.00  | 2.34       | 2.69      | 174          | 201          | 0         | 79          |  |
| 3000  | 23.20 | 26.70 | 11.10 | 2.09       | 2.41      | 156          | 180          | 0         | 79          |  |
| 3500  | 27.29 | 31.40 | 16.10 | 1.69       | 1.95      | 127          | 146          | 0         | 76          |  |
| 4000  | 32.59 | 37.50 | 21.70 | 1.50       | 1.73      | 112          | 129          | 0         | 83          |  |
| 4500  | 34.67 | 39.90 | 30.90 | 1.12       | 1.29      | 84           | 96           | 0         | 78          |  |
| 5000  | 39.97 | 46.00 | 45.70 | 0.87       | 1.01      | 65           | 75           | 0         | 88          |  |
| 5500  | 46.06 | 53.00 | 50.30 | 0.92       | 1.05      | 68           | 79           | 0         | 88          |  |
| 6000  | 50.10 | 57.60 | 50.60 | 0.99       | 1.14      | 74           | 85           | 0         | 88          |  |

**MOST ECONOMICAL CRUISING SPEED**

**BENNINGTON MARINE**  
Elkhart, Indiana; 574-264-6336; [benningtonmarine.com](http://benningtonmarine.com)

# PLAYCRAFT

## POWERTOON X-TREME 3010



### HIGH POINTS

- ▶ Patented boarding steps in the center tube reach deep for easy boarding.
- ▶ Pontoons are epoxy-painted for good-looking durability.
- ▶ Movable cushion-topped cooler and cup holders.

### SEE THE VIDEO

To see our video review of the PlayCraft PowerToon X-Treme 3010, scan this tag or visit [boatingmag.com/bbg23/playcraftxtreme3010](http://boatingmag.com/bbg23/playcraftxtreme3010).



Price: \$299,900

**SPECS:** LOA: 31'6" **BEAM:** 8'6" **DRAFT (MAX):** 1'2" **DRY WEIGHT:** 3,500 lb. **SEAT/WEIGHT CAPACITY:** 15/3,000 lb. **FUEL CAPACITY:** 100 gal.

**HOW WE TESTED:** **ENGINES:** Twin Mercury Racing 450 hp V-8 supercharged **DRIVE/PROPS:** Outboard/Bravo FS 24" 4-blade stainless steel **GEAR RATIO:** 1.60:1 **FUEL LOAD:** 25 gal. **CREW WEIGHT:** 400 lb.

**N**obody has a better handle on building high-performance pontoons complete with racecourse-ready style and durable construction than PlayCraft. Every model year, the company improves and refines its X-Treme series pontoons with outstanding luxury, speed and superior handling. The new PowerToon X-Treme 3010 emerges from that DNA.

Our recent test of the X-Treme 3010 on Lake of the Ozarks shattered old notions of pontoon boating before we even fired up the outboards. Designing a boat for speed mandates considering aerodynamics as well as

hydrodynamics. A nod to aerodynamics appears in the wedge-shaped bow and the sleek Bimini top. Pontoon tubes are flat on top, foam-filled, sealed and pressurized, then bolted straight to the crossbeams of the 30-foot-by-8-foot-6-inch one-piece plywood deck for an unassailable, solid ride.

To further boost performance, the tubes widen aft, compressing air and spray, increasing lift, and giving more speed per horsepower. A wider, deeper center tube coupled with strategically placed lifting strakes give the boat comfortable turning and tons of passenger-carrying capacity. Dual Mercury Racing 450R outboards with tunable exhaust can give a chest-thumping, muscle-car rumble or a Lexus-like purr.

In the comfort department, furnishings on board from the deck to the shoulder cushions are upholstered in UV-protected vinyl. Color combinations are virtually unlimited, and owners can even match them to their favorite football team. Exterior colors are offered in a broad spectrum too. The 3010 has color-matched, powder-coated tubes and rails for durable good looks. The fiberglass-molded helm station

| SPEED |       |      |      | EFFICIENCY |           |              |              | OPERATION |       |       |
|-------|-------|------|------|------------|-----------|--------------|--------------|-----------|-------|-------|
| rpm   | knots | mph  | gph  | naut. mpg  | stat. mpg | n. mi. range | s. mi. range | angle     | level | sound |
| 1000  | 6.2   | 7.1  | 3.7  | 1.7        | 1.9       | 45.0         | 51.8         | 1         | 68    |       |
| 1500  | 9.6   | 11.1 | 6.8  | 1.4        | 1.6       | 38.3         | 44.1         | 1         | 68    |       |
| 2000  | 16.2  | 18.7 | 8.8  | 1.8        | 2.1       | 49.9         | 57.4         | 1         | 74    |       |
| 2500  | 20.8  | 23.9 | 12.6 | 1.6        | 1.9       | 44.5         | 51.2         | 1         | 78    |       |
| 3000  | 26.1  | 30.0 | 16.8 | 1.6        | 1.8       | 41.9         | 48.2         | 1         | 78    |       |
| 3500  | 33.1  | 38.1 | 21.0 | 1.6        | 1.8       | 42.6         | 49.0         | 1         | 81    |       |
| 4000  | 40.9  | 47.1 | 32.6 | 1.3        | 1.4       | 33.9         | 39.0         | 1         | 84    |       |
| 4500  | 46.4  | 53.4 | 40.2 | 1.2        | 1.3       | 31.2         | 35.9         | 1         | 86    |       |
| 5000  | 52.1  | 59.9 | 57.0 | 0.9        | 1.1       | 24.7         | 28.4         | 1         | 88    |       |
| 5500  | 57.3  | 65.9 | 79.8 | 0.7        | 0.8       | 19.4         | 22.3         | 1         | 89    |       |
| 6000  | 62.9  | 72.4 | 88.0 | 0.7        | 0.8       | 19.3         | 22.2         | 1         | 91    |       |

MOST ECONOMICAL CRUISING SPEED

#### PLAYCRAFT BOATS

Richland, Missouri; 573-765-3265; [playcraftboats.com](http://playcraftboats.com)

is raised, giving a clear view above the crew. The captain's chair swivels and reclines, and the armrests automatically adjust to the correct, comfortable angle.

