



BOATOWNER'S BOAT REVIEW

SPECIFICATIONS

LOA:	7' 8"
Beam:	4' 4"
Height:	2' 4"
Weight:	128 pounds
Interior cockpit length:	6' 2"
Interior cockpit area:	16.1 sq. ft.
Capacity:	USCG-approved 557 lbs (motor, passengers & gear) four persons 2hp motor

Portland Pudgy

By Paula Shur

From the cockpit of *Island Time*, our Catalina 355, my husband Ken and I watched the tourists feed the ravenous, swimming pigs at Big Majors Spot, Exumas, Bahamas. Once the pigs' bellies were full, the tour boat captain motored directly for our anchored sailboat. We exchanged friendly waves with the boatload of tourists, as the captain spoke on the loud speaker. "This bright yellow Portland Pudgy is powered by an electric motor."

The swimming pig tour now included our dinghy!

Owning a Pudgy can be likened to owning an adorable puppy. Meeting new people is easy. We are grateful our little boat introduced us to Ethan, a precocious five-year-old cruising the Bahamas with his grandparents. Ethan named our little boat *The Interesting Dinghy* (TID).

Boating is all about trade-offs. We have traded the speed of an inflatable for a boat that sails, rows, and motors. We have embraced the slowness of a 2hp electric Torqeedo

motor. Rather than zooming to many different areas each day, we time the tides and conditions to select a destination agreeable to TID.

The Torqeedo motor separates into three manageable parts—shaft, battery and tiller. We remove the motor after each use. We purchased a spare battery so that while one is charging the other can be used. We do not miss the smell or hassle of lugging around gasoline for the dinghy.

The Portland Pudgy can serve as both a dinghy and a lifeboat, eliminating the need to store two boats. When we provisioned our 35-foot sailboat for our extended Bahamas adventure, we appreciated the extra storage space.

In 2015, we purchased the Portland Pudgy in preparation for our offshore cruise to the Dry Tortugas. We prefer hard dinghies, a choice we made after a frustrating cruise with a deflatable. Our concerns for an inflatable life raft are: Will it inflate when we need it and will we be familiar with



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The Portland Pudgy, named The Interesting Dinghy (TID), on davits on our Catalina 355.



The Pudgy fits nicely in our Odyssey van, eliminating a need for a trailer to move it on land. The sail kit is stored in the starboard stern of the boat.

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(If you hate your boat, we aren't interested — you must at least like it)

how to deploy it? Our Portland Pudgy hangs on davits off our stern, ready within minutes for use. In an emergency we will know how to deploy our reliable and stable lifeboat.

Before sailing offshore, we transform the dinghy into a lifeboat, a one hour procedure. We replace the canvas cover with the exposure canopy. We arm the CO2 cartridges of the exposure canopy for quick inflation. We store the sea anchor, sail kit and bailing pump in the watertight hatches.

We chose Sunset yellow for its high visibility instead of the other three colors—white, black and green. We bought the gaff sail kit. We sailed her on our first time out, but have not sailed her since. We purchased the sail kit as a safety feature to take an active role in our survival in case of an emergency. This stable boat rows and motors with ease, so we have not used the sail. During our Exumas cruise, we rowed

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BOATOWNER'S BOAT REVIEW

Ken is putting on the exposure canopy to ready our dinghy as a lifeboat. The velcro on the orange fender can be released to lower a dinghy boarding ladder.



The Portland Pudgy sailing as a lifeboat.



when the water was too shallow for our motor.

The side fender doubles as a boarding ladder from the water. After jumping in the 15-foot water for snorkeling at the Sea Aquarium reef near Cambridge Cay, Exumas, Bahamas, we remembered what we forgot. We forgot to test out the boarding ladder—not a problem. The nylon webbing ladder was easy for our 50-something and 60-something-years-old bodies to use. We climbed back in *TID* with little effort.

We bought the standard fabric cover to protect the boat from UV rays. The polyethylene material of the boat still looks great, but the cover is losing its battle with the sun. We are thinking of ordering a Sunbrella cover before the summer sun returns.

We did not purchase the optional electric system. We thought that was just another item to maintain. We have a

dinghy light to make her legal at night.

With an inflatable, I resorted to wearing waterproof pants over my clothes when going ashore to avoid the dreaded wet bottom look when dining out. With the Portland Pudgy I stay much drier on shore excursions.

The bottom of the boat has a built-in wheel for ease in rolling it around on shore. It fits in my Odyssey van, so I do not need a trailer to transport it.

The base price is \$2700. The lifeboat options can more than double the price. We were willing to pay the extra amount because the Pudgy is two boats in one. We are looking forward to another adventure in the Bahamas with *TID*.

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