

Westport Marine Pilot 2

Westport Marine is already famous for its highly popular Pilot 4 and 6 boats, reviewed last year in TSF, but the company has now added a smaller version to the range as Mike Thrussell explains...



that the middle seat can be removed to gain extra space if required. In testing I found the seat was not in the way and was, in fact, handy not just for seating, but also as a worktop for tying rigs and so on.

The gunnels carry rowlocks as, obviously, a boat of this size can be rowed. This will appeal to bass anglers who often use the motor for gaining closer access to a mark, but then either row in, or use an electric motor to finally move into position without scaring the fish.

The stern quarters are fitted with stainless-steel rope eyes for tying off, which are all that's necessary on a boat of this size, though you could opt for small T-cleats as an alternative.

The boat also features a full-length transom seat; this

hides a spacious inner locker with room to accommodate the fuel tank and spare fuel, plus other equipment.

The deck has a stippled finish for grip and also has raised foot-grip bars to facilitate easier rowing. You can put your foot against these when rowing to provide extra grip to maximise the power of the rowing stroke.

The test boat featured a dark-blue hull with off-white inside. The off-white inside cuts down on sun reflection and glare when fishing, and is also much easier on the eyes when fishing in bright sunlight.

The Pilot 2 is exceptionally well finished and uses all top-quality stainless-steel fittings throughout the build. In fact, the overall finish is as good as we've seen!

The Pilot 2 is an open dinghy that's suitable for estuary fishing. It will be of special interest to bass fly fishers and pluggers looking to work in shallow inshore reef areas with maximum stealth from a boat that can be easily be launched single handed.

Ex-naval design architect Charlie Broughton designed the boat, and modern

technology is used within the build format. This includes advanced CNC machining, using a computer-controlled robotic arm to cut the full-size patterns, giving greater mould quality to gain a very high standard of finish.

The build includes a chop-strand-matt lay-up, plus a core matt material that sits in the middle of the laminate acting like a foam sandwich to give

greater hull rigidity. The hull is a clinker-hull design, which, in itself, increases strength. The engine sits on a plywood insert that's moulded in to the transom for maximum strength.

The Pilot 2 has a length of 3.6 metres with a beam of 1.6 metres, approximately 11ft 6in x 4ft 10in.

She is equipped with a stainless-steel towing eye at the bow, plus a spacious

bow locker with room for an anchor, chain rope and other additional storage such as baler and other essential items. The hinged top of the locker is also a forward seat for one.

The middle seat is a bridging board that is open underneath. This currently screws to moulded gunnel boxes so is a fixed item, but in future Charlie may have this as a clip-in system so

FACT FILE

STATISTICS

Length: 3.60m

Beam: 1.67m

Weight: 110kg (without engine)

Max Load: 310kg

Category: D – Sheltered water, waves to 0.5m height

Maximum Outboard Size: 10hp

trailer retails for £3,551 including VAT. You also have the option of using a launch trolley instead of a trailer, which, at around £200, would further cut down on the overall package cost.

CONTACT

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PRICE

The Westport Marine Pilot 2 boat retails for £2,991 including VAT, and the full package with the Honda BF5p outboard motor and Indespension

PERFORMANCE

This boat is a doddle to launch on your own, you can launch off a trailer or use a launch trolley, plus she has minimum draft and can be launched in just inches of water. It's ideal if you're looking to launch in 'out of the way' places to reach the best bass spots without access to a slipway.

What impresses you when you initially jump aboard is the amount of space that the boat gives – even with the middle seat the deck space fore and aft is huge and completely uncluttered.

The gunnels are good and high for the size of the boat and you feel very secure when sat for fishing and when underway. The stability is amazing and two guys can stand up in this boat in a calm sea making her an ideal platform for fly fishing and casting plugs and lures.

The test boat was equipped with the tiller-steering Honda BF5p outboard. Easing on the power the boat lifts slightly at the bow, but rides nice and flat giving good forward vision for the helmsman.

She is nimble and responds instantly to the tiller. Keeping the power on you can take tight turns without the boat heeling over at a sharp angle and the boat is extremely stable when underway and manoeuvring.

Although designed for sheltered water, the boat was jumped over small waves and didn't let a single drop of water back in on deck. Such is the shape and design of the bow that water is deflected away as the wave is cut.

The Pilot 2 achieved a top speed of nine knots with one person aboard, and seven knots with two occupants, but the fuel consumption will be miserly! She could be fitted with a 10hp engine option and this would give a top speed around 17 knots!

THINGS I'D CHANGE

Charlie thought that the middle seat might be strengthened on future boats, though after sitting on them for a length of time they felt strong enough to me.

If you plan on taking the kids, even though the gunnels are high for a boat of this size, you might consider fitting additional short safety rails just in case they should stand up and topple over.

For looks, the test boat was all white inside, but, looking at the brochure, Westport has also done the middle seats and locker tops in the same blue as the hull. Some may prefer this colour layout, as it looks very classy contrasting with the blue hull, white topside and black fendering.

CONCLUSION

An excellent example of what a small angling dinghy/runabout should be!

She's built to a super standard and is very stable and roomy for fishing. Her stability means that you can stand to fly cast without the boat rocking from side-to-side to any degree, though most would sit to cast.

The Pilot 2 is predictable when underway in open water and on the drift, she's also easy to manoeuvre when dodging between mooring buoys and other surface obstacles.

The boat also has ample stowage space with easy open access direct from above so the boat is simple and easy to launch on your own.

The Pilot 2 is ideal for one or two anglers for short-session fishing inside sheltered water such as estuaries, shallow bays and close inshore reefs in calm seas close to home for bass, flatfish and mackerel. She would also suit the angler who wants to trail a small boat for summer holidays and mix a little sea fishing with piking in lakes or on the Norfolk Broads, or trout fishing on the big Scottish lochs.



On The Inside



The Pilot's transom seat is home to a roomy inner locker.



Stainless-steel rope eyes are fitted to the stern quarters. T-cleats are also available.



Our test craft was fitted with a tiller-steering Honda BF5p outboard motor.



The Pilot 2 can be supplied with an Indespension trailer for single-handed launching.