



# THE ART OF CRAFTS

For the passionate sailor, taking to the water in a boat they have commissioned to their exact specifications is the ultimate dream.

With patience, skill and expertise, that dream can come true

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PICTURES ALISON LANGLEY

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When commissioning a boat, “people do not merely purchase an inanimate object; rather, they consciously endeavor to create something with real meaning that is, in a certain sense, independent,” says Alec E Brainerd, president of New England-based Artisan Boatworks. “The commission of a custom boat is the culmination of a lifelong dream.”

Most sailing enthusiasts would love to commission their own bespoke boat, built to their own personal tastes. In reality, getting a design off the coffee table and out onto the water can seem a little daunting. But enlist the services of an expert and it will all be – excuse the pun – plain sailing.

People commission a wooden boat for many reasons. Surprisingly, personal notoriety is not one of them. On the contrary, in fact, many owners prefer to remain anonymous. Wooden boats usually become cherished family heirlooms and, says Brainerd, “are proven to appreciate in time – perhaps not

in the short term, but from one generation to the next, providing they are well cared for.”

Six years ago, Artisan Boatworks built a 25-foot daysailer for a gentleman in his 80s. His thoughts? “Knockabouts [the type of boat] are almost 100 years old. I want the next generation to see how lovely they are.”

#### PLOTTING YOUR COURSE

Building a dream boat – be it a classic sailboat, rowboat, or modern motorboat – is as much about the passion of the making as it is about the love of sailing. Whatever kind of craft you have set your heart on, bring an expert on board to ensure your vision becomes a reality. Constant communication is key, and most companies enjoy a long relationship with their boat-buying clients far beyond delivery of the finished crafts.

Brainerd founded Artisan Boatworks in 2002 after enjoying many years as an active sailor. His company’s philosophy is to offer

*Above: Master craftsmen at Artisan Boatworks at work on one-off commissions in Rockport, Maine.*

support and a thorough service to all clients from the outset. “We store and maintain nearly all of the boats we have built for New England customers, so in the off-season our storage buildings are a veritable showroom. This is a good opportunity for new customers to come down and compare details, options, and layouts of various designs they might be considering. If the visit is during the summer, then we will also arrange a test sail with an existing customer.”

One of the first elements to consider is whether you want to design the boat of your dreams from scratch or from a template of an existing model. Once you have established this you will be in a better position to start working on the layout with your chosen boatyard. >



Left: Artisan Boatworks' Buzzards Bay 18 "Uncus", launched in summer 2012.

There are many companies that offer boatbuilding and design services. Some, such as Artisan Boatworks in the US and John's Boat Works in the UK, specialize in wooden boats; others, like Clovelly Boats, also in the UK, have expertise in stock rowboats.

Most companies allow their customers to be as involved as they wish, from collaborating on every detail of the boat to perhaps just specifying a handcrafted wooden mast – or even leaving the entire commission in the hands of the experts.

"We often make subtle alterations to classic designs that make them better suited to modern customers," says Brainerd. "We make the rigs easier to handle, for example, or incorporate modern mechanical and electronic systems, make changes to increase usability, safety, and longevity."

Devon-based Clovelly Boats only builds crafts from its stock templates but happily changes colors to suit. One client, for example, decided he wanted a boat that

could be used as an ice bucket for a party, while another wanted one to match the color of their house. "Everything is possible," says Mike Ivory, owner of the family-run business.

#### GETTING SET TO SAIL

Your custom vessel will be ready anywhere between eight weeks and 18 months from initial consultation, depending on size and complexity.

Smaller, more popular boats such as the Buzzards Bay 15 class are generally built on a fixed-price basis, but larger or more involved projects are undertaken on a time and materials basis. A deposit is required to hold a space in a production schedule, which, at Artisan Boatworks, is typically booked from four months to a year ahead.

John Watson, owner of London-based John's Boat Works, advises: "Make sure the final design is exactly how you imagine, taking in any restrictions the yard has discussed with you." Adding to an agreed spec will increase the cost and build time.

A good contract is important to reduce the risk of misunderstandings about costs and delivery schedule, but more important are trust and communication between client and supplier. Many customers of Artisan Boatworks have found the construction of their boat to be as enjoyable as the end result. Some choose to visit the works regularly during construction; for others, the crew simply emails photos and updates.

Finally, once all payments and paperwork are taken care of, you are ready to enjoy your newly built, one-of-a-kind boat. Set aside time to sea-trial your boat with the builder to ensure you understand how to properly use and care for it.

Brainerd sums up the boatbuilding experience thus, borrowing words from his friend and fellow boatbuilder Doug Hylan: "Why would you want a wooden boat? Well, why would you want a handmade mahogany dining room table? Because you chose it or had it made to match your taste, because of the warmth and elegance it brings to your life, because of the pride you feel at the craftsmanship it embodies. A fiberglass dining room table simply would not do!" ●

Nicci Perides is editor of [www.charterfleet.com](http://www.charterfleet.com).

#### ON THE MARKET

### Boat-friendly properties

#### TIRRIKEE

*Darling Point, Sydney, Australia*

Set on an 18,568-square-foot parcel, Tirrikee boasts unrivaled Sydney waterfront access: three slipways, a boatshed, and a mooring.

*Price upon request*

*Contact: Ken Jacobs*

*+61 407 190 152*

*ken@kenjacobs.com.au*

#### MANOR ON THE MANASQUAN

*Brielle, New Jersey, USA*

Enjoying a riverfront location in prime sport-fishing country, the property includes a boathouse, dock, and 382 feet of waterfront.

*Price upon request*

*Contact: Kathleen Coumou*

*+1 212 468 7140*

*kcoumou@christies.com*

#### THE NINETEEN SEVENTY

*Lake Tahoe, California, USA*

One of the finest estates in Tahoe (below), this seven-bedroom lakeside property features 180 feet of shoreline and a 145-foot pier with boat slip and lift.

*\$16,800,000*

*Contact: Michael Oliver*

*+1 530 308 4738*

*michael@oliverlux.com*

