



Small Craft Advisor

[Boat Reviews](#)

Owner Boat Reviews

West Wight Potter 19, Vivier Ilur, Hartley TS16, and Bolger Chebacco
Feb 04, 2025

This is the sixth installment in our irregular series, based on results of a *Small Craft Advisor* reader survey done last year to see who's sailing what—and just how much you like your small boats. (For earlier installments, see SCA issues 116, 117, 118, 120 and 122.)

This time we look at four different popular small-boat models ranging in length from 14.5 feet to 20 feet, including the West Wight Potter 19, the Francois Vivier-designed Ilur, the Hartley 16, and the Bolger-designed Chebacco. —Eds



In reader-survey terms, the Ilur is one of the highest-rated designs we've run across.

VIVIER'S ILUR

Francois Vivier has an impressive catalog of larger cruising boats, but he is a recognized master of traditional, open, sail-and-oar designs, and his most popular small boat design is the Ilur. Ilur was designed for the sometimes-rough conditions found along the Brittany coast of France, close to where Vivier lives and enjoys sailing small boats.



In reader-survey terms, the Ilur is one of the highest-rated designs we've covered—certainly among completely open boats.

The wooden lapstrake design—14'-6" overall with a beam of 5'-6"—is available in two basic models: the "Classic," designed with a simple lugsail in the Breton "misainier" style—and the "Clinker Kit" version, designed in 2012 as a CNC-cut kit with three sailing-rig options: lug sloop, balanced lug with boom, and lug yawl. In addition to the original boomless lug rig, the Classic can now also be built from plans with a lug sloop rig, a balanced lug with boom, or the same lug yawl rig offered as an option on the Clinker Kit version.

Construction of the kit boat takes most builders about 400 hours, compared to roughly 500 hours for those building from plans.

SCA reader Christoph Harlan launched his lug sloop Ilur in 2017, and he gives the boat top marks (5 out of 5) for trailerability, ease of launching and retrieving, performance in light air, tacking ease, speed, seaworthiness, and stability. "The Ilur," says Christoph, "was designed to withstand rough waters; for an open boat she's about as stable as one could hope for, and with three reefing points she's going to stay out there longer than most other boats. And in a moderate breeze she will quite easily do 5.5 to 6 mph."

Designed more for sailing than rowing—(with high sides and generous beam-to-length ratio, the boat isn't a speedster under oars)—the Ilur doesn't pretend to be an ideal "raid" design. In fact owner Christoph sometimes uses a small Torqeedo electric outboard when the wind dies, but with 9'-6" oars that nest under removable thwarts, he's satisfied with the Ilur's rowing performance, which he says is good in calm conditions. Just don't try rowing to windward in whitecaps, if you can avoid it.

Another Ilur owner-builder, Ron Mueller, also gave the design high marks for seaworthiness, stability, trailerability and ease of launch and retrieval. Ron also built his boat from a kit, commenting that "because of the CNC-cut building jig and other parts, it is one of the most precise boats I have ever built—and that's out of six similar-sized projects I've completed."

One thing you hear from all Ilur owners—the boat inspires confidence. Ron's assessment: "Ilur is a little ship, confident in all conditions. When you make a mistake, like a messed-up jibe, the boat

just rocks a little and laughs at you. She's a friendly, confident craft for single-handed sailing, and simple to trailer and launch."

In performance terms, Ron has had experience with two other highly-rated small craft, a Wayfarer and Drascombe Peterboat. "The Ilur is slower than the Wayfarer, but much steadier, particularly for solo sailing. Compared to the Peterboat, the Ilur is just as stable, with similar speed, but she's easier to handle."

Ilur owner Michael Owen built his "Classic" version from plans, taking 3-1/2 years of nights and weekends to finish the job. "The build was moderately complex," says Michael, "but the plans were very clear and the designer responded quickly and graciously to my email queries." Michael went with the lug yawl rig, popular in the North American market. "The boat is very comfortable and confidence-inspiring," says Michael. "I love the lug-yawl rig and generous sailplan...and I can go from being on the trailer to sailing in about 20 minutes—always nice."

To see the full line of Francois Vivier designs, go to www.vivierboats.com —Eds