

TOOL TEST: FLEXICAT LONGBOARD



For fairing the bottom of a hull there is nothing better than using a longboard. Longboards are, as their name implies, long flexible boards that hold sandpaper to fair the hull. The longer the board, the smoother the hull becomes over a greater distance. The work of using a longboard is hard, dusty, and not very pleasant, so anytime somebody asks you to longboard a boat, make an excuse and leave town. Having had to use a longboard where the tolerances are the thickness of a piece of paper, we appreciate the value of having a quality longboard.

The two longboards we tried both came from Flexicat Tools and Accessories in the Czech Republic, and both are really nicely made and easy to use. Both boards are made of aluminum and are medium flexible.

They have handles at right angles to the working surface, which makes it hard on the user's wrists when using the boards for any length of time. If the handles were parallel to the board, they would be easier to grip over a long period. Interestingly, there are boards from US manufacturers with the same problem.

Another drawback to the Flexicat longboards that we found was that the boards are made for European sandpaper and are only three inches wide. Most US builders tend to prefer four inch wide sandpaper. In addition, we found that the sharp corners of the board required careful use. If you angle the board slightly, it is possible to accidentally dig the sharp corner into the job. But this problem can be easily solved by rolling the leading edge up slightly. Beyond these small drawbacks we liked the boards.

They are flexible enough that they can be used on most curved surfaces and are light enough that they are easy to hold for a long stint under a boat. In our opinion, if the company offered a 4 inch wide board with a rolled end, it would be one of the best boards on the market, but that's just our opinion.

The boards come in lengths from 420 mm to 1260 mm or 16 1/2 inches to 49 1/2 inches, and in widths of 70 or 80 mm - that is, 2 3/4 inches and just over 3 inches. The boards are available in flexibilities from 1 (extra soft) through to 4 (extra hard), with 2 (a medium soft board) being the most popular and the type we tried. Costs range from 85 Euros to 205 Euros, which at today's exchange rate is \$120 to about \$290.

FLEXICAT
TOOLS & ACCESORIES



For more information go to www.flexicat-tools.com or call (+420) 241 740-590 in the Czech Republic.