



RESOURCE

Buying a Boat: Dealer vs Private, and the Diligence Budget You Need

A lower private asking price is not the same as a lower real cost once survey, diligence, and an initial repair reserve are counted honestly.

A lower asking price is not the same as a lower real cost

A private listing usually undercuts a comparable dealer boat on price alone. What that comparison leaves out is that a dealer typically bundles some warranty or support value into its price, while a private purchase usually needs its own survey and an initial repair reserve to close the same risk gap. Only once both sides are adjusted for what each channel actually includes is the comparison fair.

Pricing the channel, not just the boat

Dealer vs Private Boat Purchase runs that adjusted comparison directly: dealer price and fees, net of whatever warranty or support value you assign the dealer, against private price and fees plus survey cost and an initial repair reserve. It also solves for the minimum private discount that would actually clear the added risk and diligence cost, rather than leaving that judgment to a gut feeling about the asking price gap.

Due diligence is its own line item, not an afterthought

Whichever channel a purchase goes through, real due diligence, a survey, a haul-out, a sea trial, has its own cash requirement, separate from the boat's price and separate from a down payment. Boat Survey and Due-Diligence Budget itemizes that requirement with a low/likely/high range, since pre-purchase quotes for haul-out and travel are rarely locked in before you're already scheduling them.

What a diligence budget is and is not

A diligence budget answers what checking a boat's condition will cost, not what it will find. It is not a substitute for a qualified surveyor's judgment, and neither this framework nor the

calculators behind it assess title validity, legal protections, mechanical condition, or seller trustworthiness directly, those remain separate, nonfinancial questions a buyer has to resolve on their own.

What to actually check before choosing a purchase channel

- What warranty or support value a dealer's price actually includes, honestly priced rather than assumed to be zero or assumed to be worth the full price gap.
- Whether a private seller's asking price already reflects the condition risk, or whether that risk is being passed to you at full price.
- Whether the diligence budget itself fits your available cash before you're mid-negotiation and discovering it doesn't.
- Whether a scary survey finding changes the price you'd pay, or changes whether you'd buy the boat at all.



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