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Inflatable boats are must-haves if you love water adventures like fishing, water sports, camping, and other recreational activities. However, choosing and buying one isn't as simple as it seems. There's a wide selection of models to choose from and many things to consider during the process.

This article has listed all the essential tips you need to know to ensure you'll have the right inflatable boat. Find out what factors to consider and check when choosing—from specifications to features.

Determine the Type You Need

For starters, think about why you need the boat and how you'll use it. What would be its main purpose? Will you be using it for recreational or professional purposes?

This will help you identify what type of boat can fulfill your needs. Typically, there are five main and common types of inflatable boats:

Inflatable Dinghy



Also called an inflatable sports boat, this is a small boat or a rowboat with an outboard motor. It can be used in bodies of water where you can't use larger boats and can usually carry up to six or eight people. It's known to be versatile, rugged, and durable. Here are its common usages:

- Boat tender
- Motoring
- Recreational
- Fishing
- Water sports
- All-purpose

Inflatable Catamaran



This boat has two inflatable hulls and is available in different sizes and layouts for different water activities. It's known for being spacious, faster, and having shallower drafts, allowing you to anchor closer to the shore. It's

also more stable, making it ideal for seasick people. You can use this in different bodies of water.

Inflatable Canoe



This is like a traditional canoe, but is inflatable. It's commonly made with double and triple-layer fabric, separate inflation chambers, and airtight valves, giving it extreme durability. You can paddle it alone or with another person—most of them can even accommodate up to 3 people and can be used in different bodies of water. It also offers a lot of space for you and your family to share as you explore nature.

Inflatable Kayak



This is the most popular type because it's easy to use, durable, portable, and can be used for different water activities. Unlike a canoe, a kayak is usually designed for one person or user only and comes with a double-bladed paddle. Your legs are also stretched out when seated as you use a kayak. Here are its common usages:

. In different bodies of water

- Fishing
- · Multi-day voyages
- Recreational

Inflatable Raft



This is the type that's most suitable and used for playing and doing fun or chill water activities. It's lighter and easier to store and transport—it can even hold up to eight people. The higher the quality, the more features it can have, like multiple air chambers, handles, motor mounts, and more. But, it might be hard for a raft to withstand the sea currents, so here are its common usages:

- Recreational
- · Floating around on the pond
- Beach
- Fishing

Make Sure to Get the Right Size and Capacity

Will you use the boat alone or with your family and friends? How many gears do you plan to bring with you? You must ensure you can use the boat comfortably and safely, depending on your needs.

Inflatable boats are available in different sizes and capacities—with most ranging from 6'7" to 14'9" and can accommodate up to eight people. The more passengers, the bigger the size and the higher the capacity.

You don't want to be going over the limits of what your boat can take. By getting the right boat size and capacity, you can use a boat that can handle its passengers as you engage in water activities.

Choose One That's Easy to Store and Transport

Inflatable boats are generally collapsible, meaning you can bring them anywhere you plan to use them. However, some types and models come with accessories and features that can make them less portable. When choosing a boat, choose one that's easy to store in your car, even with its extra accessories. Opt for a boat with bags or storage straps to make storing and transporting easier.

Inflatable boats can be made of different materials, significantly affecting their quality and durability. The most widely used materials include polyvinyl chloride (PVC), Nitrylon, Hypalon, and Polyurethane (PU). But it's best to recommend choosing between PVC and Hypalon for extreme durability.

Polyvinyl Chloride (PVC)



This lightweight and cost-effective material makes it an ideal choice for people with limited budgets. PVC boats are also easy to fold and store and are relatively strong. However, they can be susceptible to UV damage and staining, so you must put extra care and maintenance into them to use them for a long time.

Hypalon



This thicker and more resistant material can withstand UV rays, high impacts, high air pressure, and heat. If you plan on doing some hardcore or heavy water activities, this is the best boat material to look for. However, it's also more expensive and heavier, which can be a hindrance if you have a limited budget.

Look for Safety Features and Certifications

Aside from looking at the brand of the boat, you must keep a close eye on the safety features that the boat offers. Remember, safety is the top priority when navigating bodies of water. By going for inflatable boats that are equipped with safety features, you can ensure the well-being and safety of everyone on the boat.

Here are some features to check:

Air Chambers

These are responsible for the boat's buoyancy even if one part of the boat's chamber gets punctured. This means it keeps the boat afloat and functional even during an emergency.

Lifelines

These are lines or a type of rope that are securely attached to the boat's perimeter. The lifelines provide you and the other passengers something to hold onto while on the boat, especially in rough waters. These will keep you safe and reduce the risks of falling overboard and into the water.

Safety Valves

These are pressure relief valves. You can use them to release any excess pressure from the over-inflation of the boat or an increased air pressure from sun exposure. This feature ensures your boat doesn't suddenly burst or get damaged—especially in the water. They help maintain the optimal air pressure in the boat so you can use it safely.

Safety Certifications

Inflatable boats can also come with certifications from safety organizations. Examples include the National Marine Manufacturers Association (NMMA) or CE certification for boats sold in Europe. When boats have certifications, you can tell which ones follow safety regulations. These certifications prove that the boats are safe to use.

Conclusion

There are a lot of factors to consider when choosing the best inflatable boats to use. But among all factors, keep a close eye on the type, portability, material durability, and safety measures. All of these depend on your needs and affect how well you can enjoy your water adventures, so keep all our tips in mind.

If you want to check some boat models, visit and check out our inflatable boat collection. We offer all kinds of high-quality boats from reliable brands for your safe and fun activities!

Related References:

- Inflatable Fishing Boats... Do They Live Up to the Hype? (Download)
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