Three boarding options include the wide bow deck, a wheel-chair-width port side gate and the stern platform. An extra-long boarding ladder integrated into the pontoon is patented and exclusive to PlayCraft. In its fourth generation of family boatbuilding, PlayCraft expertly blends the extremes of luxury and high-speed performance better than any other brand afloat.





# UPGRADE YOUR SHADE

The SureShade Power Bimini by Lippert automatically adjusts its position in seconds with the touch of a button. With both hardwired and rechargeable battery options, and optional accessories like the bow shade extension, the power bimini can be customized to fit your pontoon boat.

See the  
Power Bimini  
in action.



## SURESHADE POWER BIMINI OPTIONS

### HARDWIRED



#### SureShade<sup>®</sup> Powered Bimini Top

With the flip of a switch, or a convenient remote control, this electric bimini provides your boat with the shade you want, the moment you want it. It's that easy.

### RECHARGEABLE



#### SureShade<sup>®</sup> Battery Powered Bimini Top

For a more DIY-friendly option, enjoy the convenience of a battery powered canopy. It allows up to 30 open and close operations on a single two-hour charge.

### ACCESSORIES



#### Shade Meets Speed

You'll never have to choose between shade and speed again with add on accessories like the SureShade sport arms and speed top, approved for speeds up to 55mph.

By  
Charles Plueddeman

## GIVE US TORQUE

This spec is key to understanding marine propulsion.

You almost certainly know the horsepower rating or displacement of your boat's engine. But some marine-engine manufacturers have begun marketing torque over horsepower. In a break from standard practice, Indmar Marine Engines is even naming its Wake Series engine models based on torque rather than horsepower or displacement. We think that's smart because engine torque is more important than horsepower for most boat owners—though, it might make comparison shopping cumbersome if not universally adopted. To understand why, you need to understand the difference between these two important engine characteristics.

Torque is a measure of force, usually expressed in weight times distance. Hang

a 10-pound weight from the end of a 5-foot-long horizontal lever and you have created 50 pound-feet (10 x 5) of force. In engine spec charts, torque is stated in pound-feet (lb.-ft.) or newton meters (Nm).

Horsepower (aka kilowatts) is power, a measure of work accomplished in a specific period of time. If you lift five 10-pound weights off the floor and set each on a shelf 4 feet high, you've moved 50 pounds of weight 4 feet, which is 200 foot-pounds (4 feet x 50 pounds) of work. If you finish this task in two minutes, you have produced 100 foot-pounds of work per minute. One horsepower is defined as 33,000 foot-pounds of work per minute. The formula used to calculate the power of a rotating engine is: horsepower

equals (torque x rpm)/5,252. For example, an engine producing 300 lb.-ft. of torque at 5,000 rpm is making 285.6 hp at 5,000 rpm—(300 x 5,000)/5,252 equals 285.6.

That number on the cowl of your outboard represents its rated peak horsepower. That peak will occur at or near the top of its rpm range. Most boat owners do not spend a lot of time running wide open. But we do want that boat to get

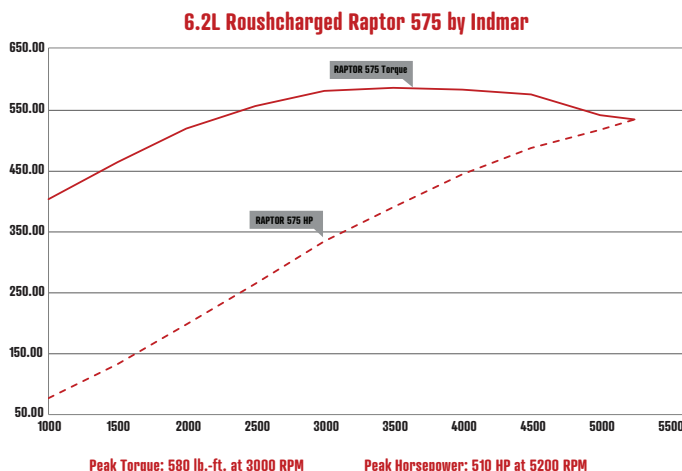
smartly on plane every time we advance the throttle from idle, and this is where torque becomes important. The more torque at the prop shaft, the larger the propeller the engine can turn, and the more thrust will be generated. (Larger can mean any combination of increased pitch, blade area or diameter.) Thrust is what moves the boat forward and lifts it on plane. Once planing, that bigger propeller moves the boat farther with each revolution with more efficiency than a smaller propeller. Because horsepower is a function of engine speed, an engine that makes more peak horsepower does not necessarily produce more torque where we need it most. The ideal boat engine would make as much prop-shaft torque as possible at 2,000 rpm, and then maintain that level of torque—a so-called “flat torque curve”—for much of the rpm range.

The cowl of this Raptor by Indmar inboard displays its peak torque output. Historically, most marine engines, and indeed other equipment, showed rated power.



PHOTOS: (FROM TOP) COURTESY SUPRA, COURTESY INDMAR





A watersports engine at work visibly shows an effect of high, constant torque applied to a heavy, ballasted boat creating a powerful, surfable wave.

Study the power curve of a 510-peak-horsepower Roushcharged Raptor 575 by Indmar engine. This engine makes 520 lb.-ft. of torque but only 198 hp at 2,000 rpm. Torque climbs steadily to its rated peak of 580 lb.-ft. at 3,000 rpm and remains above 570 lb.-ft. until it starts to decline at about 4,500 rpm—this is a pretty flat torque curve. The horsepower curve makes a steady climb diagonally up the chart as rpm increases to its 5,200 peak.

Tow-sports enthusiasts are a group of boaters who don't give a whit about top speed. But it takes a lot of thrust to push a 6,000-pound boat with 5,000 pounds of ballast—plus the lead ballast that many carry and some newer boats include, plus 2,000 pounds of crew and fuel—at 11 mph against a wall of water. Torque at 3,500 rpm, not the engine's peak horsepower, is what matters, and this happens to be

right in the meat of the Raptor 575's torque curve. This is why builders of tow-sports engines, including Indmar, Pleasurecraft, Malibu and Ilmor, brag on torque. Similarly, diesel inboard engines meant to propel large cruising and sport-fishing boats also promote torque.

