

Westport Marine Pilot 3

Mike Thrussell thinks that the Westport Marine Pilot 3 is ideal for inshore fishing and it may just fulfil the small-boat angler's dream of being afloat with no fuss.



The Pilot 3, designed by Plymouth-based Charles Broughton, of Westport Marine, is a craft that will appeal to estuary and inshore bass anglers looking to work tight in shallow areas.

The boat is designed to be both easy to row and to give maximum speed and fuel economy with smaller-sized outboard engines. With a length of

13ft 6in and a beam of just under five feet, the Pilot 2 is designed for carrying three crewmen and can take outboards up to 15hp.

A strong, simulated, clinker-type hull is formed from a chopped-strand matt lay-up. Core matt material is also placed between the laminate to act like a foam sandwich to give improved rigidity. Bow features include a small

hinge-up anchor locker, as well as a large storage locker with enough room for stowing loads of additional gear – plus the locker top acts as a comfy seat.

The deck is finished in a non-stipple effect and also carries neatly raised foot bars that you can brace your feet against when rowing for maximum power effect.

In the middle of the boat you will find a full-width

seat that's wide enough for comfy seating for long periods. This is also a handy work base when making-up rigs and sorting tackle with only two of you onboard.

For a boat of this size, the gunnels are nice and high and give you a feeling of security. There are rowlocks fitted in the middle gunnel tops, but the rear gunnel tops also carry additional, short, stainless steel safety rails,

which provide additional onboard security and also add to the overall looks of the boat. The safety rails, though, are optional extras, but well worth it.

The transom is formed around a full-width seat with spacious locker facility underneath for the fuel tank and further stowage of tackle and equipment. This is neatly divided into a short section on the starboard side, and a long section to the port side where the fuel goes, very neat! There's a narrow splash well at the back and the stern

quarters carry stainless-steel cleats for tying off.

It has to be said that the overall finish is exceptional throughout. When you jump aboard the boat it looks a class act, plus it feels strong underfoot. Nothing gives when you move around the deck and everything feels solid.

Finished with a blue hull and an off-white topside, that's designed to minimise sun and light reflection, with black fendering, this is a boat that turns heads as she passes by.

FACT FILE

STATISTICS

Length: 4.45m
Beam: 1.48m
Weight: 180kg (without engine)
Max load: 310kg
Category: D Sheltered water; waves to 0.5m height
Maximum outboard size: 15hp

PRICE

The Westport Marine Pilot 3 boat retails for only £2,795 including VAT, and the full package with the Honda BF10 outboard and single wheel,

swing-arm Brenderup roller trailer retails for £5,025 including VAT. You also have the option of using a launch trolley instead of a trailer, which, at around £200, would dramatically decrease the overall package cost.

CONTACT

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On The Inside



This large storage locker, situated on the bow, has loads of room for extra gear.



Rawlocks are fitted to the middle-gunnel tops on the Pilot 3.



The anchor is stowed in this hinge-up locker.



Tying off duties are taken care of by two stainless-steel cleats.

PERFORMANCE

The Pilot 3 is deliberately designed with a shallow draught and slim width to increase speed with smaller motors, but remain a stable craft. During the test we were swapping places stern to bow quite a few times, and it remained very stable – that said, she's not designed for continual standing, more for fishing when seated.

Fitted with a tiller steering Honda 10hp, the boat will take a 15hp if needed. With the 10hp she really flies along, so if you need to cover some distance to reach your fishing grounds this is a speedy boat for its size.

Underway the boat sits rock steady with medium power on. The bow stays down, but raises just a little, as you'd expect, as you put full power on but you still retain full forward vision. With two aboard she rides very well with a crewman up at the bow.

The boat leans a little when under power and turning

in a tight circle due to her deliberate design, but you soon become used to this and she remains very predictable throughout all major manoeuvring.

Punching forward into small waves, the hull cut through very cleanly and at no time at all did any water spray back inside the hull and onto the occupants, though the wind was only light on the test day.

With the 10hp engine and just the helmsman onboard she achieved a steady cruising speed of 12 knots, and flat out peaked at a speedy 15 knots. Fuel consumption would be around 17 litres per hour. If you use a 5hp motor on this boat she'll still do 7 knots. Stick a 15hp unit on the back and the boat will really shift up in to 20-knot-plus bracket.

You could also fit an electric motor for use when sneaking in to shallow bass marks – just another option to consider when looking at craft of this ilk.

THINGS THAT I WOULD CHANGE

I think some anglers intending to anchor a lot may choose to fit short stainless-steel safety rails at each side of the bow – just for additional security when working hard to retrieve a resistant anchor hold for instance.

Adding two more short safety rails the same as those on the rear gunnels would add further security if you intend to have the kids aboard, plus they will add even more good looks to an already stunning looking craft.

There is no T cleat on the bow for tying off, but this is a small addition and easy enough to fit.

Although the middle seat was comfy and felt strong enough to me, Charles Broughton, the owner and designer, told me that he intends to strengthen the seats a little more. Sea anglers tend to be big lads, so I take his point!

CONCLUSION

For the fishing described – sheltered estuaries, shallow water tight into shore, evening mackerel sessions, fly and plug casting for bass – this boat offers a lot of advantages.

The shallow draft means you can move into those little-fished areas that other, bigger, boats can never approach. With the ability to be easily rowed, or with the electric motor fitted, you can also creep up and ambush bass without them realising you are near to them.

She accommodates two anglers with masses of room to spare and a load of gear, but will easily fish three. The boat is quick and gets you from mark to mark to keep pace with the moving fish.

A big advantage is that she's easy to launch on your own, either direct off the trailer or from a launch trolley. You could nip home from work, grab some tea, and still sneak off for a few hours fishing on a summer's evening with the minimum of fuss and preparation. She's also a joy to tow behind a normal family car, so could be taken on holidays with you too.

Those of you comparing other boats of this type need to check this one out before you make your final decision!

