



RIB Extreme ***575***

Words and pictures by Scarlett Steer





Rigid Inflatable Boats have been around for as long as we can all remember, and regardless of ever-changing boating trends, remain an integral part of the South African seafaring community. Although they often conjure up images of white water action and exciting ocean adventure, they also bring to my mind thoughts of being cold, wet, and to be honest, pretty damn uncomfortable. Let's face it, being tossed around from pontoon to post like a redheaded stepchild is not likely to top anyone's list of favourites, but I recently came across a RIB that definitely tops mine.

Earlier on in the year *Leisure Boating* reviewed the RIB Extreme 650 and declared it a total success, and after an exhilarating trip through the Knysna Heads with experienced skipper Dave Dalton at the helm, I can tell you that the 575 is even better, with unbelievably solid handling, excellent sea-keeping abilities and beautiful manners. RIB Extremes generally are very easy on the eye, and Falcon Inflatables should be lauded for having got the aesthetics spot on. We already know that the Extreme range of RIB is being manufactured by Falcon as a special package for Honda

Marine, and that the blue, grey and white colour coding is unique to the series. What you maybe don't know is that this particular model is rumoured to be the most spacious in its class. The non-skid, full wet deck offers plenty of room to move from bow to stern, and is equipped with satisfactory seating arrangements for a maximum of ten passengers. The bow provides a triangular, cushioned seat housing storage for an anchor, ropes and chains, as well as stainless steel

rib EXTREME

bow rails for safety. A good-sized under-deck hatch can be filled with water sports goodies and lifejackets.

The centre console is equipped with simple instrumentation including rpm and trim gauges for each motor, a fuel gauge and a trim switch, and is partially protected by a tinted plastic windshield framed by a stainless steel grab rail for passengers like me who prefer to ride standing up. The trim switch is an interesting addition and allows the skipper to adjust trim on the motors either separately or simultaneously, making correcting planing levels super easy. Hydraulic steering comes standard if you choose twin 50HP Hondas as your power providers. The console itself provides large interior space for dry storage and a "shelf" at floor level in which you can slot your 120-litre fuel tank. The skipper can settle into a comfy bench with an adjustable backrest and huge storage beneath. Further seating can be found in a stretch of stern bench and a single seat in front of the console. The stern is also equipped with a second under-deck storage hatch, stainless steel ski pole and canopy. A great feature of this craft, mentioned in February's review of the 650, is the optional stainless steel boarding ladder that can be attached to the pontoon of the RIB. I've already aired my views on the unpleasant and often humiliating chore of climbing back into a RIB with only rope grab rails for assistance. Some things should be left strictly to the imagination, people, and to achieve this, that ladder is an essential!

Power Torque

Our test craft was powered by twin 50HP Honda 4-strokes, which, according to Dave Hoets of Honda Knysna, weigh only fractionally more (about one to two kilograms) than their 2-stroke equivalent. Skipper Dave Daltons first impression (he currently owns two of the older ▶



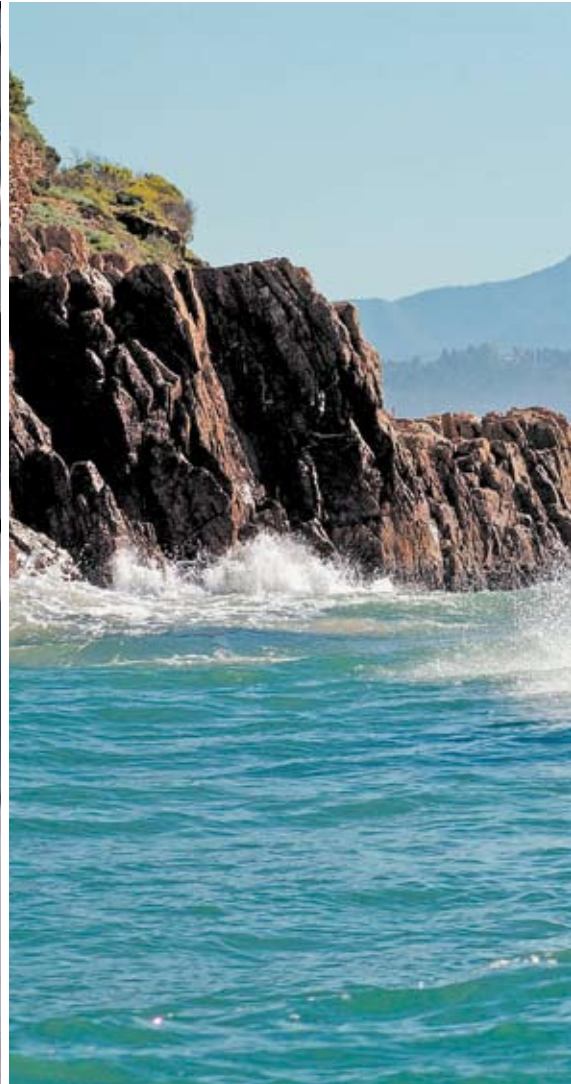
TOP AND BOTTOM: Bow storage and seating is both roomy and well designed.



