

“Why should I have a pre-purchase inspection?”
A word with Capt. David Brown, COO of Boat Squad.

No piece of boat-buying advice is more often ignored than this: Have a specialist inspect a used boat before you buy it. Why do buyers plunk down thousands of dollars on a boat with little more than a walk around, a few open compartments, look under the engine cowling and the word of the owner that everything is fine. What about those that are buying a boat on Ebay or at a distance and have nobody in the area that can help them look at a boat forcing them to buy a boat in their neighborhood? Three reasons often deter boat buyers from taking this vital step:

- Some consumers don't know that good used-boat inspections are readily available.
- Many buyers don't want to pay the extra money for an inspection.
- Some people anticipate a hassle getting a dealer or private party to agree to an inspection.

With a little planning, the inspection process can be simple, not to mention as revealing as a hidden-camera exposé. If the inspection report is clean, you can buy with increased confidence. If it unearths ugly problems, you can back away or negotiate a lower price to reflect the cost of repairs.

Most sellers will agree to have a mobile inspection performed at their home or marina as long as they are present. If the seller hesitates, you might wonder what they're hiding and consider walking away from the deal. Best of all, it does not need to be expensive. Especially considering the disadvantages of not purchasing a pre-inspection report.

The Vital Pre-purchase Inspection

Experts agree that used boats must be inspected by a qualified specialist before the final negotiation for purchase. The ordinary buyer, even if nautically savvy, really can't do it justice. A thorough, professional inspection can tell you whether you're about to buy a peach or a lemon. You should try to have the inspection performed by a specialist with whom you've already built a relationship. And ideally, the inspection should include a sea trial and hauling the vessel out of the water and if it is in the water vice versa. But what happens if you do not have a specialist in the area? What if you are looking at several boats in different areas? Having a third party inspect the boat establishes trust and increases your familiarity with the listing. Sure, there's a ton of information available on the web about every model, but what you need at this juncture is detailed information about this particular boat. A professional inspection will tell you both what might be wrong with this boat and also what's right with it.

Smart sellers, too, know the value of a pre-sale inspection. Having the boat thoroughly scrutinized by a reliable third party before listing it provides an additional selling point in the form of a written report. While this is useful information and lends credibility to the seller, you should still insist on getting your own independent inspection before making the purchase.

What it cost and what it covers

Traditionally, you would need to contact a certified marine surveyor. There are hardly any seaports in the USA that do not have at least a few of them. You could also contact small boat service centers to have one of their mechanics head over to your proposed listing and take a peak. Neither of these options are nearly as convenient or cost effective as Boat Squad. Here is why. A standard survey for a single 26ft power boat can cost you \$800-\$2500 from a certified surveyor whom would spend a day with the boat going over every detail about the boat for pre-purchase and insurance coverage reasons. Being certified surveyors, you are able to present this to your insurance company as proof of value and coverage acceptance. However, this step is overkill if all you want to do is gain more information on a particular listing

before purchase. You probably have other listings you are looking at as well. The same thing goes for small boat marine outfitter that can send a mechanic to look at your particular listing. Can they do that right away? Will you be able to get consistent reports from one location vs another location? They will probably put your request in cue and you will have to wait for them to hit the road, preview and then report back to you at sometime in the near future. By the way, you're on an hourly clock for this service, usually \$90-\$125 per/hr for door to door service. For prospective buyers, this is not an efficient way to view multiple listings and get a clear view of what the current market has to offer.

Major problems that can be spotted by a good inspector include:

- Hull damage. If the hull shows damage, it indicates the boat has been in a serious grounding or accident. Unless it has been repaired correctly, the structural integrity of the boat can be compromised and that is a major safety concern.
- Poor previous repair work. This could range from improper engine service to sloppy maintenance to improper installation of accessories or modifications.
- Flood damage or fire damage. Boats do not have carfax reports or history reports that can red-flag a boat that has been sunk or in fire. You might not spot the signs under a new paint job or the photos posted on the listing, but an inspector can identify the telltale signs of damage.

Other issues an inspection can reveal include hidden rust, fluid leaks, burned-out bulbs, nonfunctioning accessories, suspicious odors and overdue maintenance procedures. With Boat Squad, our inspectors will follow a specific 125 item list that covers everything that might be of interest to the prospective buyer.

So what are my options?

Many people will be faced with the choice of having a mobile inspector look at a boat or taking the vessel to a local shop. While the most important thing is getting a qualified inspection, each method has its advantages and disadvantages.

A mobile inspection is fast and convenient. The inspector comes to your or the seller's home or marina, performs the inspection on site, and prints out a report on the spot. Inspectors also photograph any damage, taking shots of the vessel from different angles.

Inspections done by your local marina, or the service department, are performed with more specialized equipment. For example, the inspector can put the boat up on a lift and examine the underside for damage, delamination and other irregularities that are not normally found with a mobile inspector. But at what cost? The whole inspection can take days and the benefits for a quick inspection just to see if you want to continue with this listing become overwhelming.

Buying From a Distance

Online sites have given buyers access to thousands of boats they might never have found otherwise, but purchasing a boat located far away can bring a number of potential problems. These might include out-and-out fraud, payment issues, paperwork difficulties and critically, the inability to see the listing in person before committing to the sale. Here's where a pre-sale inspection can help.

If you find a boat you like in another part of the country, you should, of course, ask to see a lot of close-up photographs and get a history of its past. But a professional inspection will provide an important extra level of insurance that you're not buying a pack of trouble. Arranging an inspection that will take place elsewhere isn't that difficult.

Obviously, it isn't a great idea to rely on the seller to choose the person who will perform the inspection. If you know someone in the area where the boat is located, you can ask them to recommend a reliable shop. Failing that, a dealership that sells that model of boat can generally be trusted to provide an accurate assessment. And if you're the one ordering and

paying for the inspection, the report should come directly to you and not through the seller. But then again, at what cost? You fall back into the high cost of a survey when all you want to know is if this boat is what they say it is.

There are currently no services provided like what Boat Squad is offering and we specialize in long distance buyers and near local as well. Our reports are on par with a surveyors as we use very similar methods of inspection and the reports are virtually identical in nature.

It's Boat-Buying Insurance

While no inspection is guaranteed to find every flaw in a used boat, a trained eye can help you avoid serious problems. A good inspector will know what to look for and will have the equipment needed to provide a reliable assessment of a vessels condition, including the all-important title or registration paperwork, safety equipment and more. Given thousands of dollars are at stake, a couple of hours of our time, at a reasonable fee are good insurance against the unknown. Just look at one of our sample reports and you will see how complete it is vs. the listing and or any conversation you can have with the majority of the sellers.