



Fast facts

LENGTH 60ft
BERTHS 4+2
ENGINE Canaline 42
PRICE from £1,149
 per week
 inclusive

01905 779048,
trinityboats.co.uk



A modern hire-boat

This summer **Mark Langley** spent a week on a canal holiday, allowing him to give a comprehensive review of a hire-boat from Trinity Boats – a company that also builds craft for private customers



Above: The boat has lovely lines, while large windows and doors let in plenty of light.

Top right: The seating converts to a very comfortable bed. A fully glazed bulkhead gives great views out.

Left: Lots of space to eat, even with five people and two dogs.

Below: The LED tunnel lamp is very effective.



Hire-boats have come on in leaps and bounds in the last ten to 15 years, as tastes for boats have changed.

Many of the larger companies, and some of the smaller ones, still offer boats that would be familiar to anyone hiring in the 1980s and '90s. But hire craft that are more like private boats are becoming increasingly popular.

Trinity Boats has a reputation for building superb bespoke craft for private customers, which *WW* has reviewed in the past, as well as hire-boats for other companies. It also runs its own small fleet, based at Dunhampstead Wharf on the Worcester & Birmingham, giving both luxury holidays and the opportunity for boaters to 'try before they buy'. Looking at boats at shows and marinas is nowhere near as useful as actually spending a week on a prospective purchase.

When my friends Anna and Chris decided, for the first time in over 15 years, to hire a boat, they went for Trinity Boats and narrowboat *Forget-me-not*. Last August I joined them as an extra pair of hands on their journey around the Stourport Ring, and I took the opportunity to thoroughly test the craft.

First impressions

Chris, Anna, their son Zach and Chris's mother Cindy were very surprised at the initial feel of quality. Their last hire was on a boat with a very traditional T&G pine interior, air-cooled Lister engine and 'garden shed brown' feel. *Forget-me-not* could not be any more different. The Tyler-Wilson cruiser stern boat is finished in a light blue-grey paint scheme, with two bedrooms, two full bathrooms and a large galley-saloon in its 60ft. You would be hard pressed to identify it as a hire-boat from a distance.

We did seem to have brought along an awful lot of stuff for the week; however, the storage aboard swallowed it up without issue, and there was plenty of room for the two dogs. A very comprehensive boat induction was provided – even experienced boaters like Chris, Anna and me can benefit from a thorough explanation of a boat, and this was backed up by an excellently written, informative handbook.

Boat layout

A large aft deck leads down into the first bedroom, which can be laid out with two singles, or, as we had, a double bed. One unit moves across the boat, and this has three drawers

underneath it for storage, while the fixed bed base has a toilet holding tank below. The bed is quite high up in this cabin but it works well, making it easy to get in and out. There is a useful shelf above the bed, as well as some cubby holes aft. A half-height wardrobe, plus another shelved cupboard, leaves space underneath to tuck bags and shoes out of the way, which is a good plan, particularly with wet boots to deal with. There are also some hanging hooks for wet weather gear, and space for mops, brooms and such like.

The second bathroom is off to port after the aft bedroom, which gives privacy and separation (by way of a door across the corridor) from the middle bedroom. Both bathrooms are mirror images of each other and have a large rectangular shower with a glass bifold door – a far cry from Anna and Chris’s last hire-boat, with a sit bath and clingy shower curtain! There is also a macerator loo – probably the only part of this hire-boat that needs really careful use by hirers, particularly if they are not used to boat toilets. There are a big sink and excellent mirror as well, plus plenty of open storage and cupboards, space for a bin and enough legroom around the loo.

The middle cabin we had set up as two singles, slightly offset – here the starboard one had the second loo tank under, with three drawers below the port berth. There was a full-height wardrobe, which also had a long mirror inside and the 230V hairdryer. Again, the bathroom and corridor door gave separation from the front cabin.

The galley is a U-shape, with the full-size cooker against the aft bulkhead (with a neat upstand so that people passing cannot knock pan handles), and a microwave on a high shelf. A small worktop and cupboards jut out from the port side, giving some extra work surface space. There is a proper-sized bin (often missing from private craft), as well as pull-out grocery racks. There was



Left: The saloon and galley are very light and open.

Right: The large aft cockpit, with a comfortable steering position above an exceptionally quiet engine.

Below: The galley packs in a lot for a cruising boat.



a sizeable amount of storage aboard, with a large Shoreline 12V fridge giving enough space for our provisions, though we did bring a coolbox to keep the beer and wine out of the way.

The saloon has a L-shape dinette, with a sturdy table on desmo legs. This converted to a double berth, with storage for the bedding below and a small locker for the crews’ kit; however, during the day, the occupant of this berth (me!) had to store his bag on one of the beds in the centre cabin. There was a TV/ DVD player in the corner plus a car-type stereo, and the Omnimax aerial for the TV – something familiar to hire-boaters for many years! The fully glazed forward bulkhead and doors really made it light and airy when sitting inside, with great views out.



