

BOAT TEST

Pilot 4

Simon Everett takes a look at a very affordable boat that's just perfect for the occasional angler.

Specs

LOA	4.00m
BEAM	1.82m
FREEBOARD	32in
WEIGHT	290kg
MAX PASSENGERS	5
MAX POWER	50hp
CE CATEGORY	C

Prices (inc VAT)

As tested with 50hp Honda outboard and unbraked, bunk trailer £10,995.00.

With 30hp Honda outboard and unbraked, bunked trailer £9,995.00. Boat only, £4921.12.

Availability

For more information on the Pilot 4, contact: Wesport Marine, 9 Crownhill Fort, Plymouth.

Tel: 01752 772224, Mob: 07977 466160 or e-mail: sales@westportmarine.co.uk

You can also visit their website at: www.westportmarine.co.uk



She's stable underway.

Easy To Launch

There are plenty of folks who are looking for an affordable boat that is not too big and easily managed. This month we are looking at a package that anyone with a job could afford, at under £10,000 the Pilot 4 would get you on the water and fishing without breaking the bank to buy, or run.

Built by Westport Marine in Plymouth the name of the model is a very old Plymouth style of boat, the Plymouth Pilot is a traditional little launch with a cuddy which has been around for years. Westport Marine have updated the concept with a very beamy boat that can be converted from open boat to cuddy with the easily as the cuddy is removable and is held in place by just a few cam locks.

Westport Marine is run by Charles Broughton who is a Naval Architect from Norfolk originally and is now based in Crownhill Fort, Plymouth. Charles has penned this boat for his own use in and around The Sound and for going along the coast either side. The boat has been designed to be safe and welcoming to the whole family, hence the high internal freeboard for security with children.

Careful Choice

The length has been deliberately chosen as being one of the less favoured sizes, there are few boats available in the under 15-foot bracket. This size is ideal for young families, or a couple of mates to go fishing and is easy to keep at home. Being small doesn't mean you can't go out of the harbour, the high bow gives her the ability to take on bigger waves than you would imagine a small boat like this could. The removable cuddy also does a great job of keeping the water out, even going through the Peveril Race on a strong ebb against a westerly we put her nose under a couple of times but the green water wasn't forced up under the seal.

Plenty Of Room

Despite being only just over 13 feet in length there is a surprising amount of room in the cockpit. Stowage is kept simple with a large locker under the forepeak seat and another even bigger one under the stern bench which houses the fuel tank and battery. The helm seat is a simple arch support with a cushion pad atop. It suffices and it is possible to steer while sat and see through the screen. The helm console is a simple affair, but provides a small area where a fishfinder and GPS could be mounted.

The vision through the screen is excellent as there are no supports to restrict your view because the screen doesn't open. Access to the foredeck for anchor or mooring work is through a large hatch in the cuddy roof, which does allow you to reach the cleat and although it seems incongruous it wasn't as restrictive as I thought it would be and it is much safer than going on deck, or having an opening

You even get a sunroof!



A nice compact helm.



The Honda 50 is an ideal choice.



hatch in the screen. Life could be made even easier by rigging a lazy line and working the anchor from the cockpit.

The aft bench locker is particularly large and between the two lockers there is room for a spare fuel tank, the camping cover, ropes, fenders, anchor and rope, and still leave plenty for foulies and even some food and drink in a coolbox. There are two rod holders, angled aft just short of the cleats on each quarter, making the cleats ideal for attaching rod security lanyards. On the gunwale there are hardwood inserts where it would be easy to attach additional screw on attachments.

Typical Weather For A Test

Taking the boat out from Poole there are some good spots to put her through her paces, both for speed and to see how she copes when a sea is running. The day was a typical one for going out and the little boat was quite at home, even in the overfalls off Old Harry.

Peter Johnson the salesman out with me was a little apprehensive when I said I was going through it, but he soon relaxed as he saw how the Pilot 4 bobbed over each wave. In the overfalls the wave length is much shorter and steeper than on open water and so she put her bow under several times, nothing untoward, it was just the height and length of the waves meant she was coming down one as she met the next. By working the throttle and letting the boat fall gently over each one we got through very happily.

Once out the other side we could open her up and she spanked along at a steady 28mph with the needle on 4000rpm from the 50hp Honda. To be fair, although she is rated for 50hp, a 30hp motor would be more than adequate unless you were taking heavy loads on a regular basis. For two people and a bit of fishing gear 30hp would hardly make any difference to the overall performance as it is rare you use full throttle. The ride at higher speeds is a little harsh, the mild deadrise of 15 degrees makes it easy to get the boat on the plane without soaking up loads of power and makes the boat very stable, but can't give the softness of ride that a more angular V would.

For a little boat, this was a very good compromise between the various trade offs, you can't have it every way. The double chine hull, with its two strakes, cutting the water neatly with the strakes providing some additional lift and grip on the water together with additional rigidity.

We spent a while trolling at under two knots and the Pilot 4 was very comfortable at slow speed without wallowing. The very beamy nature of the boat gives added stability and room around your legs. The room in the self draining cockpit for a boat of this size is very generous, and the non slip moulding is pretty grippy. When we stopped to drop some lines down on the drift she lay quietly and rode the swell without slapping or chucking us about.

Excellent Choice

The Pilot 4 is a well thought out little boat that punches high above her weight. At 14 feet she is a real pocket boat but will permit access to coastal marks and given the weather I would be happy to take her out to within an hours sprint home. For anglers wanting a boat to fish the likes of her home waters, Plymouth Sound, Falmouth Roads, Poole Harbour and surrounding water, The Solent or the East Coast estuaries, this is a fine little boat that comes in at under the £10,000 budget. With her removable cuddy she can offer the best of both worlds, protection from the elements and bigger water capability, or as an open boat for inshore, sheltered waters. In this size bracket there is very little choice, the Pilot 4 brings something different to the table.