

FLYING FISH
HOVERCRAFT



Your Hovercraft

What To Do With Your Hovercraft!

Good quality, reliable, recreational hovercraft can be used pretty much as you'd use a boat – but with the advantage of being able to cruise at low water, exploring shallow water, bays and estuaries, waterways and beaches where no boat can go. Around the UK, there are lots of hovercraft owners, some fabulous places to use your hovercraft and the Hovercraft Club of Great Britain who organise regular cruising events.

Hovercraft are the most environmentally sound powered vessel available, so you can rest assured that as long as you use your craft responsibly, you'll cause no damage to the ground over which you travel - or the environment in general.

There's some amazing places to hover in the UK. In the south, you could start with the Rivers Medway, Blackwater and Severn. Pick a nice day and the Solent is enormous fun! Moving North is The Wash, Morecombe Bay & the Humber. Head west into Wales and there's a huge number of places to explore offering large tidal ranges, saltings and mudflats! In Scotland, there's endless rivers and Lochs to explore. There's even a 'Rhone Raid' each year in southern France which takes in 600kms of the Saone & Rhone rivers and must be experienced at least once! Joining the Hovercraft Club of Great Britain (www.hovercraft.org.uk) will introduce you to both organised events and local contacts who've experience in hovercrafting in your area.

There's a strong social side to hovercrafting, which you can get involved with as much or little as you like. It's a great 'dads and lads' hobby (or mums and daughters of course!) and often organised events are two day affairs with a barbecue on Saturday night.

In 2013, things will become even more fun for those with too much adrenalin, with some competitive events planned such as a "Round the Island" rally and some "Coastal Race" events, racing through the mudflats and gullies. Visit our website and sign up to receive our regular newsletter!

'Buddy Hovering'

There's always a dozen or so organised cruising events each year but when you've attended some club events and met some other folks with hovercraft, it's likely you'll end up exchanging numbers and arranging informal cruises. It's good fun to use your craft with a buddy - and safer if you're being more adventurous! This is how the we tend to do our own recreational cruising and we often extend open invites if we're headed out.



Are There Any Restrictions On Where You Can Use A Hovercraft?

Hovercraft are categorised as boats (not PWC's) which means you can use a hovercraft as you would a boat of equivalent size. Rivers, coastal and inland waterways are all possible cruising locations and very few places have any arbitrary ban on usage. We've explored the Thames, crossed the English Channel and completed literally thousands of miles of coastal cruising around the UK and found that safe and responsible operation pays dividends.

In the UK, you have a Common Law right of Navigation on tidal waters so you'll be fine as long as you stick to any speed limits and pay respect to nature reserves, SSSI's and other water users - obviously staying away from busy beaches and controlling 'prop wash.'

We rate our own craft to Sea State 3 (0.5m waves) and Force 4 winds (approx 20mph) but ultimately you're the skipper, so it's your responsibility to ensure it's safe to operate your craft in the prevailing conditions.

Simply put, with a recreational hovercraft, you can do everything a small boat or jetski can do ... but it's so much more fun! 360 Spins and 40mph, playing on sandbanks and in estuaries, fishing & shooting remote areas, exploring mudflats and frozen lakes - it'll be a long time before you're bored with your Flying Fish Hovercraft!

"I've had boats all my life but I've been places in this that I didn't even know existed... it's just so much fun!"
Carl Cristina



So Much For So Little!

We often get asked how our hovercraft work so well with their modest power levels, and whether the performance is as good as our competitors.

Flying Fish Hovercraft were the first hovercraft manufacturer to identify the potential of the 35bhp Vanguard engine and lead the way in developing it with a program of 'marinisation' and performance improvements. Most industry experts agree that it's the right engine for recreational hovercraft. Two stroke engines simply do not offer the 'whole package' despite their high power to weight ratio.

Quite simply, compared to an overweight 'HDPE' hovercraft, Flying Fish craft have a superior power to weight ratio. Advanced GRP hull technology and hand crafted layup make for a very strong but lightweight hovercraft. Unlike a car with its tyres physically gripping the road, or a boat with a prop in the water, hovercraft are moved by their fan blades biting on thin air. And that means the craft weight is crucial - simple physics mean a heavy hovercraft cannot overcome the limitations of the air it moves - however much horsepower it has. An overweight hovercraft feels like driving a car with the handbrake on!

