



## BUYING A RIB?

# A GUIDE ON WHAT TO LOOK FOR WHEN BUYING A USED RIB.

I guess if you've asked for this guide you're keen enough on buying a RIB, we love RIBs too and share your passion for them.

Over the coming weeks we will send you five different instalments with key points for you to consider when looking for that dream RIB to buy. We have also appended a ' Check List ' which can be used as an aid memoir when pondering your impending decision.

Our views and opinions are not exhaustive and we recommend that you talk to trusted others also. RIBs are a large investment and we strongly recommend that you obtain advice from a qualified surveyor, before you splash your cash. They are however great fun and should give you hours of pleasure and adventure. Don't forget to try out as many different makes of RIB as you can before you buy.

RIBs have progressed from the utilitarian 4x4 of the sea, initially developed for rescue and military use. Today the recreational use of RIBs is well established. The massive inherent buoyancy, low centre of gravity, and high power to weight ratio has made today's RIBs thoroughbreds of the sea. The RIB can be an extremely fast, safe sea boat, when properly handled, and is seen in many guises as harbour runabouts, rescue lifeboats, luxury tenders on mega yachts, adventure craft on cruise liners, race and cruise boats and others besides.

The EEC issued a Recreational Craft Directive in June 1994 which also covers the design and construction of RIBs. Reputable RIB builders have progressively adopted this directive since this time. The directive identifies four Boat Design Categories:

**A - Ocean:** Designed for extended voyages where conditions may exceed wind force F8 (Beaufort scale) and significant wave heights of 4m and above, and the vessel is largely self sufficient.

**B - Offshore:** Designed for offshore voyages where conditions up to and including wind force F8 and significant wave heights up to and including 4m may be experienced.

**C - Inshore:** Designed for voyages in coastal waters, large bays, estuaries, lakes and rivers where conditions up to and including wind force F6 and significant wave heights up to and including 2m may be experienced.

**D - Sheltered Waters:** Designed for voyages on small lakes, rivers and canals where conditions up to and including wind force F4 and significant wave heights up to and including 0.5m may be experienced.

**Boats from builders who meet the EEC directive will have two points of identification attached to the RIB:**

#### Hull Identification with:

The HIN, which holds the following info, should be moulded into the hull.  
 Manufacturer's code  
 Country of manufacture  
 Unique serial number  
 Year of production  
 Model year.

#### Builder's Plate with:

Manufacturer's name  
 CE Marking  
 Boat design category  
 Manufacturer's maximum recommended load  
 Number of persons recommended to be carried

\*It is a legal requirement that all RIBs are CE marked.

## What Type of RIB interests you?

You will probably have already seen many different deck layouts, so what are these?

### Rescue/Commercial/Services

Smaller craft are often used by sailing clubs as safety cover and organisations such as the RNLI use larger models fitted out with twin engine motors and self righting gear. Commercial models generally used for pilots and by the maritime protection agencies often have a wheelhouse. Services RIBs are usually about 7m, used by the marines and other waterborne forces. Some types are recognised by the grey or olive green colouration of both hull and tubes. You may spot the odd 'black' special services or smugglers model, but don't ask too many questions or else they may have to kill you!

### Diving

Divers usually sit on the inflatable tubes, including the Cox on some smaller models, leaving plenty of deck space for kit and "treasure trove". A single helm console, jockey seat and bottle rack are the norm. The tubes are set close to the waterline and in some cases the hull freefloats to provide maximum stability at rest.

### Sports & Cruising

Moulded consoles and upholstered seating, stowage lockers, some even have a bathing ladder and shower facility. A Cruising RIB is quite capable of an English Channel crossing with a range up to 120 miles. Often with a minimum of between 4 and 6 seats and serious electronics packages. Cabins are also to be found on some models.

### Racing

High-performance deep-V and more recently stepped hullled craft. Normally they have only two seats. These craft are capable of speeds in excess of 100 mph but more typically 50 -70 mph. Special designs with lightweight but strong construction, perhaps using kevlar composite material in the build.