The stern is equipped with plenty of bench seating and further under-deck storage.



The centre console is set with basic instrumentation including RPM, fuel and trim gauges.





The craft's sea-kindly deep V hull mastered the chop with aplomb.



New twin 50HP Honda 4-strokes provided plenty of power through the acceleration range.

50 HP motors) was that the craft might be underpowered.

"When I first saw the boat I thought that if she were mine, I'd definitely put two 60s on the back, but I was really surprised with how powerful the new motors were, and how light. This is a fantastically rigged package with more than enough power."

Both props were fitted with 11 1/4 X 13" pitch propulsion, providing plenty of torque and power through the acceleration range. Honda recommends this rig as the ideal choice in terms of power-to-weight ratio, but those who want to push it can go up to twin 90HP motors, although to my mind this is totally unnecessary. It is not advisable to go any lower than twin 30HP outboards as the craft won't be able to cope with any sort of load. These outboards also delivered noticeably silent running and environmentally friendly low emissions, and are therefore permitted to be used within the strict Thesen Island area.

For the hull of it

Constructed by Swellendam-based Falcon Inflatables, these RIBs are built tough and entirely user-friendly. Falcon uses high-grade German Valmex in the construction of their pontoons, and thermo-bonded pontoon seams for incredible durability and such high tolerances that it is no longer necessary to adjust the air pressure for temperature changes or storage. Hulls are hydro-dynamically efficient and made from a high-tech modern composite. Dalton was incredibly impressed with the 575's handling while travelling through the angry waters of the Heads.

"This is real washing machine stuff," he commented, describing the sea conditions, "yet we're hardly being bumped around at all. It really is incredible!" And I definitely agree. The craft's sea-kindly deep V mastered the chop with aplomb, and what's more, we stayed 100% dry. I had an idea that the 575

would handle well as I'd already seen her in action a few months back during a surf launch in Sodwana. RIB Extreme hulls are also very forgiving, which comes in handy for the slightly rusty skipper who doesn't want to be shown up in front of family and friends as an amateur. Dave Dalton concurred. "These hulls don't punish you," he said, "and they sit the boat so solidly in the water. I really am impressed."

And I have to say it was hard not to be. As the 575 carved a clean line out through the mist-veiled Heads, the early morning sun broke through the fog and set the ocean alight with gold and green. And just when we thought the morning couldn't get much better, two Brides Whales broke the cold sea surface on either side of the RIB, showering us with a fine cloud of condensation. There you have it – a magical African morning, a humbling sighting, and a superb craft. I don't know about you, but I'm sold.

The RIB Extreme 575 retails for a reasonable R175 000 including twin 50HP 4-stroke motors and a trailer. For more information on this craft or to find the Honda Marine dealer nearest to you, contact Dave Hoets on 084 677 1400 or Richard Worth on 083 647 7030 at Honda Knysna on (044) 382 4090 or email hondamarine@knysna.sa.com. ●



At a glance

Specifications

LOA	5.7 m
Beam	2.5 m
Inside length	4.5 m
Inside width	1.5 m
Hull deadrise	15 degrees
Air compartments	6
Hull weight	350 kg
Max. load	1 595 kg
Max. persons	10

Motors as tested

Motors	2 x BF50 4-stroke
Type	SOHC 3 cylinders
Displacement	808 cm ³
Bore and stroke	70 x 70 mm
Valve train	6 valve
Full throttle rpm range	5 500 – 6 000 rpm
Rated power – (kW)	50 – (36.8)
Cooling system	Water-cooled
Carburetion	3 carbs with acc. pump
Ignition system	Electronic PGM – IG
Exhaust	Propeller boss
Top speed achieved	43 mph / 70 Kph

Drive

Gear ratio	2.09:1
Gear shift	F-N-R

Equipment

Alternator	10 amp (126 watt)
Prop size	11 1/4 x 13"
No. of blades	3
Direction	Remote control

Starting system	Electric
Power and trim tilt	Available
Gas-assisted tilt	Available

Motor Dimensions

LOA	685 mm
Overall width	370 mm
Overall height	1 260 (S) – 1 365 (L) mm
Transom height	416 (S) – 521 (L) mm

Pontoon

Construction
Double-overlap thermo-fused
Materials
High-grade German Valmex
Warranty
3 years (South Africa only)

Hull

Design
Hydrodynamic efficient
Construction
Modern composite high-tech design
Materials
Lloyds-approved yacht quality
Warranty
5 years (South Africa only)

Production

Full in-house by Falcon Inflatables

Certification

European ISO 6185