When Mercury Marine introduced its V-12 Verado 600 outboard, we asked how much torque the motor makes, and the company

refused to divulge. To be fair, its two-speed transmission makes that a more complicated question because any gear reduction between the crankshaft and the prop shaft will amplify prop-shaft torque. But we don't think any outboard manufacturer has ever published a torque rating. Mercury says one reason is there is no industry standard for measuring engine torque. One engineer cited the example of an Evinrude

advertisement that bragged on prop-shaft torque—but at engine rpm rather than prop-shaft rpm, thus taking the gear ratio out of the equation for an advantageous comparison. There may be more to it than a testing standard. For example, does a 4.2-liter 250 outboard make more midrange torque than a 4.2-liter 225? And if not, maybe it would be smarter to buy the less-expensive 225. That would be valuable information for boat buyers.



Torque ratings for tow-sports engines and marine diesel engines are readily available. Outboard and gas sterndrive-engine torque data is scarcer. Still, torque is important to the performance of those engines.

By  
Charles Plueddeman

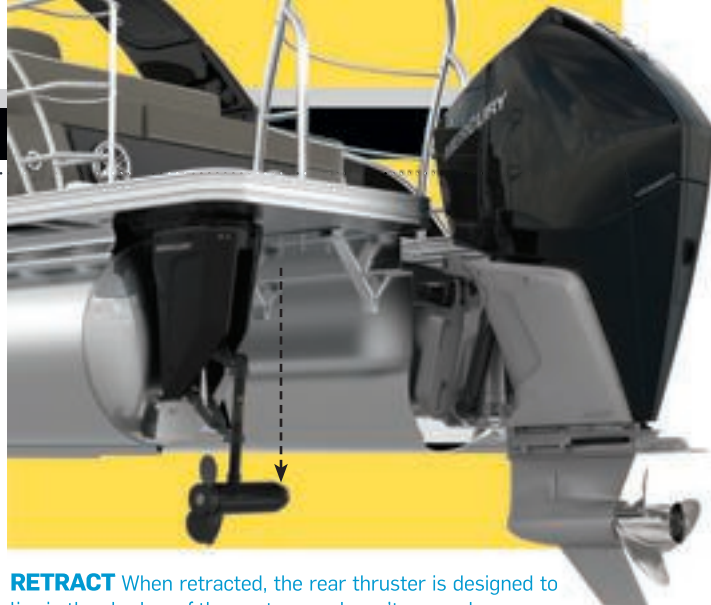
## MERCURY JPO FOR PONTOONS

This innovative system aids pontoon owners in docking and integrates seamlessly with Mercury outboards.

Pity the pontooner. The combination of a huge footprint, a wide turning radius, shallow draft, windage, and limited sightlines from the helm can make docking a pontoon challenging, especially in a breeze or current. Mercury Marine hopes to lower the stress level of pontoon captains with the introduction of Mercury Joystick Piloting for Outboards (JPO) for single-

from 175 to 600 hp. Mercury expects Harris and perhaps a dozen other builders to offer the system this season. The basic version works with hydraulic steering. The premium version works with electric steering and Verado models.

The basic version of pontoon JPO works with a hydraulic helm, requiring the captain to center the steering wheel before activating



**RETRACT** When retracted, the rear thruster is designed to live in the shadow of the pontoon and won't cause drag.

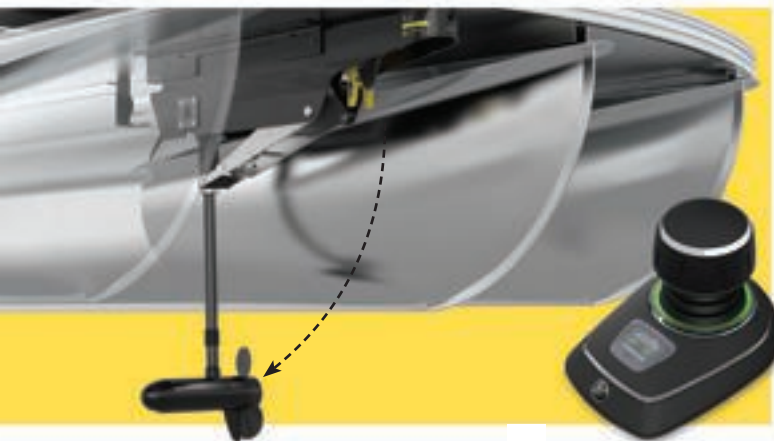
Advanced MidSection (AMS) outboards. In addition to fingertip control, the premium version adds an auto-heading feature and the ability to navigate to waypoints selected on a compatible chart plotter. Both features are only active under outboard power.

Mercury leveraged a number of Brunswick partners to create this system. The thruster heads are 36-volt, 105-pound-thrust MotorGuide saltwater-rated units. The props spin clockwise and counterclockwise, and Mercury created a special composite propeller for this application. Lenco designed the deployment actuators, and Blue Sea Systems designed the charging relay and battery connections. The system will be delivered to boatbuilders as a kit that also includes a Minn Kota battery charger. Mercury says three group 27 batteries can power the system for more than an hour.

Upon approaching the dock, the captain shifts the control to neutral, then presses a button on the joystick base. The thrusters deploy from retracted positions

below the pontoon deck, one at the bow and the other at the stern, which takes about four seconds. Each thruster aligns with the prop-aimed outboard, and both are fixed—they provide lateral thrust in two directions but do not steer. The thruster props are about 10 inches below the waterline, shallower than the outboard skeg, but something to be aware of. The outboard motor provides fore and aft thrust. Manipulating the joystick simultaneously controls the outboard and both thrusters for seamless maneuvering in all directions. The thrusters automatically retract if the joystick switches off, the throttle advances, or the outboard keys off.

In the retracted position, the thrusters tuck up below the deck. It should be noted that the thrusters must be retracted before the boat can be loaded on a trailer. The system is compatible with bunk trailers and fork lifts, but not scissor-type pontoon trailers. We are anxious to give Mercury JPO for single-engine pontoons a sea trial. Please stay tuned.



