



By Brady L. Kay

## #273 ISLAND HOPPER PRODUCTS

### Island Buddy

Working at Island Hopper Products is arguably the closest thing to being an elf at Santa's workshop. This manufacturer has simply been creating fun for nearly 30 years and among a variety of great water-specific products, is probably best known for its Water Trampolines and Banana Boats. There is plenty to get excited about when it comes to Island Hopper, but its latest offerings in its Water Platforms are creating a burst of excitement this summer.

The Water Platform series includes the massive 15-foot inflatable Patio Dock that works as an extension of your pontoon boat, but we were equally excited about the smaller version, the Island Buddy, and decided to give it a try.

The Island Buddy Water Platform & Dock is a super buoyant, ridged, inflatable water platform. To clarify, this is not the rolled-up foam mat that has been around for years yet is still gaining in popularity with boaters. (Island Hopper, of course, offers one if that's what you're looking for). The Island Buddy is an actual swimming platform that inflates to hold up to 1,000 pounds.

Fair warning: if you don't enjoy the sound of laughter as well as entertaining both children and adults for hours, this might not be the right product for you. We recently pulled out our Island Buddy and there was no shortage of people wanting to give it a try. In fact, it made us feel even better about our decision to order two of them since we were able to connect them together.

To get started, at roughly 30 pounds the manageable 36-inch by 12-inch size is greatly appreciated since storage on board a boat is typically limited. "With other products you have to step on them or climb over it when it's not being used so the fact that it rolls up and can fit just about anywhere on your boat is a great feature," said Jill Cruz.

It easily fits under most seats or in an in-floor ski locker and it takes less than five minutes to fully inflate. It comes with a PSI double action hand pump and the gauge really comes in handy. It truly works best in the 8 to 10 psi range. We found using the electric Magic Air Blower (\$99) first is the best way to inflate it and then use the hand pump to top it

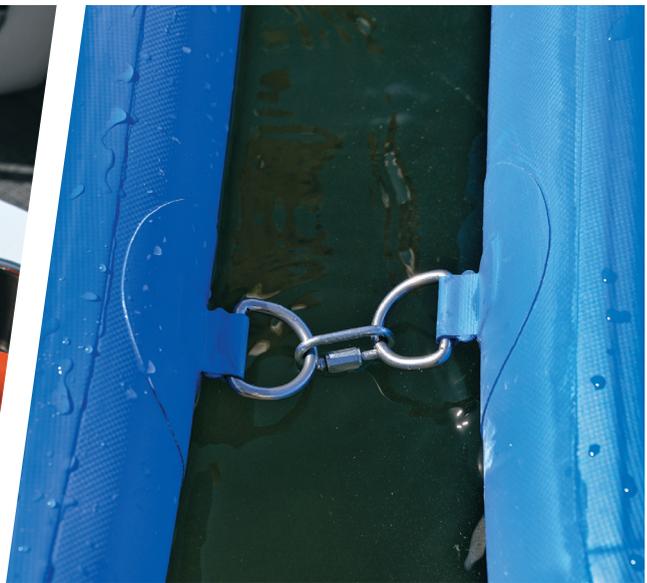




*We enlisted some friends for the actual testing and we're pleased to report it passed the "Big Dave" test.*



*The manageable size allows the Island Buddy to be stored on board and comes standard with a PSI double action hand pump.*



We highly recommend using locking carabiner clips to attach multiple platforms together. This style of clip will keep them locked together with no chance of accidentally coming unlatched.



**Product Score: 96**

Portability 18/20  
 Function 49/50  
 Durability 10/10  
 Design 10/10  
 Price 9/10

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off for best results.

The swimming platform can be used in conjunction with your boat to make a patio area for sunbathing, swim play, wakeboard and tube launching, or any number of water activities. For both kids and adults, the optional soft 4-step ladder (\$79) makes it even easier to get back on when in deep water, but it's not a must-have upgrade in our opinion since our test crew was able to get on and off of it with ease.

Ideal for four to six people, the Island Buddy expands to 8 feet by 6 feet when fully inflated and comes with 11 side-welded stainless steel d-rings to tie off and anchor securely. Up top are eight web-loops for tying down your ice chests, lounge chairs, paddle boards, and water toys. It's clear they thought of everything when designing this multi-purpose

craft. Also available and sold separately is Island Hopper's exclusive inflatable pillow (\$149) that puts the Island Buddy over-the-top as far as usability is concerned. It is easy to attach to the platform using any of the six mesh loops; we used our own carabiner clips to secure it and the pillow perfectly stayed in place for a little afternoon nap.

Priced at \$599, the Island Buddy is extremely well built and I was impressed by its durability. It is made from commercially rated 1500 denier drop stitch material and built with heat-welded seams to top boating industry standards with a five-year "No Blow Out" limited warranty so you know it's going to get plenty of great use. Easy to inflate, hours of fun and simple to store, the Island Buddy checks all the boxes for a great day on the water.