

DYNAMIC DUO

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SEATTLE & VANCOUVER BOAT SHOWS 2020

Both the Seattle Boat Show and Vancouver International Boat Show are upon us. Read on for insider tips to make the most out of these awesome boating-themed opportunities.

T The Seattle Boat Show and Vancouver International Boat Show are coming in hot, and it's time to get organized to make the most of your time. The secret is to pace yourself and plan to see what interests you first before it gets too crowded and you get too tired. For the past eight years, I have been working in a booth at the Vancouver International Boat Show, so I miss out on a big chunk of that show. That is why I really enjoy going to the Seattle Boat Show.



Left: The main floor of CenturyLink Events Center in Seattle. There are plenty of interesting things on display from exhibitors ranging from boat builders to the newest boating accessories.

5-9, and you can visit the website at vancouverboatshow.ca/2020/. Sign up to get the Skipper's Club newsletter for the latest info on the British Columbia boat show.

Next, choose the days and times you would like to attend, keeping in mind that weekends are going to be the busiest. Unless it rains. The weather can keep people home, so pack a mini foldable umbrella, throw on your duck boots, and take advantage of the smaller crowds on rainy days.

After that, decide why you are going to the show. Are you actually looking for a new boat? New gear? Maybe you are all about the seminars and presentations, or is this could be mostly a social affair.

Why you are attending can dictate how you plan. Quite often, I download the floor plan ahead of time and highlight the booths I want to visit.

If you are looking for a new boat and you know what you want, go online and arrange a time with the broker to look at the boat. I always recommend arriving first thing in the morning when everyone is bright-eyed. Some brokers offer private viewing times and complimentary tickets. If you aren't sure what type of boat you are looking for, then wear shoes that are comfortable but easy to take off and put on so you can board lots of boats. Get to the show early and go on every different kind of boat possible. It will become apparent, very quickly, what you like and don't like about the layout and options.

Manufacturers typically have the brand new inventory at the main show and the "previously loved" inventory at the floating show. Check out the Boat Finder option online, and search by boat brand and pricing. Do some homework before you go and set a budget, whether you are purchasing

outright or financing. With skyrocketing gas and diesel prices, it pays to ask what the operating costs are going to be. It is a competitive market, so you may also be in a position to ask for a maintenance package or an extended warranty. Maybe they are willing to throw in some safety gear or give you a reduced price on the dinghy. You will also want to consider the cost of moorage and insurance.

If you are looking for new gear, both the Seattle and Vancouver shows are set up so that you can walk through the vendors easily. Companies pay a good amount of money to participate and staff the booths, so take advantage of that and have your specific questions ready. This is also an excellent time to see products up close and personal. For example, if you are looking at new navigation equipment, vendors have the chartplotters and radar systems on display so you can try out the touch screen or buttons and decide what is most comfortable for you to use. Can you still use it in the rain while wearing gloves? Is the screen crystal clear and easy to see in daylight? These experiences just can't be replicated online.

Another great idea is to take a photo of your existing helm or battery setup with you to the show. If you are looking for a new chartplotter or VHF, take some measurements ahead of time, allowing vendors to see your current setup and make recommendations.

These two epic shows are not only about boats and products, it is also a chance to check out some new destinations. Marinas want you to visit, so they have promotions like two nights for one or free shore power with your stay. Many also offer a shuttle bus to go into town to buy groceries or bike rentals. They usually have a large chart on display so you can

Below, left to right: Boating adjacent products are a large part of the exhibitor mix at the indoor portion of the Seattle Boat Show; The in-water part of the Seattle Boat Show is at Chandler's Cove, South Lake Union.

I love seeing the new products, attending seminars, and catching up with friends. Here are a few of my tips and tricks to get the most out of the show.

The first step is to download the show guides and the apps from the boat show websites. The Seattle Boat Show is January 24 to February 1, 2020. Visit the website at seattleboatshow.com and sign up to get the newsletter, which has lots of great information. The Vancouver International Boat Show is February





Clockwise from top left: Even if you can't buy one of their boats, you can marvel at Delta Marine's scale models, typically on display in their booth; There's plenty of things to shop for from fishing lures to boats and also services like insurance and surveying; All the cool kids visit the Northwest Yachting booth (614 East) and we want to meet you, so head over; A gorgeous new Tiara on display from Alexander Marine USA; Perusing sailboats from Signature Yachts on a clear January day.

see how to enter the marina and the size of the slips. To top it off, they have a ton of local knowledge and can recommend the best restaurants, gunkholing, and even golf courses.

The shows are also excellent opportunities to talk to the local yacht clubs. Whether you are looking for moorage or camaraderie on the water, they can give an insight into the events, cruises, and the benefits of membership. I think joining a club was one of the best things I did. I have participated in several cruises, met some wonderful people, and attended monthly events discussing everything from boat insurance to wine glasses that don't tip over.

Which brings me to my favorite part of the show, the seminars and presentations. They are listed on the boat show website, so decide ahead of time which ones you would like to see and plan your attendance around those dates and times. I always recommend putting them in your phone's calendar with a 15-minute reminder. It is very easy to be talking to someone on the far side of the stadium when you realize your presentation is starting. Most are free with your show ticket, but some require that you sign up ahead of time. Both shows are also hosting a Women's Day—Seattle is Monday, January 27 and Vancouver is Saturday, February 8.

If it is just social, there is always the option of going after work, wandering the show, and then heading out for dinner. Some boaters also decide to do the main show one day and then head to the floating show the next day.

