



TEST ZONE ▶▶



Our test team is led by Charles Hood, a BSAC instructor and DIVE's senior correspondent. This month he tests the Ocean Pro RIB, the Neptune II full-face mask, the Otter Extreme BC and from Transpire, a fleece top, trousers and socks. Meanwhile DIVE's editor Simon Rogerson checks out the Seemann Sub weight vest

OCEAN PRO
8M RIB

RIB, from £10,569,
Humber Fabrications: 01482 226100
DF140 outboard engine, from £8,822,
Suzuki Marine: 023 9282 6484

For the club looking for a RIB that's a little bigger, the Ocean Pro could have you purring with contentment

With the quietest of purrs, the massive thrust of 280hp generated by the Suzuki power heads pinned me to the back of the seat. The large, 8m Ocean Pro RIB effortlessly accelerated to her cruising speed of 38 knots within a few seconds – quite impressive as there were six fully kitted divers, two coxswains and myself on board. However, the most noticeable feature was actually how quiet it was. The twin four-stroke Suzuki engines were only just audible above the sea spray

being thrown up from the RIB's hull and the background diver chatter. I was on board the new RIB recently custom-built by Humber for DV Diving dive centre. We were on our way to a dive spot off the shores of Strangford Loch, Northern Island.

What's different about this RIB? In a nutshell – its size. According to Humber the company is increasingly being asked to manufacture larger RIBs. The reason, it says, is two-fold: firstly, more clubs appear to be getting lottery grants and, more frequently, dive centres are turning away from traditional hardboats to the much faster RIB.

David Vincent, owner of DV Diving, recently bought one of the RIBs and we joined him on his boat to put it through its paces. Vincent explains, 'They are safer at sea due to their incumbent buoyancy having large air-chamber compartments. They are also far more comfortable in harsher sea conditions, large enough to carry an arsenal of health and safety equipment, capable of carrying high quantities of fuel storage under

the deck offering high-mileage capabilities to sites which are not easily accessed by smaller club craft. And they are relatively easy to launch and recover, giving great flexibility of dive site choice in bad weather'.

Big RIBs require big engines. Vincent chose the twin Suzuki 140hp four-stroke engines. His reasons being that the DF140s match and, indeed, improve upon, the new low-emission requirements that are due to come into force in Europe later this year. Furthermore, despite being four-stroke engines they weigh less than the Mercury Optimax two-stroke and are lighter by a massive 40kg than the Honda equivalent, dispelling the myth that four-stroke engines are heavy. As well as being very quiet, the engines did not expel smoke when idling, a common occurrence with two-stroke and diesel engines. Twin outboards were chosen over one larger single engine due to the requirements set by the Maritime and Coastguard Agency. As the RIB operates in a commercial capacity it has to be what is



known as, 'coded'. The vessel itself must also comply with a whole book full of requirements which include having life rafts, life jackets, flares, first aid, electronics, build quality control, stability and swamp testing. Also, the craft must be manned by a qualified RYA operator. In most cases such individuals will be experienced in diving, navigation and fully aware of the health and safety aspects of carrying passengers looking after their life and well being. The RIB is designed to take up to 12 divers although for most of the time it will operate with eight as plus coxswain and crew.

How did it perform?

On first appearance the interior looked smaller than expected. The reason being that DV Diving chose to mount the console in the middle of the RIB. Furthermore, it has two seats aft of the helm. Personally, I would have chosen to have the console towards either the bow or stern, leaving the maximum amount of deck space. Moreover I would only have one seat. Out of the harbour on the open water of the Loch she was very stable. The water was not too rough, so to liven things up we kept travelling across the wake made by another RIB – the Ocean Pro dealt with it effortlessly. The engines were responsive and had plenty of torque. Our cruising speed was reached at about two thirds' throttle, leaving plenty in reserve for the extra two divers and kit that would normally be on board. Without steerage the RIB remained in a perfectly straight line. This is achieved through the engines counter-rotating. One spins the propeller clockwise while the other spins anti-clockwise, so any sideways pull from the



Captain's log

External length: 8m
Internal length: 6.7m
External beam: 2.6m
Internal beam: 1.5m
Weight: 700kg
Carrying capacity: 2,125kg
Maximum engine size: 400hp

propeller is cancelled out. The only niggling aspect of the engines was that the throttle does not lock into neutral. I prefer a locking mechanism, as it prevents the throttle accidentally being knocked into gear.

While our divers were in the water it was a pleasure to be able to admire the scenery without having smoke all around. If I have my say, the next RIB our club buys will have four-stroke.

About the boat:

The hull design is based on the Humber Attaque 5.3m, which is renowned for its high performance. The Attaque was chosen by Enda O'Coineen when he set the first world record for an Atlantic crossing single-handed in a RIB. An advantage Humber has when designing boats is its waterside factory location. This gives the company direct crane access into the Humber Estuary and North Sea, allowing extensive sea trials. Some notable features include a high, sheer bow giving a smooth ride in rough waters.

The raised, full-width deck gives a large amount of work space while the surface has been covered with an anti-slip texture. Underneath the deck is an airtight hull compartment which makes the Ocean Pro virtually unsinkable.



Engines

The lightweight DF140s are in-line four-cylinder DOHC (double overhead cam) engines with a displacement of 2044cc. To put it another way, Suzuki has managed to develop 68.5hp per litre, which is very high compared to its competitors. This high power-to-weight ratio has been achieved by a new air-intake system. In layman's terms, air is forced through a network of silencers and tubes before entering the cylinders. More air entering means more exhaust. So Suzuki has developed an ultra-low drag-exhaust mechanism. All this air is then subjected to what Suzuki calls its Multi-Point Sequential Fuel Injection (MPSFI). What all this technology gives the user is the optimum amount of fuel being burned. This gives high-fuel economy with maximum performance while reducing exhaust emissions to a minimum.

Nuts and bolts

Type: in-line four-stroke
DOHC 16 valves
Ignition: fully transistorised
Weight: 186-191 kg
Displacement: 2,044cc
Maximum output: 103KW
Prop size: 14in x 18in to 14in x 24in

the verdict

Quiet, but powerful and very big

Performance 8

Value 8