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## Hull & Deck

Inspect the hull for cracks, chips and grazing, in particular along the spray rails and chines. Hairline cracks running across the beam of the hull and any longitudinal cracks are the principal elements to look out for. Either of these could indicate substantial damage. Minor grazing, small star cracks (stress) emanating from pressure points and chips in the chines may detract from the boat's appearance, but are usually superficial and require a relatively easy and inexpensive repair job.

## Deck and Transom

Damage is rare, however points to look for are spongy decks caused by fuel or water logging. The problem will require the attention of an expert and a great deal of expense. Check the transom around its base and its bearer's knees. Minor cracks in both the base and at the top of the knees can be common, but generally do not indicate major damage. Nevertheless, check carefully.

## Seating and Console

Upholstery condition are visually easy to see, but do check the deck attachment of the console, the seat hinges and the watertightness of any integral storage areas.

## Fuel tanks and Battery

Check the location of fuel tanks and battery, do you really want them both located in the same deck space? Inspect all fittings, pipes and breathers for signs of damage. Check out accessibility if a damaged fuel tank has to be replaced. This can be quite expensive if the design and construction has not taken this possibility into account.

## Tubes

Inspect the buoyancy tubes for major repairs. Check for half stuck patches as they are a good indicator of an amateur repair job and consequent hidden dangers. Such patches should be attended to as soon as possible. Check for previous repairs to the tube attachment, usually spotted by glue stains. Pull at the fabric, to check that any gluing has been carried out properly. In particular check the seam at the bow, along each underside of the hull, the transom seams and the joining of the stern tube cones.

## Seams

A lot of seams are covered by tape that can start to lift or become totally detached. While on some RIBs, the tape is purely a protective measure covering the main seam below (a little glue is all that is needed to rectify the problem) on others it is the main attachment. In the case of the latter, then this can be the beginning of the seams becoming unglued, which entails an expensive repair job.

The RIB should have a minimum of 3 independent air chambers, preferably more. To check the condition of the baffles (the divisions between the air chambers) deflate one tube at a time and inflate the other to a normal working pressure, 1.5 to 3.0 psi. With your 'good' ear pressed against the tube you should be able to hear any leakage of air from one chamber to another.



## Engine & Steering

As with all aspects of the boats an inspection by a qualified person is the ideal solution; however, if this is not always possible, we do suggest that you carry out the following checks:

Remove the cowl and inspect the engine for general condition, a clean engine often indicates a careful owner. Look for signs of salt corrosion, most importantly around the cylinder head. With the engine running check that the water pump is functioning properly, pumping a sufficient volume of water to cool the engine. Look at the strength of the 'tell tail' which will give you a good indication. Overheating can cause serious damage to the pistons and bearings as well as twisting the cylinder head. Check the kill cord works.

Check for wear in the swivel bracket and engine mounts by attempting to shake the engine, RIBs put huge loads on the engine mountings and suffer from this type of deterioration if the engine has not been properly checked and fittings tightened after every trip.

Check the propeller for damage and look to see if the bottom of the 'skeg' is also damaged, usually indicating that the engine has hit something at sometime. Take the engine out of gear (ignition switched off) and rotate the prop slowly by hand, checking to ensure that the propeller shaft is not bent. Again with the ignition switched off or the kill-cord out, put the engine in gear and pull the starter cord or turn the propeller by hand. You should be able to feel a resistance as each piston rises to compress the air in its cylinders.

Loosen the gearbox oil drainage plug and inspect what comes out. The oil should be thick and transparent. If it is not and appears to be thinner and murky, then water contamination may have taken place and consequently damaged the gears or bearings.

Ask to see a service history. You will probably be very lucky to find one, some enthusiasts do all their own servicing and maintenance.

Steering, usually cable or hydraulic on some of the larger engines or a combination of both. Check the free movement of all cables, it's not uncommon for steering cables to seize. It's recommended changing them anyway on a routine basis. Not expensive but sometimes fiddly. Check condition of all fittings to steering box and engine. If hydraulic steering, check oil level and look for leaks. Move steering and check for 'play'.



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Personal choice largely dictates what equipment should be on the RIB, expect that not every pre-owned (let alone new) RIB will come complete with all the equipment considered to be prudent to take to sea. The British Inflatable Boat Owners Association sets down its requirements for members who take their RIBs on the more challenging events and these can be found at [www.biboa.com](http://www.biboa.com). To give you a general idea we have listed below some items that should be considered as part of the purchase of a used RIB.

