



## HOW TO BUDGET YOUR BOATING SEASON

It's no secret that boating is a costly activity. If you're not careful, fuel prices, water sport accessories, docking fees and routine maintenance expenses can easily put a damper on anyone's boating plans. That is why we've put together a few helpful hints to keep your boating expenses to a minimum this season!



### *Plan Shorter Excursions*

Instead of your usual weekend cruise up and down the coast, stick to shorter day trips. A day on the water is still a day on the water, no matter where you go. Here in Sarasota, FL, we like to cruise a few miles off the coast and float in the gulf. After a full day of sun, we're ready to pull anchor and head home! Staying closer to home means you'll save on gas, plus you also cut costs by passing up overnight dockage fees.

If you have a bigger boat and still insist on taking longer trips, you may want to think of inviting a few friends to share the getaway and some of its costs.

### *Travel in Groups*

This goes hand in hand with sticking to shorter excursions. Although taking longer cruises always seems like an exciting trip, consider getting a few of your fellow boaters together and organizing a day at your local sandbar, or even rafting up together in a traffic free area. A day on the water with all of your friends is an event of its own.

### *Be Fuel Efficient*

Know your boat's most efficient cruise speed and stick to it. For scenic runs, consider cruising at idle speed, which usually gives you the best mileage. Even having a clean hull makes a difference; waxing it with a high-tech polish like Star brite Teflon polish will make it more slippery and help reduce drag.

### *Do Your Research*

Planning ahead is a big help when it comes to sticking to a budget. Check AAA discounts at local marinas and docks for better fuel prices. If your weekend routine is cruising over to your favorite watering hole, ask about their weekly specials (happy hour, free live music etc.) and try timing your arrival around them. Cutting coupons never hurt either; visit sites like [www.couponsalacarte.com](http://www.couponsalacarte.com) to get savings on nearby eateries while you're on the water.

### *Pack Smart*

Next time you pack up your cooler, use pre-frozen drinks in lieu of that extra bag of ice. Water and Gatorade bottles work best. For longer treks, consider using three coolers: one large efficient cooler for your main food supply, one medium cooler for daily supply and the third cooler for ice and drinks. Open the large cooler only once a day to move your daily food into the middle cooler. It sounds a bit like leap frog, but it definitely helps conserve the cold!

### *Shop Around*

The marine industry is full of great bargains nowadays; you just have to look for them. Marine stores like West Marine or Boaters World have great sales on their water sport accessories, and if you're willing to purchase slightly used items, Ebay and Craigslist have a huge selection of inner tubes, water-skis, and wake boards.

## FACING THE FACTS

### *What to expect when buying used...*

No matter how good a used boat may look on the surface, the potential for hidden faults to arise runs high. So what's a buyer to do?

There are a few important realities that used boat buyers need to face in order to keep the proper perspective:

1. Boat owners sell their boats for a lot of reasons. Most often, it's because they've simply run out of funds to support their extracurricular activity. If a boat owner can no longer afford his payments, it also means they may have slacked on routine maintenance or avoided other expenses that occurred in the last six months or so. So no matter how perfect the boat may appear, any buyer should expect a proper survey and be prepared to see a list of potential defects.
2. Keep true cost in perspective. Used boats typically sell for a fraction of their cost at time of first purchase. This difference is called depreciation. If the original price was \$100,000 and the current market value is \$65,000, there is \$35,000 worth of depreciation that you should definitely not pay for. Checking programs like NADA online will help identify correct current market values.
3. There is a time consuming factor associated with purchasing a used boat that's commonly known as "fitting out." Basically machinery malfunctions, equipment failure or other related problems are amidst any used boat, and the time it takes for surveys, mending, and settling on a price creates a gap between your purchase and your first sunset cruise. Always take into consideration the costs and time restraints you will incur when purchasing a boat with problems. Perhaps the previous owner is willing to deduct these maintenance fees from his asking price? Or perhaps you should just move on to another prospective boat? Either way, it is important you realize any good deal will take a considerable amount of time to finalize.

## CLEANING PRODUCTS PROVE THEIR WORTH IN HEAD-TO-HEAD CONTESTS

### Round 1

After ramp grease, beach dirt and a day's worth of snacks and saltwater, it's hard for any nonskid deck to come clean with a simple soap-and-water scrub. So we took Marine Spray Nine and Star brite Hull Cleaner, to see which one of these products was bound to shine through the mess.

Half the deck was cleaned with each product. Spray Nine (\$7.99 for 25 ounces) was the quickest. Simply spray it on, wait, brush it and hose it. Star brite's brush-on hull cleaner (\$10.99 per quart) took a little more elbow grease but worked as advertised. We saved a spot and tried Bissel's Bathroom Cleaner on a patch and found it worked just fine -- for 98 cents from Big Lots -- but it would take a quarter can (17 ounces full) to clean the deck.

### Round 2

After two weeks in storage, our life jackets were growing fungus. We spread them out on the driveway and tackled the problem with two products: Armada Mighty Brite Mildew Stain Remover (\$13.99 per pound) and Star brite Sail and Canvas Cleaner (\$6.99 per pound). Mixed as directed, both claim to brighten whites and colors without fading. Good thing, because these jackets were red and white. We hosed them down and scrubbed on the products, waited and rinsed. Both products required a second scrubbing, but they came clean in a dead heat. The jackets look great and smell terrific.

