



Haul or Nothing

When the trawler you wish to buy is safely lifted from the water, cradled in the slings, take a moment to appreciate the gravity of the situation.

A haulout is a vital part of the survey process. There is always something to learn about the boat you're planning to buy. It can be exhilarating to behold what lurks below the waterline (most yard visits end up with me humming the classic 1970s rock song by Free, "Haul Right Now"), but don't become mesmerized. Before you know it, the boat is back afloat and you are reboarding to sail away for your sea trial.

To make the most of haulout day, make sure to arrive early. If you or your team is late, the yard may cancel your appointment. The haulout process, sometimes called the "haul and hang," is normally conducted on a weekday and lasts an hour or two.

Once you arrive, be ready to make a swift exit off the boat with everything you may need for your time on land. Once the boat is in the yard, it will be difficult to retrieve forgotten items. Make sure you disembark with your water, phone, tape measure, clipboard with paper, and anything else you may need to observe and take notes.

Good yards execute a disciplined choreography to prepare the Travelift, line up the slings, balance the load and safely surface the trawler for the survey team to inspect. Your surveyor may request that the yard power wash the underbody to blast away scum and surface growth. This takes a few minutes and may be a good time for the buyer to find the yard office to confirm payment arrangements.

There is a popular yard saying: "No cash, no splash." As brokers, we remind our sellers that they are responsible for the insurance requirements and for signing the yard work order, all of which is best organized well before arriving for the haulout. If something goes wrong and damage occurs, it is most likely that the buyer will walk, and the seller will be left to sort out the damage claims.

Each surveyor has his own routine. See if you can look over his shoulder to learn what he discovers. Many surveyors work bow to stern, looking for abnormalities such as bubbles in the bottom paint or blisters in the gelcoat. They check the thru-hull fittings, inspect thrusters, stabilizers and rudders, and then focus on the running gear. Most propellers have a stamp that shows pitch and diameter; the hub may need to be scraped with a knife to read this information. The trueness of propellers (looking for dings or damage) and smooth rotation (cutlass bearing) are analyzed.



A pre-purchase haulout is a great time to learn more about a boat's below-water features.

Your diesel mechanic should be on hand and equally engaged, looking over propulsion-related running gear. I've seen propellers caked with barnacles on boats whose owners said they were having engine trouble. Once the barnacles were scraped, the engines ran up to the rated rpm.

Take your own notes, photos and videos, as well as some measurements. For instance, estimate true draft from the boot stripe to the keel bottom. Look closely at the underwater configuration and appendages, and have your surveyor point out any problems. Ask the lift operator if he has a load cell that will provide an estimate of the trawler weight out of the water.

We like to walk our buyers around and point out details such as rudders, propellers and active fin stabilizers, as well as less obvious components like shaft line cutters, underwater anodes and thru-hull fittings. Before we launch the boat post-haulout, I try to create a port and starboard hull-profile diagram. I'll sketch what I see, and then try to identify the items and their function. 🌟



JEFF MERRILL is a professional yacht broker who has helped hundreds of trawler clients. He is a member of several yacht broker associations, has served as president of the CYBA and is licensed in California, Florida, Virginia and Washington. He has presented at Trawlerfest for over 20 years, hosts a popular YouTube channel and enjoys sharing his knowledge on JMYS.com.

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