**SPIN ME** The yellow clip on the mounting bracket is a trailing lock that must be manually secured before heading down the road.

engine pontoons. The system pairs Mercury JPO technology with two retractable thrusters to offer 360-degree boat control through a joystick, including the ability to guide the boat directly abeam to snug up gracefully to a dock.

Pontoon JPO will only be available for OEM installation on new boats powered by a Mercury Digital Throttle and Shift (DTS) outboard

the joystick. A premium version utilizes an electric helm and is designed exclusively for use with Mercury Verado outboards and Mercury Racing

## SIDESHIFT

Sideshift offers three electric thruster kits that function independently of the outboard motors for pontoons up to 35 feet. The bow thruster can retract, and the stern thruster mounts on top of the outboard's anti-ventilation plate. A combined bow and stern system is \$5,695; sideshift.com.



PHOTOS: (FROM TOP) COURTESY MERCURY (3), COURTESY SIDESHIFT



By Randy Vance

## INDMAR ECOJET

Indmar's EcoJet pontoon propulsion system proves quiet, nimble, safe and eco-friendly.

Something new has come to recreational boaters, an unanticipated but long-needed creative surprise drawing a familiar cry of "Why didn't somebody think of that sooner?"

It's Indmar's EcoJet propulsion system for pontoons. We've had a limited test of the system, and without a doubt, it fills a new niche in marine propulsion that may shoulder out some outboards typically found on pontoon transoms.

What is it all about?

EcoJet is a 310 hp Ford 2.3-liter EcoBoost engine mated to a high-power, nimble

horsepower at low rpm (2,400 to 4,800) when compared to most jet engines. That's one step of noise knock-down. Next, it mounted the jet to the motor, and the motor and jet to the center engine pod in a way that isolates the hard parts of the propulsion system from the pontoon chassis to minimize vibration. Third, by tuning EcoBoost's turbocharger for instant activation, Indmar knocked down the turbo lag typical of many turbocharged motors so that the boat responds quickly to throttle at lower,

speeds. First, Indmar gave the jet-pump steering nozzle 45 degrees of turn, 15 degrees greater than most outboards and stern drives. In our test boat, that steering went lock to lock in just over a half-turn of the wheel, so there's no waiting when it comes to the propulsion's direction reversal needed to turn the vessel.

We could pivot the 24-foot pontoon with a combination of wheel and throttle handling, making it the most maneuverable pontoon we've skippered.

Our initial demo was in a speed- and wake-restricted area that didn't let us experience the effect of a small rudder under the jet nozzle, designed to aid the boat in tracking around turns, mitigating the sideways slipping or skidding experienced on many jets. That skidding phenomenon comes from not having running gear below the water's surface.

Closed cooling makes the EcoJet corrosion-resistant for saltwater use. It also enables adding heating ducts to the deck for cool-weather comfort. The engine is deep belowdecks in its pod, leaving ample room for routine

service while clearing the aft deck for a spacious swim platform unobstructed by motors. The intake grate is designed to eliminate ingestion of debris and vegetation, supplying optimal water to the impeller.

With no running gear below the bottom of the pontoons, the EcoJet renders a vessel friendly to grassy flats, requiring only 1 or 2 feet of water to maneuver. Plus, there's no risk of dragging the gear case when trailering because there isn't one.

### HIGH POINTS

- The 2.3-liter Ford EcoBoost engine block generates 310 hp and earns Carb 4-Star emissions certification.
- Propulsion system is completely belowdecks, clearing the stern for a large swim platform.
- No exposed propeller to injure swimmers.
- Shallow draft prevents grass-bed damage.
- Optimal maneuverability from sharp steering angles.



but durable jet-pump drive, and installed on a pontoon in a way that completely isolates the engine and jet-pump noise and vibration from the rest of the hull. It dramatically dampens the high-pitched sound inherent with jets, offering all the advantages of jet propulsion while mitigating its chief liability—noise.

First, Indmar has tuned the EcoBoost engine for optimal

quieter speeds.

Another important advantage is the EcoJet's penchant for maneuverability. Jets are known for being nimble and, in the hands of experienced skippers, can outmaneuver prop-driven vessels. EcoJet brings that maneuverability to a platform notorious for being slow to answer the helm.

Three factors contribute to that maneuverability in slow



**TIPS THAT  
WILL GET  
YOUR BOAT  
READY FOR  
THE NEW  
SEASON**

***spring  
fling***

BY ED SHERMAN  
ILLUSTRATIONS BY TIM BOWER







It's that time of year again: Time to get the cover off the boat and get ready for summer fun on the water. If you are anything like me, you need a list to check off as you get the required tasks done and out of the way. I break down my list into five categories. Let's take a look and make sure you have your boat ready from top to bottom for the start of the new season.

## BOTTOMS UP

### *Clean It*

I always start at the scum line with an application of Marykate On & Off Hull and Bottom Cleaner to scour the hull bottom before applying any antifouling paint. Be careful: This stuff is hydrochloric-acid-based. Safety glasses and disposable gloves are important here. Paint it on with a disposable brush and rinse thoroughly with fresh water.

### *Paint It*

Next, I mask off the waterline and apply a fresh coat of ablative multiseason, water-based antifouling paint. If you are switching to this type of paint from something else, be sure to check for compatibility with your paint manufacturer. Because my boat is on a trailer, I'll jack it up off the trailer with a small hydraulic jack, block it, and paint the entire bottom in sections. (Water-based paint ensures easy cleanup.)

### *Wax It*

I struggled for years with a power buffer and traditional wax application on my boat's dark-blue hull—but no more. About three years ago, I switched to a spray-on ceramic finish after paying a professional detailer to give the hull a final power buffing. I can't believe how great my 10-year-old hull looks. No more carnauba wax for my boat—it's ceramic coating all day.



PHOTOS: COURTESY WEST MARINE



## POWER TO THE PEOPLE

### OILS AND FILTERS

- I'm going to assume you did the right thing and changed your engine oil and filter as well as your lower-unit oil before your boat was decommissioned for winter. If not, change your ways and do it now. This should always be done before extended layup.
- You should have a water-separating fuel filter in your system. It needs to be replaced each season, and keep a spare on board—you never know when you're going to pick up water when refueling.

