

During a recent trip to Portugal to visit Facebook friend, Mark Shreeve, in order to test his new pride and joy – a custom-built 700 Sport Fishing from Levant, I also stumbled upon a rather sexy little bass boat from the same manufacturer – the Levant 560 Open.

Perfect For UK Bass Fishing

Measuring in at just a tad over 18ft in length, the Levant 560 is just about perfect for UK waters in terms of average size of towing vessels found here. What caught my eye was the fact that it's a completely open design, with a full walkaround deck area.

There's a sensibly sized centre console, with enough dash space for fitting flush-mounted electronics and gauges, plus on this boat we had a fold-down radio

antenna – a great addition.

As far as seating goes, this boat has the traditional seating arrangement of two behind the console and two in front. The helm seat is a 'Sport Bench' design, allowing both seated and semi-seated steering options.

While I'm on the subject of seating, there was a rather nifty little seat right on the bow of the boat I looked at. Perfect for when you're motoring up for another drift, and you don't want to put your rod down or sit on the bench seat – it's almost there to just rest your bum on while you're still standing.

Another thing that caught my eye was the addition of a 'dive ladder' on the Port side stern – this is something that you rarely see on boats as standard, and if you've ever been thrown



The centre console is really well laid out.

overboard you'll appreciate how hard it is to try and climb back into a boat – a ladder is essential, so hats off for yet another safety plus point to Levant.

So why do I reckon this beauty is perfect for UK bass fishing? Well, apart from it being an open design, which helps with drift speed (no cuddy to catch the wind), and the

obvious point of plenty of casting room for flinging lures, the big plus is that the boat only draws 10.6-inches! Of course you have to factor the leg of your outboard into the equation, but any boat that draws less than a foot has to be a serious contender for creeping into shallow water or drifting over shallow reefs in search of the UK's favourite fish in my book!

Masses Of Storage

Everywhere you look on this boat has neat little storage lockers, and space has been used very effectively to keep unwanted items off the deck. Up the bow there are two lockers and a handy 'bits' cubbyhole, for anyone fishing up the pointy end to store bits and bobs (my instant thoughts were 'there's a great place to hang a few different

lures when casting at bass').

There's more storage inside the centre console itself, both sides, and a further two lockers at the stern – either side of the engine well.

Great Handling

If you read last month's review on the Levant 700, you'll know just how good a helmsman Francisco is. Well he manned the helm of the 560 for most of our trip, especially when Mark, myself and Jamie Day were fishing from the 700 (you can read all about that trip on page 36 of this issue). He followed us everywhere in the 560 with BFM photographer, Jim Midgley on board, and to be honest the conditions outside the safety of the river were pretty horrendous.

The 560 coped with ease, and that's testament to just how good

About Francisco

It turns out that Francisco is one of only three Naval Architects in the whole of Portugal. After serving his time designing and repairing various hulls such as fast patrol boats, he decided to start up his own business building pleasure craft. So, the 560 Open, as with all of the Levant boats, is designed from scratch – not re-shaped from moulds already in circulation. And, what's more, they're designed by a Naval Architect! You can't really have better credentials than that for a boat-building company.

I was blown away by the hospitality extended to us by Francisco, who is by all accounts a very modest and kind gentleman. He invited us to his house on the second and third nights of our stay, and fed us like kings! He's also a mad keen fisherman, and that passion shines through to his boat building.

the hull design is. Having spent some time on three different Levant boats, I've come to expect nothing else!

Francisco loves his 'boys toys' and is a true boat enthusiast. He pumped up the power on the 560 and was throwing it about all over the place, doing doughnuts, tight turns and such to demonstrate just how stable this little boat is. I was very impressed to say the least.

Then it was my turn to man the helm, and boy what a fun machine I found it to be. Turns are instant, the throttle control is easy to use and the boat reacts as quickly as any other that I've ever thrown about.

Because she's lightweight, and

with the help of the hull design, she's up on the plan very quickly, and there's no real drag before you're on your way. Even at speed, when you throw the wheel round she responds and simply glides into the turn. There's no digging in at all – it's like thrashing about on a speedboat, but one that's build for fishing!

Conclusion

As with the Levant 700, I am mightily impressed with this boat. I'm really hoping that we start seeing a few Levant 560s in UK waters. Bass beware!

For a little over £13,000, you're getting a whole lot of boat and engine, with superb handling and sea-keeping qualities.

LEVANT 560 OPEN

BFM Ed, Dave Barham reveals another fantastic new boat that is built and designed in Portugal, which is set to turn the UK boat market on its head!



She literally glides across the water in a turn.



Ready to pile on the power!



A finished boat, ready to leave the factory. You can see the amount of deck space you have to work with.

BOAT SPECIFICATIONS:

LENGTH OVERALL	5.60m
BEAM	2.22m
WEIGHT	650kg
DRAFT	0.27m
MAXIMUM POWER	1 X 115hp
FUEL TANK CAPACITY	95lt
CE RATING	C3
MAXIMUM CAPACITY	6 persons

PRICES

560 Open with Selva Dorado 50hp	£13,155 €18,417
560 Open with Selva Tarpon 115hp XSR	£17,097 €23,937
560 Sea Pro with Selva Dorado 50hp	£10,833 €15,167
560 Sep Pro with Selva Tarpon XSR 115hp	£14,776 €20,687

INFO

For more details on this model and others in the range, visit: www.levantboats.wix.com/levant-eng
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