

BAYBROT



The Young
Delegates



ShipChic

By: NANCY BIRNBAUM



A stunning array of seacraft, like this Sea Ray 580 Sundancer, will be on display at the Tampa Boat Show.

The Tampa Boat Show Brings Out The Nautical Spirit

Marine manufacturers across Florida are back to the business of building boats, with hopes that the current consumer demand will leave the recession in their wake. Thinking about a purchase? Then your ship has come in!

The Tampa Boat Show is coming to town (September 28-30) and the time is right for so many reasons. Historically low interest rates and loosening credit conditions have helped buyers needing to finance their purchase. Prices have never been better and the Boat Show continues to display hundreds of boats, from luxury yachts to sport fishing boats to family cruisers and PWCs. As always, you can access the best deals of the season on marine accessories and gear.

What was long known as The Tampa Boat Show is now called the Progressive Insurance Tampa Boat Show in recognition of the National Marine Manufacturers Association's new sponsor. The largest show in the Bay area, now in its 47th year, is once again the premier destination for on-the-water enthusiasts. Tampa Show Manager Larry Berryman expects between 160 and 180 exhibitors, 500-plus boats and about 20,000 visitors at the event.

More significantly, show-goers can have a hands-on experience with just about all the ways to be on the water. Take a powerboat or jet boat ride or cruise on a ski boat. There will be plenty of opportunities to try something new. The show will have a huge variety of watercraft available from more than 100 manufacturers, dealers and resellers, including Sea Ray, Boston Whaler and Hatteras.

According to local manufacturers such as Tampa's Intrepid Powerboats and Jupiter Marine of Palmetto, sales of recreational boats, accessories and marine services are on the rise for the first time since the struggling economy took the wind out of the \$72 billion industry. In fact, Florida's boat sales rose 24 percent

in 2011. Attribute it to an economic upswing or just the undying love of being on the water, but buyers are regaining the confidence to indulge once again in big-ticket items.

"Boat sales traditionally follow consumer confidence very closely, so when we see sustained consumer confidence in the long run, we also see increases in boat sales," NMMA spokeswoman Ellen Hopkins says. "Boating is not just a product, it's a lifestyle and people don't want to wait anymore."

At the Tampa Boat Show, you'll experience the boating life firsthand. Discover Boating, the educational arm of NMMA, has expanded their offerings and will be adding new adventures to the long list of learning opportunities available at the Show. Back by popular demand is the Fred Shed, a DIY area where attendees can get help with all kinds of boat maintenance issues, including trouble-shooting outboard or inboard engines. Introduced at the 2010 Tampa show, Discover Boating has doubled on-the-water training opportunities since then. They have also formed a partnership with DEMA, the organization that promotes recreational diving and snorkeling, to offer—for the first time—an actual Scuba dive tank where anyone who wants to experience what it's like to dive, can.

Have you ever docked a yacht with just a joystick? Now you can at the Demo Dock. Here you can try your hand at close-quarter boat handling, anchoring and advanced powerboat handling for free. There's also sailing education, even though the show is typically 95 percent powerboats.

A specially designed course for women is available for ladies looking to enhance their boating skills. The seminar, presented by Thunder Marine, will cover safe boating practices along with hands-on training aboard a 30-foot Glastron

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A nautically-minded crowd of 20,000 is expected at this year's show.



Sea Ray's 540 Sundancer is the ideal vessel for catching rays.


boat. You'll want to sign up in advance for "Ladies at the Helm" by emailing info@thundermarine.com. There's also the popular fishing seminar series, which features local guides who will educate as well as entertain. Fishing seminars span Wrecks and Reefs of Tampa Bay, Summer and Fall Trout Fishing and Choosing the Right Electronics for Your Boat.

Navigating The Tampa Boat Show

Decide what's important. The first thing boat buyers must determine is what they need versus what they want. So before you hit the showroom floor and become dazzled by all the sleek boats, set a budget. How much do you want to spend? Will you pay for the boat in one lump sum or finance it?

Before you buy, check the used boat ads for the resale value of the model you have in mind. What will it likely sell for in two or three years when you may be ready to upgrade?

Know your needs. If you love to fish, and that's it, then the size of the live well or the number of rod holders will probably be important factors. But if you're looking for an all-around pleasure boat, you may want to include a cabin and a comfortable bathroom. Check to see if the amenities are standard features or options. For the best deal, find a craft that is a "boat show special," which means loaded and ready to go.

Many dealers are offering deep discounts to move inventory. There will be great deals on 2011 models that have been sitting in the showroom. Keep in mind that most year-old boats have no wear and tear on the engines and are usually sold at or near dealer cost. 

IF YOU GO:

WHEN: September 28-30, 2012

WHERE: Tampa Convention Center, 333 South Franklin St., Tampa.

ADMISSION: Adults 16-and-over \$10 (\$2-off tickets good for September 28 only, if purchased in advance). Kids 15-and-under free (should be accompanied by adults). Free Admission for Police, Firefighters, EMT and Military Officials.

HOURS: Friday-Saturday—10 a.m. to 8 p.m.; Sunday—10 a.m. to 6 p.m.

For more information, visit the official Tampa Boat Show website at: tampaboatshow.com