### Anchor and Line

An anchor of a weight and type adequate to hold the boat with at least 30 metres (inshore), 50 metres (offshore) of line with 3 metres of chain. Ask a good chandler to advise you on RIB.

### Bailers and Bilge Pumps

Bailers or buckets and either manual, automatic or electric bilge pumps (particularly on inboard engine installations).

### Fire Extinguisher

We would recommend that you have a fire extinguisher on board at all time. Inboard engines should have an automatic fire extinguisher system installed in the engine compartment.

### Hand or Foot Pump

A hand or foot pump capable of being operated below the gunwale.

### Paddles

A minimum of two paddles.

### Painter/Mooring Lines

Painter and mooring lines. The painter should be shorter than the length of the boat so as not to foul the propeller should it fall into the water whilst underway.

### Towing Points

Cleats, eyes and samson posts strong enough to tow the boat when waterlogged.

The items above are those which mainly 'look after the boat'. Other important safety items, e.g. compass, flares, lifejackets, VHF radio, medical kit, charts, etc., should be carried. You can obtain professional advice on these items from your local maritime safety agency or national boating association.



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Used trailers are generally in a poor condition and can sometimes seem to be more of a liability than an asset. (But not always, especially if the RIB has been regularly moved from cruise to cruise area). Ensure it fits the boat, providing sufficient support, and determine the existence and extent of rust, particularly in any box sections.

Brakes often become seized due to their frequent immersion in salt water, so don't be put off immediately if this is the case. However, do check carefully how easily they release. Inspect the cables, making sure they appear to be good condition. Lastly, check the brakes don't scrape or bind when the trailer is being towed.

Jack up the trailer and check for play in the wheel bearings. Also spin the wheel, listening for noise from the bearings. If the bearings are noisy, then the trailer is not in a good state to tow the RIB. Always carry a spare wheel bearing when towing on road.

Check the draw bar and hitch, ensuring that the coupling bolts are tight. Brake the trailer and attempt to manoeuvre the hitch, checking for wear. Try to push the hitch back towards the trailer, it should slide slowly with some resistance. It should not slip in easily or seize up.

Winch mechanism - check the strap for deterioration. If there is a winch wire, then you're better off replacing it with a strap, as this is a much safer option. Inspect the winch mechanism for jammed or worn pawls.

Trailer board - check that there is one, and that all lights are working.

Finally - try your prospective RIB purchase on the water.



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#### **RNLI**

The Royal National Lifeboat Institution is a registered charity that saves lives at sea. It provides, on call, the 24 hour lifeboat search and rescue service to 50 miles out from the coast of the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland, and a beach lifeguard service on 57 beaches in the south west of England. There are 232 lifeboat stations strategically placed around the UK and Republic of Ireland.  
[www.rnli.org.uk](http://www.rnli.org.uk)

#### **RYA**

The Royal Yachting Association.  
[www.rya.org.uk](http://www.rya.org.uk)

#### **Ribnet**

The original on-line RIB magazine, and an essential resource for users of rigid inflatable boats!  
[www.rib.net](http://www.rib.net)

#### **Sea Start**

Sea Start has been established for over 15 years in order to offer expert mechanical breakdown assistance to boat owners who suddenly encounter unpredicted problems.  
[www.seastart.co.uk](http://www.seastart.co.uk)

#### **Metcheck**

Find the weather in your area.  
[www.metcheck.com](http://www.metcheck.com)

#### **BIBOA**

BIBOA (British Inflatable Boat Owners Association) was set up in 1990 to help RIB owners not only to socialize and take part in events with other owners, but also to encourage uses of the boat that they hadn't considered before.  
[www.biboa.com](http://www.biboa.com)

#### **Small Ships Register (SSR)**

To use your RIB on the continent you will need to register it with the small ships register at a cost of £25. They will issue you with an SSR number which you must have printed and stuck onto the boat. The best way to apply is online.  
<https://mcanet.mcga.gov.uk/ssr/ssr/>

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