### IMPELLER ACTION

- Every three years or 300 hours of engine operation, your water-pump impeller should be replaced. Also, look carefully at the bonding wires—the small stainless-steel, uninsulated wires connecting articulating parts on your engine. These have a habit of breaking and should be replaced if this occurs. These wires are important to minimize engine corrosion.

### ANODE ACTION

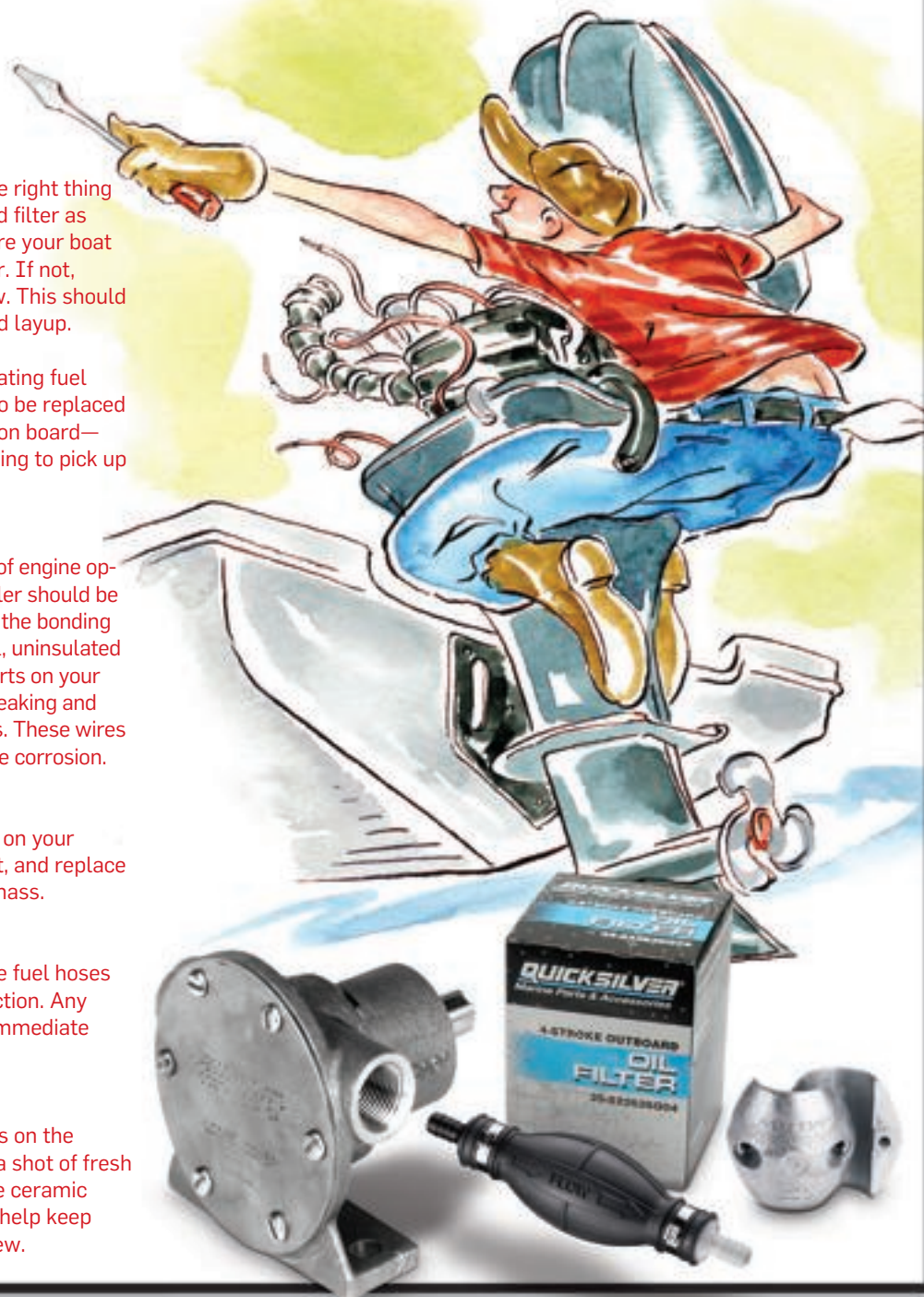
- Check all the sacrificial anodes on your engine(s) and mounting bracket, and replace those that have lost half their mass.

### HOSE HEALTH

- It's important to give things like fuel hoses and primer bulbs a close inspection. Any cracks or chafe points dictate immediate replacement.

### FIT AND TRIM

- Make sure all the grease fittings on the engine and tilt mechanism get a shot of fresh grease. Finally, apply that same ceramic coating you used on the hull to help keep that engine paint looking like new.



## GET A CHARGE

### Battery Maintenance

Depending upon the size of your boat, you'll have at least one battery, and probably more than one. These need to be clean and secured in the boat to eliminate any movement. If they are of the serviceable variety, the electrolyte level needs to be checked and topped up as needed. Most new batteries today are of the sealed or semi-sealed variety, and you can't add fluid. In fact, removal



of the caps can ruin the battery. Again, make sure the top of the battery is clean and dry. Oily,

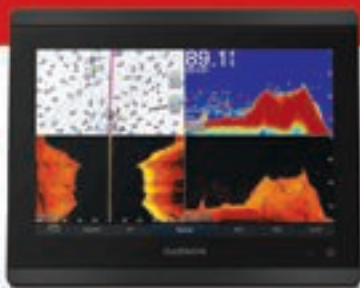
dust-laden deposits attract moisture, which can cause low-level electrical leaks from the positive post to the negative. Clean and dry is the order of the day. Make sure the battery clamps are tight and corrosion-free. Incidentally, if your battery cables are held on with wing nuts, they are no longer compliant with industry standards because they can loosen too easily. Replace these terminal connections with locking nuts.

### Electrical System Checks

Ensure that all the electrical devices on board are working as they should. Check things like fuse panels and exposed electrical connections, looking for any sign of corrosion or loose connections. Any corrosion needs to be cleaned, and a small wire brush can do the job easily. I like to give fuse holders and terminal strips a light spray of Boeshield T-9 to help keep corrosion at bay. CRC and others

PHOTOS: COURTESY WEST MARINE





submerged part of my outboard engine trim and mounting bracket. Prospeed Foulfree also makes a good transducer coating system.

