



**Summer 2010**

## **The Pontoon Boat Buying Guide**

Summer in a pontoon boat just might be the most relaxing way to spend a day on the water! Since pontoon boats offer more space and more carrying capacity than any other boating segment, the whole family & your friends can all partake in the fun.

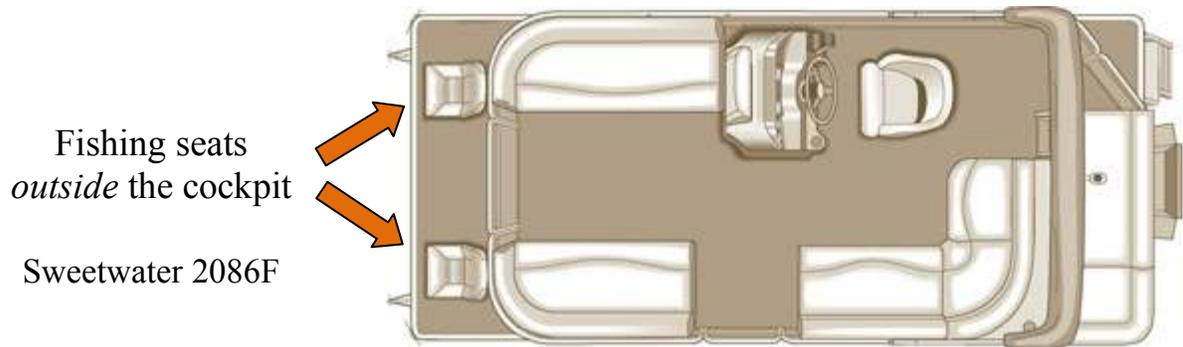
If you have just started shopping for a pontoon boat, you might be getting a little overwhelmed. Why so many brands? Why so many different floor plan layouts? Before you get confused, we'd like to offer some advice that will help to simplify your buying decision.

To choose the model that best fits your boating needs, you should ask yourself several questions:

- How will I use my new pontoon boat?
- How many people will boat with us on a typical outing?
- How fast do we need to go?
  - Do we just like to cruise around the lake or river with friends, or will we need a faster boat for tubing or kneeboarding?
- Will we be fishing from the boat?
  - If so, would we prefer to cast from the bow of the boat or troll off the stern?
  - If we want to occasionally fish but don't want solely a 'fishing boat', could we add fishing seats?
- How about swimming? Would a changeroom be ideal?
- How size horsepower do we need?
- Do we need a trailer, and is our vehicle properly suited to tow our boat?
- Is our dock long enough to moor our new pontoon boat?
- What's the performance difference between 23" and 25" pontoons?
- How can we best protect our investment?

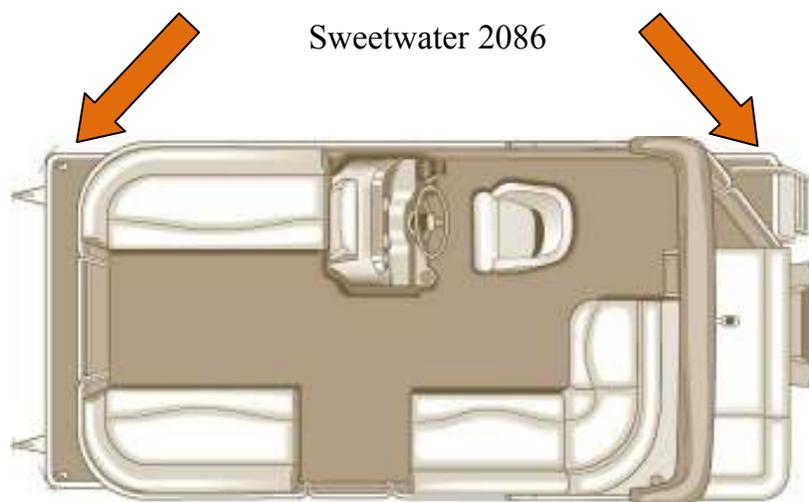
Once you know how your boat will typically be used, you are better prepared to make smart choices about a practical layout for your family's needs. Asking these questions will narrow the choices significantly.

**If fishing is on the agenda**, perhaps you should look at models with some swivel fishing chairs and maybe a livewell. For the die-hard fisherman, look at a model that supports fishing from all 4 corners. If inviting a couple of families out for the day is more your style, perhaps you should consider a pontoon boat with lots of couches. This will obviously increase the seating capacity, and also greatly improve the on-board storage space under each couch.



**Are the kids going swimming?** For many families with kids, the pontoon boat gets anchored and becomes their own private island and a ladder would be valuable! Whenever there are kids, boats and water, there will surely be swimming. Does your pontoon boat have a good-quality ladder? Is there room to jump off, i.e. decking at the bow, forward of the couches? These items are ideal so that everyone enjoys their afternoon out!

