

PERFECT PILOT

Nobody in the sea angling press has tested more angling boats than Dave Lewis, so when he says a boat is perfect for fishing you have to sit up and take notice...

HAD YOU GIVEN me a blank sheet of paper and asked me to design what I thought was the perfect angling boat, then probably the result would look like the Pilot 6 I am testing here.

I've been regularly reviewing angling boats for this magazine for more than 15 years, and I am on record as saying there are three key things that are essential in any small angling boat. The boat should be well built, structurally sound and in all ways safe to take to sea.

Then I would add a large amount of stowage space, and (even on a small boat) ample deck space to fish in safety and comfort. The Pilot 6 ticks all these boxes.



INFORMATION

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THE GUIDED TOUR

THE Pilot 6 I tested featured an attractive deep blue hull with white topsides. Forward I found the standard open cuddy, which I later confirmed had ample headroom for me to sit under in comfort. Forward visibility was provided in abundance by the large tinted windscreens.

Access to the bow was through an opening hatch that not only provided enough space for a large adult, but in this case hinged inwards to the underside of the cuddy roof where it could be clipped out of the way while working the anchor, or simply for maximum ventilation in hot weather. The anchor locker was sunk into the bow with the access hatch offset to port, while the provision for general anchoring/mooring is perfect.

Beneath the cuddy I found large lockers that are perfect for general stowage of bulky items of equipment, along with an open section forward with hinged seat from where it is possible to stand firmly braced against the forward bulkhead while working the anchor. The steering console was of the open pedestal-mounted type and can best be described as basic yet functional, with ample space to install the

usual electronics. On the test boat, pedestal seats were provided for both the helmsman and crew, and while these would not have been my choice – I prefer to stand – I know they are popular with many anglers.

The fishing cockpit featured a large self-draining deck, and had sufficient space for three, or possibly even four, anglers to fish together in comfort. There is an excellent amount of inboard freeboard with cavernous stowage compartments aft that have been incorporated within the transom to stow fuel tanks, batteries etc.

One of the few criticisms I have of this boat is that the design of the transom and size of these lockers is such that it restricts access to the aft end to net fish while fishing at anchor in strong tides.

All necessary deck hardware, including stainless steel rails in both port and starboard quarters and on the cuddy roof, was fitted.

The Pilot 6 has an overall length of 5.20 metres, a 2.20m beam, and tips the scales at 590kg excluding engine. It has been rated as suitable for CE Category C, the standard for almost all boats of a similar size. She features 1,200 litres of foam buoyancy below decks, and I was extremely

impressed with the overall build quality and finish of this boat. The inclusion of a stainless boarding ladder pleased me and, call me old fashioned if you like, I appreciated the hardwood cappings on the gunnels that add a traditional, warm feel.

PUT TO THE TEST

CONDITIONS outside Plymouth Sound were horrendous, and beyond the sensible limits even for much larger boats. However, such is the topography of Plymouth as a port that finding more realistic testing conditions was easy.

After a quick look at the various options we decided that Devil's Point, the famous conger hot spot, not only provided sea conditions choppy enough to put the boat through her paces, but a rather convenient vantage point for taking pictures, too!

The Pilot 6 is rated for use with outboard engines up to and including 90hp. The test boat was fitted with a 90hp Suzuki that produced a top speed ever so slightly above 30 knots with two persons on board. I was informed that under ideal conditions speeds of up to 32 knots have been recorded. It is worth noting that even when fitted with a smaller, more affordable

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50hp engine, 25 knots is still achievable, which is more than enough speed for many anglers.

I found the boat to be an absolute delight to handle, with positive, crisp steering thanks to no-feedback steering installed as standard. She responded smoothly and positively to even slight adjustments to the throttle, and within no time at all I was entirely comfortable at the helm. I found the Pilot 6 cut cleanly through what really were quite choppy seas with barely a hint of slamming, provided we maintained a sensible speed in the conditions.

As my confidence in her handling qualities started to grow, I tentatively headed out towards Plymouth Breakwater where, in addition to a snotty, breaking sea, courtesy of a strong wind against tide scenario, we started to encounter sizeable swells that were rolling in out of the south west. Again, taking into account these conditions – which were at the top end of what any small boat should willingly have been committed to – I enjoyed a smooth,

dry ride that quickly inspired confidence.

I tried running her with the prevailing conditions coming from various aspects, including on the beam and from astern. At one stage I pulled out of gear into neutral to see how she responded on the drift, and was very impressed.

Consequently, I am happy to conclude that not only does the Pilot 6 look the part, but having tried her under realistic sea conditions I can confirm that this is an excellent sea boat that is for the mixed, varied and often frequently changing sea conditions we encounter around the coast of the British Isles.

At the time of my trial the cost for a boat/engine package as tested was £16,294. A standard boat, which includes the likes of navigation lights, deck fittings, buoyancy, seating, steering and controls, along with all lockers and tinted windscreens as described, is £8,495, while a braked trailer with 950kg capacity (900kg is required), is available at £1,950. A range of accessories is available as optional extras. ●



The boat has plenty of useful storage space



A hatch gives access to the anchor locker



The steering pedestal is basic, yet functional