- Weight is crucial to acceleration and overcoming the inertia of a heavy craft takes time - more power doesn't necessarily overcome the difference in weight.
- Extra weight means more inertia to turn and stop. A hovercraft that weighs twice as much, will take twice as long to turn or stop.
- A heavy craft is likely to be more reluctant to lift, meaning it needs to be thrashed to perform, can't cruise slowly and makes a terrible noise!
- Extra weight means the hovercraft doesn't sit 'on' the water when hovering. In fact some hovercraft are so heavy that theoretically, they really shouldn't even work! In practice, they act more like an 'air lubricated boat' than a hovercraft, being just clear of the water.



Compare the two images above, the one on the left showing a heavy HDPE craft ploughing through the water. The one on the right shows a Marlin sitting right on the fingertips of it's skirt - no friction and a dry ride!

- Extra weight also prevents the hovercraft from starting on water ('planing' or 'getting over the hump') with ease.
- In bumpy conditions, the lighter hovercraft skips over waves and whitecaps whereas the heavy hovercraft ploughs uncomfortably through the water and soaks the passengers.

The simplicity of the Flying Fish is one of its other strengths - air cooling means no radiator and no turbo means no intercooler - both of which block the fan and prevent it from moving air...which is what makes hovercraft go! No matter how much horsepower you cram through the fan, if it can't flow air cleanly it won't work to its full potential. A lightweight craft with a clear duct will always give great performance, better fuel economy, reliability and lower noise levels.

Hovercraft owe more to aircraft than boat design and quite simply, the Marlin II only needs 35bhp to offer magnificent performance. It's light weight, uncluttered fan, 4 stroke engine and advanced skirt design make for a hovercraft which will outperform many more powerful hovercraft in all conditions.

"I have so much fun with my Marlin - when I'm out in it, everybody I meet wants one!" *David Hall*

"I should have got one of these 10 years ago, it's the best thing I ever bought!" *Dave Sax*

A Word Of Caution...

In the UK at least, there is no legal requirement for a license or qualifications to drive either a boat or hovercraft. However, like any other boat, it's crucial you prepare properly for its use. Hovercraft aren't magic, and failure to respect the sea can land you in trouble, whatever you're driving. We advise joining the hovercraft club and - initially at least - using your craft with others at organised events. We'll teach you how to drive and maintain your new craft as part of the 'handover' when you come to collect it, but if you have no maritime experience, we recommend gaining some basic boating qualifications from the RYA. Before using your craft in a maritime environment, you should equip yourself adequately with all necessary equipment, clothing and safety gear, register it and carefully check the weather and tidal charts before setting out.

Hovercraft And The Environment



It's an unequivocal fact that hovercraft have a much lower impact on the marine environment than any conventional powered boat.

Using a low-revving, 4-Stroke 'commercial specification' engine means Flying Fish Hovercraft produce negligible exhaust noise. Most of the noise of the hovercraft is produced by the fan and this has been reduced as far as possible by a clean, efficient duct design, and a relatively slow fan speed. The noise is largely directional in nature, and of a low frequency, meaning it dies away very quickly and is not a frequency that the human ear is attuned to. At cruising speed, Flying Fish Hovercraft produce approximately 75dbA at 25m, roughly the same as coach or truck driving at 50mph - and less than a lot of jet skis!

- Unlike other powered vessels, Hovercraft do not discharge their exhaust into the water, thus eliminating the pollution of the marine environment by oil and fuel particles.
- Hovercraft fly straight to their destination regardless of water depth. This means shorter access routes and no dredging of river beds. Coupled with 20mpg economy (many times better than any equivalent boat,) hovercraft save fuel and reduce damage to the environment.
- Hovercraft do not have a hull in the water - so they produce almost no wake and no 'hull slap' noise. This means foreshores and river banks aren't damaged by wash.
- With no propeller in the water, there is negligible underwater noise levels to disturb marine animals and no seabed erosion when operating in shallow water.
- No hull or propeller in the water means that animal strikes are impossible.
- A recent study concluded that the passage of hovercraft over intertidal areas caused no damage to sea grasses or invertebrates. It was noted that bird life rapidly adjusted to the presence of hovercraft and were no more disturbed by their passage than that of a conventional boat.
- The pressure that the hovercraft exerts on the ground over which it travels is less than that of a seagull standing on one leg or pressure variations due to the tide. At just 0.33lb/sq in, it's 75 times less pressure than a human walking!



**"In my opinion, hovercraft cause absolutely no damage within Moreton Bay Marine Park."
Kristy Currie, Senior Conservation Officer, Department of Estate Resource Management.**

For further information contact us on

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