Platform at the bow, swimming ladder at the stern



**A pop-up change room or 'privacy enclosure' comes in handy.** Changerooms also double as an excellent spot to install a pumpout head, just in case. Another advantage of a changeroom or privacy enclosure is that you can take your bathing suit with you and, if you feel the urge, change into it and have a swim when the sun shines its hottest. Then you can change back into your clothes if you wish. Flexibility is ideal!



Stand-up changeroom can also be used for storage; folds flat to make a relaxing sunpad!

AquaPatio 220 Aft Deck



**How big does our boat need to be?** That's going to depend on how many people you plan to entertain on a typical day. Most 20-foot pontoons seat 8-10 people. Other items to consider are:

- If you plan on purchasing a trailer and you'd like to boat on many lakes, what is the towing capacity of your vehicle?
- What is the size of your dock - i.e. will an 18-, 20- or 22-foot pontoon boat fit?
- If you store the boat in your garage/shed/at the cottage, will this location dictate the size of your pontoon boat?
- Can you picture in your mind enough space for you & your guests on a typical summer day?

**How big of an engine will we require?** 20-foot boats with an average number of people can work well with a 40 hp engine. We sell most of our 20' pontoon boats with Mercury BigFoot 40, 50 to 60 hp FourStroke EFI engines. Most 20-footers are rated for up to 90hp if you need extra power. Our 22' and 24' models are best suited for 90 hp or 115hp and up for use on bigger water. Your intended use will suggest the horsepower required. Keep in mind that, since pontoon boats are in essence 'displacement hulls', they don't get up 'on' the water like V-bottom boats do. Thus, a larger horsepower engine will not

mean significantly higher speeds, but rather better manoeuvrability when docking and navigating through a headwind.

**Can kids ski /tube/kneeboard behind our pontoon boat?** The approximate top speed of a 20-foot pontoon boat with a 50hp FourStroke is 15-18 mph. This might be ideal for smaller children on a tube, but for older kids the thrill may not be achieved with this horsepower. Perhaps a 75hp or 90hp would be more ideal if you want to pull your kids tubing or kneeboarding. Top speeds using these horsepower engines are approximately 22-25 mph.

**How do you tell a quality brand from just a “run-of-the-mill” boat?** We suggest that you look in all of the places the manufacturer doesn't expect you to look. Even the most value priced brands look plush and stylish, but you should also ask these types of questions:

- Are waterproof connectors used?
- How are the cleats bolted to the floor?
- How about the decking material? Is it true pressure treated decking or just dipped plywood?
- There is lots of carpet and vinyl on a pontoon boat. Are these products a high grade? Do they have an impressive warranty?
- What is my overall impression of the fit and finish, and am I getting good value for my money?
- If I do encounter problems, is my selling dealer ready to look after me?

**Are there performance/buoyancy differences between 23” pontoons and 25” pontoons?** There is a misconception that boats with 23” pontoons are inferior to boats with 25” pontoons. What we've found is that, the heavier or bigger the boat, the bigger the pontoon diameter required. In order to meet flotation requirements of the marine industry, manufacturers need to install either 23” or 25” pontoons, depending on the size/weight of the boat. From there, you achieve the passenger/ weight rating that you see on the capacity sticker. For example, a Sweetwater Tuscany 2086 weighs 1,618 lbs., has a 10-person (1,400 lb.) capacity, and has 23” pontoons. Our Starcraft Limited 206 weighs 1,875 lbs and has a 12-person (1,400 lb.) capacity and has 25” pontoons. Both boats are 20 feet long and have the same beam, but because the Starcraft is heavier (more plush upholstery, bigger console, for example) and seats more people, it requires 25” pontoons in order to meet NMMA (National Marine Manufacturers' Association) standards. Note that both boats have the same passenger weight capacity! The pontoon diameter is most often reflective of the weight and outlay of the boat and how many people it is designed to carry.

Finally, **how can I best protect my new pontoon boat?** Most pontoon boatbuilders make what's called a 'playpen cover' for their boats. In essence, it covers the whole seating area with snaps and acts like a tent to keep rain from coming in, and to protect

the upholstery from fading. A very important item to note is *how much of the boat does the playpen cover really cover?* For example, our Sweetwater playpen covers fasten around the *complete* circumference of the boat. In other words, the carpeted deck in front of the cockpit (seen in the photos above) is also protected from the rain and sun. This not only prevents rain from getting into the boat, but it also protects the carpet from fading. Make sure your playpen cover does its job!

Pontoon boats are relaxing, social and versatile. They just might be right for you and your family! Len's Cove Marina is proud to feature Starcraft, Sweetwater and AquaPatio pontoon boats. Once you ponder some of the questions above, we're sure that you'll make a wise decision and enjoy your purchase for years to come. Ask our Sales Staff for any help with choosing your new pontoon boat for the Summer of 2010!

[www.lenscove.com](http://www.lenscove.com)

Sweetwater

[www.godfreymarine.com](http://www.godfreymarine.com)

AquaPatio

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