

# Overnight in COMFORT

Some tips to make staying aboard overnight a pleasant experience.

By Capt. Dave Lear





**T**HE RELUCTANCE to give up simple comforts is basic human nature. Still, as anglers, there are times when the chance to fish remote spots or for multiple days is just too compelling to resist. Larger diesel-powered sportfishers have the size, capacity and accommodations to live aboard independently for weeks at a time. But how about smaller, outboard-powered cuddy cabin, walk-around or center console models? Can your family or a few buddies stay in more confined spaces for a long weekend without killing each other? Of course. But the boat needs to be properly outfitted or your dream trip will quickly turn into a nightmare.

The right generator tops the list. When a shore connection isn't available, generators provide the power necessary to run the boat's systems and

main fuel tank.

"Because we're very keen on safety, we've been using the low CO2 gasoline generators for a long time," says Jeff Vaughn, Boston Whaler's vice president for sales and customer service. "They



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are safe, cost less money to operate and are more convenient. We've been very satisfied with their performance."

After a long day on the water, a real marine head with a shower and hot water heater are essential for anyone planning on staying aboard overnight. Hot water heaters start as small as six gallons and increase in capacity based on the boat size. They are powered by the generator or propane gas. Gas heaters don't require electricity, but they do need a separate fuel tank.

An enclosed head with a curtain and removable shower nozzle arrangement offers the most privacy and convenience in a confined cabin setting. A sump pump drains the standing water afterwards, while acrylic counter tops and cabinets repel water and provide storage for towels, toiletries and other items. To duplicate a home bathroom as much as possible, a porcelain commode rounds out the necessary components.

#### EASE OF USE

What is essential for a working galley depends on the menu. Electric hot plate stoves are still an option with some builders, but a microwave oven is more practical with the variety of pre-prepared food now available. A refrigerator will cut down on the number of coolers needed, while a freshwater sink makes cleaning up afterwards easier. Electrical outlets for blenders, food processors, coffee pots and other small appliances are handy, too. Portable grills, either propane or electric, give an outdoor cooking option without taking up much room. And you can never have enough storage, especially in the galley.

For ambient comfort, air conditioning systems are another must-have item,

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accessories when the engines aren't running. The output depends on the size of the boat and the amount of electricity needed. Because of space limitations, 28 feet and larger is typically the minimum size when a generator is installed. Generators can run on gasoline or diesel and usually pull from the

In smaller or older boats where space is a factor, an AC inverter is another power source. Inverters convert direct current from the boat's batteries into alternating current to power accessories. The engines must be running to keep from draining the boat's batteries, however, so applications are limited.



particularly during a hot, humid night in the tropics. A combined reverse heat system is a welcome feature in cooler climates. Units are rated by BTUs, which are calculated by the volume of space cooled or heated. With a full enclosure buttoned up, a helm vent also keeps the bridge cool or warm depending on the setting.

Sleeping arrangements on overnight-capable boats vary by model and company, although the forward bow berth for two is an industry norm. Many galley dinettes convert into berths as well. The mid-berth, often located under the cockpit or bridge deck, is usually tight for most adults. For kids, pets or honeymooners, however, that snugness may not be an issue.

Although not quite as roomy as express or walkaround models, some builders like Grady-White and Regulator offer larger center consoles with enclosed accommodations, including a berth, gallery and head. The contrasts appeal to different users.

"The couples or families interested in boat-camping or extended cruises

typically buy our 33 or 37-foot express or the larger walkaround cabin models," says Shelley Tubaugh, Grady-White's vice president of marketing. "Those fit the live-aboard lifestyle much better for island-hopping in the Bahamas, around Martha's Vineyard and other spots. They are also popular in the Pacific Northwest because they offer better protection during nasty weather. Our Canyon center consoles appeal to those who might occasionally overnight, like a weekend trip to the Mid-Atlantic canyons to fish before returning to port. Each style has a distinct niche."

Space permitting, additional options like entertainment centers, stereo systems and ice makers improve the comfort level considerably. Vaughn has some other suggestions for boaters contemplating a cabin boat purchase.

"Make sure the cabin area is well lit with plenty of ventilation. People don't like to sit in a cave," he says. "Before you make the deal, go inside and judge it for layout and ergonomics. You'll know whether it works or not. Do you have to move 12 giant cushions just to

get into a hatch? Is the storage in the right place and can it be neatly organized based on your routine? Think about how you're going to use the boat and what you'll normally be bringing along to see if fits your style and needs. The easier a boat is to use, the more you'll actually use it."

There's certainly no place like home. But by adding features that will enhance your comfort level on board, you can get close. 🐾

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*Capt. Dave Lear is an award-winning freelance writer and photographer whose byline appears regularly in TIDE, other national fishing magazines, plus tournament web sites. When not on assignment, Lear, a retired light-tackle guide, can be found poling Florida's Big Bend coastline in his custom skiff or exploring the tidal creeks by kayak.*



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