

A taste of the high life

Perhaps you want a top-flight boat but you can't afford one. Or maybe you struggle to find the time to go out on the water as much as you want. In either case there are now ways of making it work. **Simon Everett reports.**



Photos: Giles Penfound

The appeal of the club is simple - to go boating, all you need is five grand and a pair of shoes

It's amazing how much money people waste by staying at home when they could be out on the high seas. The number of dreams tied up on berths and sitting on drives is astonishing.

Boats that get bought and left idle do have benefits. After all, they support the industry with a ready flow of purchase cash, but it hardly makes financial sense for the 'boater' to have £30,000 or more tied up in a vessel that sees the water for less than ten hours a year.

If you worked out how much it cost per hour, it wouldn't make good reading and it is for these kinds of people that the Lynx RIB Club has been formed. It is for people who find time harder to come by than money; people who want to get involved in boats but don't quite have the time available to dedicate to it. ➤



The Lynx RIB Club was formed by a couple of guys who already worked together running corporate hospitality, entertainment and training events. Stuart McKeen and Hugo Ambrose are well versed in keeping the most demanding clients happy and that means attention to detail. The RIB Club has sprung very naturally off the back of the training and entertainment and compliments it particularly well as the boats are also available for corporate team building.

It's no accident that the club is aimed at the high end. The Scorpion boats are kept on air berths at the Lymington Yacht Haven, and apart from providing access to top of the range, high-performance RIBs, club membership includes training to powerboat level 2, or the advanced level if a new member already has the basics. You also get your VHF certificate including GMDSS.

In fact the guys won't let anyone out in the boats unless they are satisfied that the person is competent, so everyone

The Lynx Club takes a concept that has often been used for supercars and transfers it to the water

goes through an assessment of some kind. It makes sense. Legislation or not, it is simply irresponsible to let an inexperienced boater loose with a 60mph outfit without first making sure that sufficient handling expertise is evident.

From a prospective member's point of view, the appeal of the club is simple. In order to go boating, all you need is a pair of shoes! Everything - and I really do mean everything - is taken care of. Foul weather gear from Musto is provided in a range of sizes to suit the party. Lifejackets, of course, donuts and waterskis (if you



'When you're going uphill, it's important to trim her in and blip the throttle'

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want them) can also be put on board. All you have to do is park the car and walk to the boat. She will be on the water, fuelled, ready for you to turn the key and go. If time is tight, this really is a godsend. You have nothing to think about other than where to go and what to eat when you get there. Marvellous. Boating made simple, but not simplistic.

The Scorpion is at the top end of the RIB market and the 8.1m boat, powered by the 275hp Verado is no mean mover. It's a RIB for the beautiful people who are used to the best of everything and it has the performance to match their lifestyles.

From the berth at the mouth of the Lymington River it is only a 20-minute run to the Folly for lunch. A trip round the Isle of Wight is a pleasant afternoon's

leisure and picnicking in Alum Bay on a fine day make's a nice change of scenery. If you had plans for trips further afield, then the run to Weymouth is only an hour and half or so. That is what a boat of the Scorpion's calibre opens up and the Lynx RIB Club is simply an easy and affordable way to avail yourself of that opportunity.

The concept is certainly not new. It has been used for supercars for several years now. The Lynx Club has simply extended the idea onto the water. In effect you are chartering the boat with the economic benefits that come from non-ownership. For those people who get only a few days a year to go boating, it is an ideal way to take all the responsibility and time consuming paperwork out of leisure boating. The renewal of insurance, berthing, servicing, cleaning and dealing with niggles - all these headaches are removed.

The drawback is having to book the boat in advance to ensure the date you want is available. An online booking diary can confirm this for you. Many of the current members are boat owners already, mostly yachtsmen who want the ability to scratch their sports boat itch without having to go through the pain of ownership. A bit like the Ferrari 

£500 a day for ten days might not seem cheap, but you're free of the regular costs associated with full ownership



With a 275hp, 60mph Scorpion RIB on offer, club training is an obligatory part of the package



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aficionado, whose family circumstances cause him to settle for the Volvo V70.

When you do the maths it is actually very competitive with ownership. If we take the £5,000 per annum minimum membership package and compare that with the cost of ownership things are actually weighted very favourably in favour of the Club scheme. The marina berth alone eats up over £3000 of that figure. Servicing and insurance will take another chunk of the best part of £1000. That leaves only £1000 to cover the depreciation. Depreciation of just £1000 in a year is asking a bit. Try getting £69,000 for a one year-old £70,000 boat on the used market.

Club members have the use of a new boat every two years, when the old boats are replaced as a matter of course. That ensures you get access to the very latest boats. What price that kind of marina credibility? That old model is just so last year.

There is one final aspect to the Club that makes enormous sense and that is for actual Scorpion owners awaiting delivery of their own boat. Typically, lead times for a new Scorpion are around the

eight-month mark. That, in effect, is a whole season. What better way of getting to know your boat than to have access to one while yours is being built? I suppose you could buy something else to tide you over, but would it be the same? I think not, somehow.

The latest kit, the latest electronic toys, the most up-to-date model of boat with top-flight performance, but without the cost of ownership. Unlike other shared ownership schemes, this one is more like a regular charter than time share ownership. And despite the fact that your five grand buys you just ten days a year, you have to ask yourself just how many days a year you really expect to set aside. If your boat is one of those wasted dreams eating up your cash in a quiet marina, the deal sounds pretty good. ■

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