### **Radio Check**

Double-check the coaxial cable antenna connection to your VHF radio, and make sure you have a clean and tight, corrosion-free hookup. Perform a radio check, and don't use Channel 16! Channel 9 will do nicely here and won't clutter the emergency channel.

### **Antennas**

If you have already checked all your electrical-system connections, then you have confirmed good power and ground connections for your equipment. Do the same for any GPS antenna connections.

offer corrosion inhibitors if you can't find Boeshield T-9. As for loose connections, tighten any held with a hex nut, and any push-on terminals might need replacement. Make sure you use proper crimping pliers and the right-size terminal for the wire gauge in question.

Have any lights out? Check the bulbs, and get them replaced as needed.

### **Electronic Equipment Checks**

Now is the time to check for any software or firmware updates to your equipment and install as needed. Make sure the software

for your multifunction display, electronic charting and other equipment is the latest available and update if not. This can be confirmed with a visit to the manufacturers' websites.

### **Transducers**

If your fish-finder transducer is transom-mounted, make sure it aims straight down; these are typically designed to articulate

to accommodate different mounting angles. Also, make sure there is no barnacle or other sea growth on the transducer's surface. Transducer antifoulant is available at West Marine and should be used, especially if your boat stays in the water all season.

I use Pettit transducer paint, which is also good for use on stainless-steel trim tabs and the





## FIT & FINISH

### **Canvas Snaps, Zippers and Tie-Downs**

Get some Star brite snap-and-zipper lubricant, and use it to help with those stubborn snaps that resist coming undone just a little too much at times. It also keeps zippers running smoothly. Are the clear vinyl windows in your canvas getting a bit hard to see through? Get some Flitz plastic polish and a

Flitz BuffBall. Use as directed to get things cleared up.

### **Upholstery Service and Care**

Vinyl upholstery on boats lives a tough life. UV exposure will eventually attack and destroy it. I use 3M Vinyl Conditioner & Protector monthly as part of a routine maintenance schedule for the vinyl on my boat. So far, so good. I get a lot of compliments on how great the seats and cushions look.

### **Exterior Wood**

Wood types and amounts vary considerably from one boat to another. The only wood on my boat, for example, is a beautiful Edson wood-rimmed steering wheel. As with vinyl, it lives in the sun, and UV rays will eventually get to it. I lightly

sand and varnish it every two seasons to keep it looking like new. Obviously, this will vary quite a bit between boats, but keeping your exterior wood

looking first-class is an important maintenance item.



PHOTOS: (FROM TOP LEFT) COURTESY WEST MARINE (2), COURTESY STAR BRITE





## SIMPLE SAFETY

- If you ever get stopped by the US Coast Guard for a routine safety inspection, you need to make sure your flares are not out of date and you have approved life jackets on board for everyone in your party. If you are like me, you probably carry inflatable life jackets. Make sure the inflation cartridges are still in the green; if not, they'll need replacement. Also, be

advised that these jackets come in different sizes. Young children won't do well in an adult-size life jacket. Because the flare dating is something I typically forget, I switched to one of the new Coast Guard-approved electronic flare sets last season. Remember, these are battery-powered, so make sure the batteries are up to snuff each season.

- Make sure you have the required number of fire extinguishers on board and that their charge gauges are in the green. Also, US Coast Guard regulations require a "sound-producing device," such as a hand-held air horn or athletic whistle. Although not mandatory, I also recommend having a first-aid kit to take care of minor injuries.

PHOTOS: COURTESY WEST MARINE

Once you've completed your spring commissioning checklist, it might be tempting to head straight to the launch ramp and take off on an all-day nautical adventure. Before you do that, take a pre-trip—aka shakedown trip—to make sure everything is OK on the water before going on a real boat outing.

Make a plan to launch your boat and check

for leaks or any issues, then give it a short test run to make sure all your hard work paid off and the boat is ready for the season.

## SCAN ME

Keep up to date on all of your boating maintenance needs by scanning this tag or going to [boatingmag.com/how-to](http://boatingmag.com/how-to).





# TRIPLE TOW TOYS



THESE THREE-PASSENGER INFLATABLES OFFER



# THREAT



THREE TIMES THE FUN—AND THEN SOME.

BY JEFF HEMMEL PHOTOS BY TOM KING



One is the loneliest number.

Well, unless you're skipping across the wakes solo on an inflatable tow toy, then let's face it: One might be lonely, but it's still pretty darn fun. But as any kid who has ever invited a friend along for the ride knows, two can be double the fun. And three? Judging by the teen trio riding a collection of tubes in this year's annual inflatable roundup, the equation turns exponential. That's probably the reason inflatable manufacturers keep producing bigger and bolder rides. In terms of rider capacity, fun factor is far from finite.

To prove it, we assembled a quiver of truly unique three-passenger inflatables from brands HO, Radar, O'Brien and WOW. One offered arguably the best bang for the buck, one was laid-back until it wasn't, one was some kind of rocking inflatable cage match, and one was, well, a magical unicorn. Behind an equally unique tow vehicle—Sea-Doo's new Switch pontoon—all provided near-endless fun in our idyllic yet rough tropical setting. They all proved durable and well-made, with heavy-duty PVC air bladders protected by durable nylon covers that easily handled the occasional scrape across the beach or bump into the boat without any fear of a rip or puncture.

While we pushed each tube to its passenger capacity, all offered great fun with just one or two riders. Three might be a triple threat, but our test crew will attest that things can get tight at times for full-grown teens and adults. A rider on the outside of a tube flew off and into the water more than once.

But hey, it's tubing. That's all part of the fun.