So are you ready? Here's a few tried and true tips and tricks that will serve

The Seattle Boat Show is the West Coast's largest show. There's a lot to remember, but this information should be useful:

- Avoid the Mercer Mess and Seattle traffic when headed to Lake Union. Take the free shuttle instead. There are shuttles from CenturyLink Events Center to Chandler's cove and back.
- There is no more free parking, but you can purchase an e-ticket and receive \$3 parking, available all days at Mariners Garage at T-Mobile Park (otherwise be prepared to pay \$20 at CenturyLink Field Event Center) and on weekends at South Lake Union at the 300 Yale Street North Garage with a free shuttle to the show.
- Attend the Lake Union floating boat show first as it closes at 1700 hours.
- If you can't decide between all the seminars, purchase a nine-day pass for \$30 and you won't have to choose.
- January 28 is Cheese The Day, and you can enjoy a free grilled cheese sandwich courtesy of Seattle Sourdough.
- Don't forget to wine-down at the Uncorked event on Opening Night. I love this event because I love wine. Tickets are \$30 and sell out quickly. Tasting stations are set up throughout the indoor location at CenturyLink Field, offering wines from different West Coast wineries. Tickets include a complimentary souvenir wine glass and six tasting tokens. Another tip, each token is good for one pour, so if you like a particular wine you can get a double pour for two tokens.
- "Sails & Ales" is similar to the Uncorked event but features craft beers. This sail-aboratory evening is held on January 31 and also includes a complimentary souvenir craft beer glass and six tasting tokens.
- This year, the Seattle Boat Show will be featuring a display of the history of boats and bathing suits. This exhibit will take you from the 1800s to present with live models on January 24 during the Uncorked event.
- January 30 is Dogs On Deck for all of us dog lovers! Purchase a ticket online and bring your dog with you to CenturyLink. Meet new friends, get a pet tag engraved, or attend the 5:00 p.m. Yappy Hour. Dogs are always welcome at the South Lake Union location.
- Bass Pro Shops, Cabela's, and Spartan Boats are hosting a 10,000 square foot catch-and-release trout pond. Bring the kids, all the gear and fish are provided.

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SEATTLE

you well at any boat show:

1. Purchase tickets online ahead of time and download the boat show app. I always say, "More organization means less stress."

2. Both shows offer reduced rates on hotels, but you have to book early. A few include complimentary breakfast, Wi-Fi, and are close to the free shuttle.

3. A stylish backpack is the way to go. Having your hands free is a bonus, and the even weight distribution won't drag you down. Many new ones include a bladder for drinking water, as buying water at the shows is ridiculously expensive. Or bring a water bottle and fill up at the water fountain to save some money and reduce your plastics use.

4. Wear super comfortable shoes or bring an extra, slightly larger pair with fresh socks to switch into at the end of the day. And wear your pedometer, the steps will add up!

5. Take a break halfway through your day. Rummage through your brochures and take a moment to reflect. If you made a list ahead of time, do a double-check to ensure you haven't missed the products or booths you wanted to see.

6. It will likely be cold and rainy. After all, both shows are held in January/February. The stadiums are large and not always warm. Dress in layers and top it off with a lightweight rain-proof windbreaker instead of a heavy parka that you have to pack around all day. And don't forget a small, easy-to-pack umbrella. I take mine everywhere because it is so compact. I found one online that is less than 6" folded and fits in the palm of my hand. It has an auto-open function and the all-important Pacific Northwest wind vent at the top.

7. Have things at hand. I put my show guide on an outside pocket for easy access and clip a pen to the top.

8. Take notes or a photograph of the products you like. Ask about "show deals."

9. Ask about booth storage. If you are buying larger gear, most vendors will allow you to leave it in the booth until you head home.

My friends tease me that I must have everything on my boat already, but the truth is, there are a lot of amazing products and ideas out there that I haven't heard of yet! On the macro level, I think marine professionals and companies should be rewarded for ingenious ideas. See you at the show!

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Missy grew up boating with her family in the Gulf Islands. She works for a yacht services company based in Vancouver, B.C. and boats most weekends from April to October. A self-proclaimed weekend warrior, she enjoys blogging about everything cool for women who boat at missygoesboating.com.

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Headed to the Vancouver International Boat Show? Here are some special tips to consider from an insider's perspective:

- Vancouver parking is limited and expensive, so I always take the train. If you are coming from out of town, park at the River Rock Casino in Richmond (\$2.50 for 24 hours). The Skytrain is only 15 minutes to downtown.
- The floating show closes at 1730 hours each day, so go there first. You can also park at Granville Island and take the free ferry shuttle to BC Place.
- Boating BC will be offering free 30-minute power and sailboat rides, but you have to sign up early at the entrance to the floating show.
- If you are looking for some onboard cooking ideas, visit the Dockside Grill on the main floor food court at BC Place. Learn from seasoned chefs how to create big tastes in small spaces, perfect for boaters.
- Check out the DIY Garage and Ask An Expert all of your boating service, maintenance, and technical questions.
- The New Product Showcase features items that are at the show for the first time. Vendors who have brand new products have a big red balloon in their booth.
- Are you heading down after work? There are \$5 tickets after 1700 hours, Wednesday through Saturday.
- Don't forget the Kids Zone with paddleboats and arts & crafts.
- If you are looking for a quick and inexpensive lunch, Costco is across the street.

Below, clockwise from top left: The in-water portion of the Vancouver show is on Granville Island; Showgoers check out Canadian builder Tactical's boat; Ski boats and runabouts are well represented at the indoor location; Appreciating an aluminum EagleCraft at the indoor location.



VANCOUVER FEBRUARY 5-9, 2020