



Boat Ownership Costs Checklist

Use this checklist to get a better understanding of the real costs that you should budget for when you are buying a boat.



Boat Ownership Costs Checklist

From Lake Travis to the Gulf of Mexico, Texas boasts a broad collection of rivers, lakes, and other waterways. While boating is a uniquely rewarding experience, especially if you own your own watercraft, it can be a costly hobby if you are not prepared.

Do you need a boating license? What about Texas boat registration? There are many costs associated with owning a boat that are easy to overlook. Use this checklist to make sure you are factoring in all the costs that may come up to avoid any costly last-minute surprises.

Ownership Costs

Down Payment: This is the total out-of-pocket amount you are paying toward your purchase. The standard down payment is 15% but depending on your boat age, loan amount, and loan term the required down payment can be between 10% - 30%.

Boat Registration: All motorized vessels up to 115 feet in length and all non-motorized watercraft 14 feet or longer must be registered with the TPWD. Coast guard documented boats must also be registered. All registrations are valid for two years.

Boating License: If you're born on or after September 1, 1993, you will need a boating license. If you are born before that date, you do not need a boating license. You'll need a boating license for all motorized vessels—including personal watercraft like jet skis—and for non-motorized vessels longer than 14 feet. Texas does honor out-of-state boating licenses as long as those licenses were accompanied by a NASBLA (National Association of State Boating Law Administrators) approved course.

Boat Taxes: In the state of Texas, the state boat and boat motor tax rate is 6.25 percent of the taxable value. No local tax applies.

\$ Ownership Costs (Continued)

Extended Warranty: If you decide to buy an extended service contract, find one that begins after the manufacturer's warranty expires, and never be pressured into buying one the same day you buy the boat. You've usually got up to at least nine months to make a decision. It should also be transferable, which adds to the boat's value.

On-Water Towing Assistance: Like AAA service on the water, a towing assistance program can bring you gas if you run out or tow you to shore if your boat breaks down. This service is available on most larger bodies of water. Annual coverage from SeaTow (starting at \$179 per year) is really affordable



\$ Maintenance Costs

Fuel Cost: Boats consume a lot of fuel—figure 8 to 12 gallons per hour of operation for a single-engine runabout. If you purchase fuel at a marina, you'll pay a premium over the cost at a filling station. When possible try to purchase fuel that does not contain ethanol, and use a fuel stabilizing additive with each fill-up.

Regular Maintenance & Repairs: The cost of annual maintenance depends on the size and type of boat, whether it's used in fresh or saltwater (and may need bottom paint, for example). Boat maintenance costs also depend on whether or not your boat needs to be prepared for off-season storage and winterized.

You can assume \$500 to \$2,000 or more per year. Owners of smaller boats can often perform basic maintenance themselves and only pay for parts and supplies like engine oil.



Boat Safety Equipment: Every boat must be equipped with gear required by the U.S. Coast Guard and your state regulations. This is sometimes called a “safety kit,” and some new boat dealers can supply many of these items and may include them with a boat, but most do not. A basic boat safety equipment checklist includes:

1. Life jacket or personal floatation devices for every passenger onboard (\$25 to \$100 each) – If you boat with children you’ll need life jackets sized for them. Most states also require keeping a throwable floating cushion (\$15) or ring on board.
2. U.S. Coast Guard approved distress signal – which could be a set of flairs (\$35) or an LED signal light (\$80 to \$150).
3. Marine fire extinguisher (\$25) – More than one may be required on larger boats.
4. Anchor and rode (chain) – A safety item when used to secure the boat if the engine fails or you run out of fuel. The anchor will keep you from drifting into danger. A basic fluke anchor (\$50 to \$150) works in most situations but must be sized to the boat, and different types of anchor are designed for specific bottom conditions. Get some input from a local marine dealer on the best anchor choice for your situation. You’ll also need chain/rope rode for the anchor (\$230 and up) sized for you boat and typical water depth where you boat.



\$ Maintenance Costs (Continued)

Storage and/or Marina Fees: Eventually you'll want to tie up to a dock. Or, you'll get your boat out of the water for long-term or short-term storage. In either scenario, you'll need:

1. Dock lines (\$30 to \$100 each) – Sized to your boat, four to six lines required.
2. Fenders (also called bumpers) – To protect the boat from the dock (\$20 to \$60 each) sized to your boat, two to four are required.
3. Launch fees – Usually charged at most public ramps, and varies from about \$5 to \$15 per launch.
4. Mooring fees – If you plan to keep your boat in the water at a marina, there will be a charge based on the size of the boat, which can range from \$15 to \$45 a month per foot of boat length depending on the region, whether the marina is public or private, and its amenities. Shore power for electric service at the dock is usually extra.
5. Dry stack storage – in which the boat is stored on a fixed indoor or outdoor rack at a marina, can cost \$50 to \$200 per month. The boat is lifted off the rack with a forklift when you want to go boating, and there may be a fee for this. Many marinas also have an area where a boat can be stored on its trailer between outings, which is a more affordable option. You may not be allowed to park your boat and trailer in your driveway in some communities.

\$ Transportation Costs

Trailer: Not all boats come with a trailer and you may end up needing to purchase one that is appropriate for your boat.

Boat Transportation or Hauling: Moving your boat from one location to another using a transportation service. This can involve moving a vessel over land, sea, or air. Boats typically have to be towed behind a vehicle if transported by road, but some specialized vehicles are designed for this purpose.



Ready to Get Started?

At America's Credit Union, we know that your boat is more than just a toy, it's an extension of your personality. That's why we make it easy to [finance your boat](#) with **no money down** and up to **100% financing** with terms that make your monthly payment affordable. If you have any questions about getting your boat financed, please [contact America's Credit Union today!](#)

[Click Here to Apply Today!](#)



AMERICA'S
C R E D I T U N I O N



**Annual Percentage Rates are effective as of 05/12/2023. Rates shown include discounts of up to 0.40% that are available. Said discounts require qualifying products and/or services. Rates are subject to change without notice. Rates, terms and conditions may vary based on an individual's creditworthiness and credit union underwriting guidelines.