## RADAR ORION 3 (\$229.99)

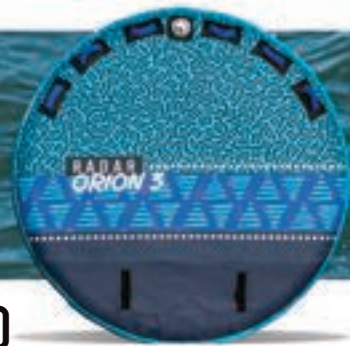
If you're looking for the best bang for the buck, a strong argument could be made for a basic, deck-style inflatable like Radar's Orion 3. An oversize version of Radar's popular two-passenger model built to satisfy consumer demand, it doesn't offer a cushy backrest, cute animal character, or any real bells and whistles. The Orion is just a classic 75-inch round inflatable with room for up to three riders lying side by side in a prone position and six padded grab handles arrayed across its front. Radar's Marshmallow Soft Top, a comfy neoprene

material, covers the upper side of the tube and all but eliminates riders' elbows and knees chafing against the surface when bouncing along behind the boat. The convex shape of the aptly named Spoon-O-Vation bottom reduces drag. It also allows the tube to have a clean connection with the wake, grab air in the right conditions, and carry a lot of speed out into the flats.

While the Orion is certainly capable of a relaxing ride, the listed features mean this inflatable practically begs to slingshot (responsibly) across the wakes.

It's one of the best sliders in the bunch and can be subtly influenced with body language. The only real downside is that the completely bolster-free deck surface offers little to keep the outside passenger in place when the Radar accelerates outside the wake.

With its single bladder, the Orion 3 was the simplest and quickest tube to fill, a bonus if you're attempting to inflate it on board the boat or at the launch ramp. Its two-piece Boston valve is simple to use, but don't lose it.





# HO SPORTS UNICORN [\$469.99]



HO bills the Unicorn as having a “kid-friendly animal design,” and the description is right on target. The Unicorn quickly caught the attention of some youngsters set up near our photo shoot, as well as adults who just couldn’t help but laugh at the idea of riding a brightly colored unicorn across the water.

That unicorn’s head and tail add another dimension to what otherwise would essentially be a 64-by-75-inch D-shaped, deck-style tube. Namely, while outer passengers will assume the typical prone position, a central passenger can sit upright using the inflated tail as a supportive backrest, grabbing the reins—a pair of padded handles astride the head—to keep atop the little critter while underway. Like any deck-style tube, the Unicorn can trot happily in the wake during straight passes, but crank an S-turn (or three) and it can’t help but gallop outside the wake with ease.

The main deck fills via a Boston-style valve. The head, tail, and a pair of wedge-shaped bolsters designed to keep riders’ legs from slipping off fill separately via traditional pool-float valves. A pair of padded grab handles with EVA knuckle guards are placed in front of each prone passenger. But while the Unicorn’s added side bolsters work when riding in relatively calm conditions, the outside rider occasionally didn’t find them enough to keep from being bucked off once the Unicorn really starts sliding. Clearly, the magical Unicorn has got some spunk.

## TOP TUBE TIPS

Big tubes benefit from big, powerful 120-volt air pumps rather than smaller 12-volt inflators that work off your boat or car battery.

For performance and safety, fully inflate the internal bladder(s). Ready-to-ride tubes should feel firm and cover snugly with no gaps or wrinkles.

Inflatables put considerable tension on a tow-rope, especially multipassenger models. Rather than a ski rope, use a dedicated inflatable towrope with greater tensile strength.







## WOW JOKER (\$549.99)

This year's entry from WOW was surprisingly subtle in appearance. OK, who are we kidding? This is WOW we're talking about. You can't miss the Joker, with its bright contrasting colors and acid-trip graphics. However, it's not a case of a graphic designer run amok. On increasingly crowded waterways, the Joker is easy to spot from a distance and stands out in high contrast from the background.

The Joker featured the most interesting design of this year's foursome. The bottom curves with considerable rocker for minimal

drag and a rocking ride from side to side. Up top, a pair of arches run front to back connected by twin crossbars. WOW calls it the Power Tower. We call it a feature that gives the Joker plenty of options. With EVA foam deck pads on the main deck and grab handles at the ready both high and low, passengers can lie across the bottom or sit, kneel or stand. With the rock-and-roll bottom profile and raised tower, standing riders have great leverage over the tube as it skids back and forth across the wakes. Riders' only real concern was possibly briefly

tangling in the Power Tower should the tube flip, but it remained stable even in the rough waters we encountered.

Inflated, the Joker stretches the tape at 79-by-74-by-53 inches. WOW's two-part speed valves offered easy inflation and deflation, but the Joker proved the longest to fill and empty due to the multiple bladders required by the rockered bottom and Power Tower. Tip: If you notice that a tower bladder is twisted, save yourself a headache and access it via the cover's zippers to straighten before you fully inflate it.

## DRIVING DO'S AND DON'TS

Always use a dedicated spotter. Establish basic hand signals between riders and the spotter—faster, slower, stop—before leaving the dock.

Stay a considerable distance from objects like docks, pilings, buoys and other boats. Keep in mind that a tube can travel well outside your wake. As the driver, it's your job to keep riders safe. Watch your speed. A

mere 8 mph is often enough for kids. For adults, 15 to 18 mph should be your target.

Recklessly powering into a turn can accelerate an inflatable to dangerous speeds and increase the chance of injury. A gentle series of S-turns is typically all you need to send a tube back and forth across the wake and out into the flats.