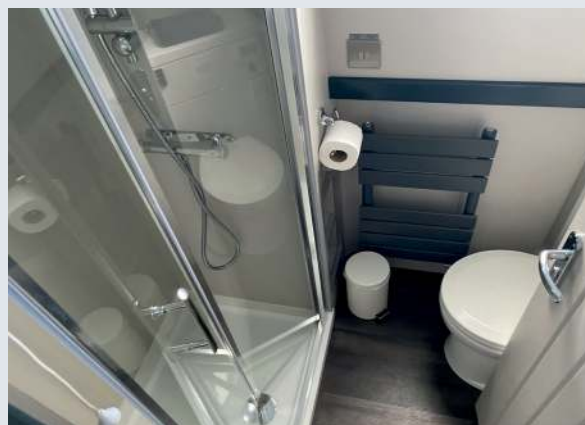
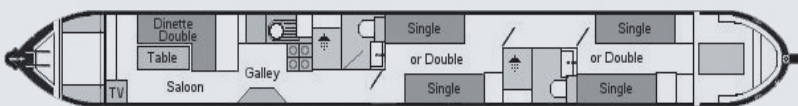
Below left: Plenty of space in the bathroom, including in the shower. **Below:** There are a large washbasin and mirror in each bathroom.

Living aboard

Despite there being five of us and two dogs, we never felt cramped. Having two full bathrooms was particularly useful – the showers were powerful, the extract ventilation removed condensation quickly, and the toilet tanks must have been massive as, during quite a lot of intensive use, neither holding tank was above 50% full by the end of the week.

Sitting five around the table was easy enough – two onboard folding chairs helped, though a perch on the step up to the front cockpit was also popular. By night, the lighting was excellent – a mixture of LED downlights and under-gunwale LED strips. The reading lights by the beds though were maybe a touch too bright – if you nipped to the loo at night, you risked waking others. The provision of free 4G wifi aboard was good, working surprisingly well in places where our phone signal was poor.

Being as it was so warm, we didn’t need the heating, but there were a





Above: Aquadrive ensures prop alignment and massively reduces vibration through the boat.
Above right: Heavy duty 225Ah 6V batteries.
Far right: The Canaline engine.



Above: The centre cabin was set as two singles but could also be a double berth.
Above centre: The aft cabin set as a double.

lot of large radiators, including in both bathrooms and behind the aft step (to stop draughts and dry wet waterproofs) running from a diesel heater, which would make off-season cruising very comfortable. Thick curtains really blocked out the light as well, which was welcome in summer.

The beds were very comfortable, even for the crew member relegated to the dinette. The only downside is reduced storage in this cabin, as much of the under-seat space is taken with the water pump and accumulator tanks. The double USB charging ports in the saloon and by the aft deck were good, and there was a spare 230V socket in the saloon. The boat's 230V system came from a Sterling 1600W inverter, to mainly power the microwave and hair dryer, but we also sneaked along a handheld mains vacuum from my boat to help keep on top of the dog hairs. The instruction manual sensibly suggests that the inverter is only used when underway or the

engine running, to avoid flattening the batteries. Most of the controls that hirers don't need to see are hidden away, which avoids the temptation to touch things they shouldn't!

Underway & cruising

The handling of *Forget-me-not* was a revelation. It was incredibly easy to steer, including when travelling stern first in central Birmingham for 300 yards to reach the water point at the top of the Farmers Bridge flight. The Canaline engine also had a large hospital generator-type silencer, which muted the exhaust noise, and an Aquadrive minimised vibration from the prop shaft. Despite no sound insulation, the engine was very quiet – many people assumed we were in an electric- or hybrid-boat, particularly when passing other craft at tickover. The large domestic alternator charged four 225Ah 6V traction cells, which helps with power aboard – unlike the last time Chris and Anna hired a boat, when the fridge would cut out in the evening due to low voltage.

On canals, the boat did not pull a wash, apart from the very shallow section south of Wast Hills Tunnel on the W&B, where even at tickover it is hard not to make waves. On the River Severn, the boat performed well, even during some challenging

manoeuvres where we struggled to find a pub mooring for the evening. Trinity had also provided a good selection of cruising gear, including lightweight windlasses, piling hooks and decent-length lines, including a mid-line. We only had to head down to the weed hatch a couple of times, and the chute-like Tyler Wilson special made it very easy to access. Apart from a daily turn of the stern tube greaser, there was no maintenance – a far cry from the daily checks required on hire-boats of yesteryear!

WW'S VERDICT

Trinity Boats hire-craft are popular and you can see why. Despite being a few years old (built in 2019) *Forget-me-not* looked and felt brand new. As well as a couple of other conventional boats, the company is adding a hybrid to the fleet from next year.

Forget-me-not is a stunning, well-thought-out boat, which handled well and provided a superb base for a week's cruise, with ample storage aboard. For anyone looking to buy a new boat, hiring one that is close to what you want is a very good idea – not only could it enable you to hone your ideas, it's possible it will save you money in the process!