

An Owner's Review of the Seaspray 15 Fisherman

My story...

I am a retired professional naval architect, so have some knowledge behind my research. Good boat design is about making the right compromises, no more so than in a boat under 20ft length.

I had previously owned a 17ft dory fishing boat and whilst it made a very stable fishing platform, its weight was such that I found it quite a handful to launch and recover on my own, or tow any distance behind our 2 litre family car.

When I was looking for a new fast fishing boat early this year therefore, I wanted something a little smaller, lighter, easier to launch and tow and yet be large enough for a couple of people to fish comfortably and be safe enough to go 2-3 miles offshore in the right conditions.

To meet these requirements I had been looking at aluminium open boats around the 15-16ft size range, before I came across MB Boats.

And so my final choice was the MB Seaspray 15.

My impression of the Seaspray...

The Seaspray 15 Fisherman not only has a rugged GRP hull, but also comes with the added bonus of a lightweight cuddy, which is actually both roomy and makes a very effective windshield for motoring at speed into the wind. Many small fishing boat owners have to stand in the cockpit whilst driving – it's the only way they can see where they're going and keep a look out for small hazards like crab pots, of which there are many in our area. However, all-round visibility whilst seated behind the cuddy of the Seaspray is so good that I found there is no need or even temptation to stand and look over the top, even at higher speeds or when entering a busy harbour.

The sole in plan view is almost rectangular – you literally couldn't fit more deck area into a 15ft boat of these overall dimensions. The cuddy is relatively short and the seats positioned forward, which means lots of lovely deck space behind the seats for handling rods and landing fish.

The numerous storage compartments are extremely useful. Not only do they use all available space, but they serve to separate fishing tackle from clothing, from emergency gear, etc.

On the water I can see why the Seaspray got its name. At planing speed spray is thrown cleanly to the sides by the gull-wing hull form and the boat and occupants stay dry. I've also been out in it with my wife on board in a Force 4-5 (an inshore passage of about 10 miles) and whilst having to reduce speed considerably we felt totally confident in the boat's handling, were well protected by the cuddy and arrived at our destination comfortable and dry.

Weight of boat and outboard is under 500kg, making it possible to use an unbraked trailer. Experience with my previous boat had taught me that brakes on a trailer that is used for frequent launching are a big hassle to maintain, due to the inevitable seawater ingress. So this is another bonus that makes boat ownership easier.

Launching and recovery seem effortless compared with my old boat, even when on my own. I regularly have people coming up to me on the slipway and remarking how easy I make it look.

If I had to think of the compromises of this size and weight of boat, I would say the freeboard seems low, making the optional side rails essential in my view. Quite honestly this is far outweighed by all the advantages. The centre of gravity is kept low, meaning it handles well under way and manages to achieve that all-important function of a stable fishing platform.

My overall impression after the first summer season are that as a fishing boat or day boat with one or two people on board the Seaspray has fully lived up to expectations. It is really hard to design a boat that is functional, easy to live with and looks so good on the water. I think MB Boats have achieved this by taking a proven hull design and refining the layout over the years. Like all good design it looks very simple, perhaps even understated, but everything about it is done for a reason.

Our future plans are to trailer the boat to other locations and as well as fishing trips use it to explore estuaries and rivers around the Devon and Cornwall coast. This is something I wouldn't have contemplated with my previous heavier boat, but now seems easily achievable with the Seaspray.

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