# O' BRIEN BALLER 3 (\$389.99)



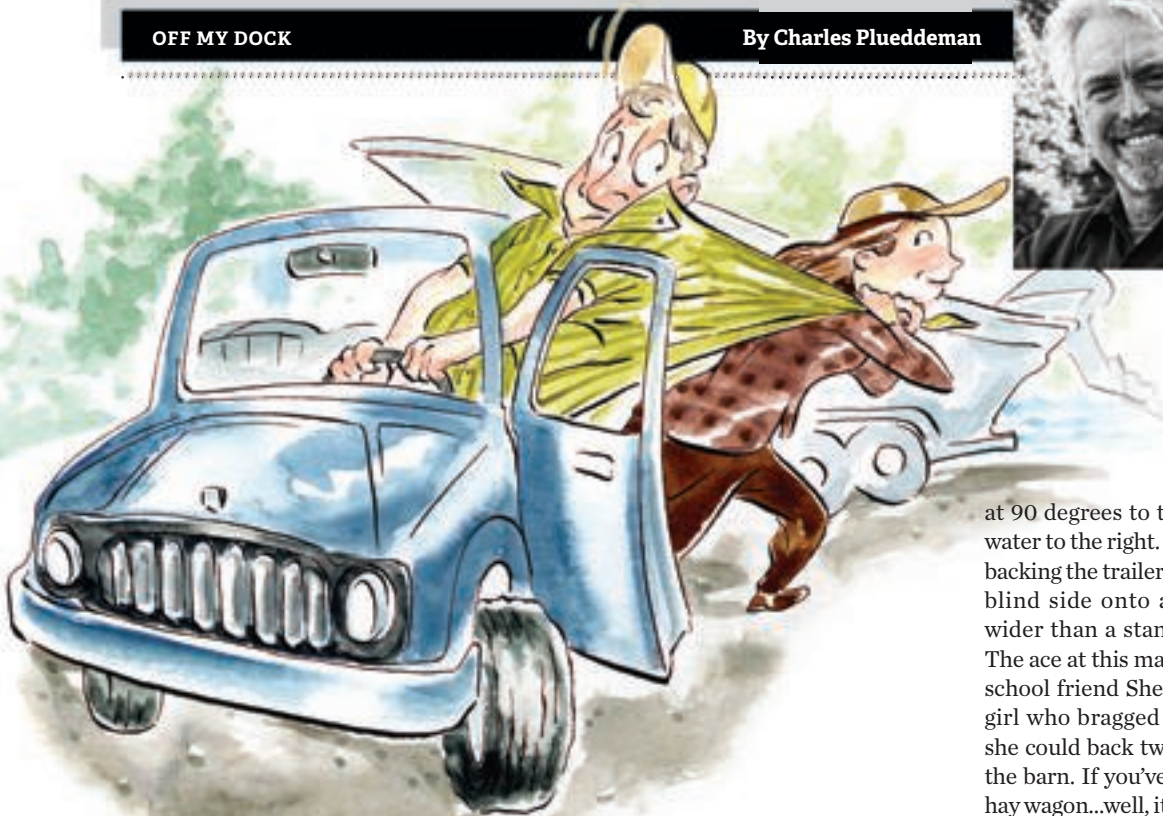
With its couchlike design, the Baller 3 was tempting to chill on even before leaving the beach. Its 70-by-78-inch D-shaped bottom offers plenty of room to stretch the legs, and a plush backrest offers comfy support. Underway, however, this big comfy couch loves to rocket across the wake and into the flats. As it does, riders will appreciate that the backrest wraps around to the sides and keeps them from a premature slip into the drink.

The Baller features two unique tow points, one to tow the tube like a couch, and one that turns riders into a waterlogged Ben-Hur championing a chariot. Our three-person test crew noted how that split personality added to the fun, and it gave differing body parts a break in our wind-chopped test conditions. In both positions, O'Brien's Softec nylon offers a softer feel than a traditional cover, eliminating chafe with a stitch-free finish topside and without added neoprene pads or EVA knuckle guards. The grab handles in the chariot position, however, could use additional padding. More than one test rider longed for a more comfortable grip after extended bouncy rides across the waves.

Like almost all O'Brien tubes that have debuted of late, the Baller features the brand's proprietary Lightning valve, a wide-mouth design with a clever internal flap without loose parts that fills and empties the internal bladders with—you guessed it—lightning speed. When packing the tube away, just push in the flap and the air gushes out of the bladder.







## THE UNQUALIFIED CAPTAIN

There but for the grace of God...

I suppose it's human nature to be entertained by the ineptitude of others. The folks over at the Qualified Captain, for example, state that its popular Instagram page is intended to elicit chuckles by broadcasting bad choices made by clueless captains. This summer, bartender Wally figured out how to link his cellphone to the Lake View Inn's big screen so that we could watch the Qualified Captain's clips together, if not for entertainment, then for educational purposes. One day, one of us might want to run a pontoon out of Jupiter Inlet, for example.

There is the old notion about the fun of spending a Saturday afternoon at any launch ramp simply to watch tempers flare and relationships dissolve. But who wants to spend an entire afternoon sitting on a picnic table at

the ramp? None of us can drink that much beer anymore. So, we thought it was brilliant when Wally had a camera mounted to the eaves of the Lake View, aimed at the adjacent ramp. The ramp cam has been a big hit, with downloaded clips of boats floating off trailers and into the bay, tires shedding water like a wet dog on the slick

ramp, and dads yelling at pissed-off wives and crying children. The highlight so far has been the scene of a tow truck winching a water-filled SUV back to dry land—yes, this really does happen.

Hubris is a bitch, of course, and I should have figured she'd come looking for my good friend Chuck Larson. Instead of erupting in mocking laughter at the ineptitude of others, Chuck should have been taking notes because this particular ramp is a challenge. There is one lane, and traffic approaches

at 90 degrees to the ramp, with the water to the right. To launch requires backing the trailer 90 degrees to your blind side onto a ramp not much wider than a standard garage door. The ace at this maneuver is my high-school friend Shelly Nickels, a farm girl who bragged in drivers ed that she could back two hay wagons into the barn. If you've never backed one hay wagon...well, it's hard.

Last Saturday, Chuck arrived at the ramp towing his brother-in-law's new Four Winns with two families packed into the SUV. Once coolers, tubes, gear, children and two wives were unloaded on the dock, Chuck said, "I got this," and jumped into the driver's seat. The ramp cam was rolling, and Chuck did not nail it. After the sixth attempt, restless little boys began pushing each other and female hands moved to hips—never a good sign. On the seventh try, there was a loud chorus of "whoa, whoa, whoa" and hand-waving when a flustered Chuck was about to put the portside trailer wheel onto the dock.

Suddenly, Shelly strode into the camera frame. She spoke through the driver's window and then opened the door for Chuck, who stepped onto the asphalt and took a walk of shame to the dock.

Shelly later explained she was not out to humiliate Chuck by backing that boat down in one move. She was next in line and just wanted to get on the water. Wally, of course, was perfectly willing to chasten Chuck by playing the episode over and over to the packed bar that evening. Fortunately for Chuck, the Lake View does not have an Instagram account.

The highlight so far has been the scene of a tow truck winching a water-filled SUV back to dry land—yes, this really does happen.





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