

LIKES

- Substantial build
- Astonishing agility
- Heavy Fendering

DISLIKES

- I guess I'm just not a 'banana boat' man!

RIBCRAFT 9M

Are you seeking a big, beamy offshore spec'd craft able to carry at least a dozen souls through virtually any weather? The Ribcraft 9m is 'just the job'.

So often we test RIBs just off the production line with no real idea as to what sort of person is going to end up the proud owner, so it made a great change to test a new boat that had already had a couple of months use and that had been bought specifically to earn a living.

When Mike Nicholas decided that his days of running North Sea oilrig safety boats were coming to an end, of course he didn't want a 'proper job' and wanted to use his many years of RIB driving experience to earn a crust. The coast around the Bristol Channel is very pretty and there are huge numbers of tourists now visiting the newly regenerated Cardiff Bay so it didn't take a genius to work out where he was going to settle or to guess what he was going to do. The rules and regs for taking paying passengers out for sightseeing trips by boat are onerous but this didn't put him off, so four years ago he took the plunge with his first 9m Ribcraft and hasn't looked back since. His business, Bay

22 RIB INTERNATIONAL

Island Voyages, has expanded steadily and now that son Richard has joined the firm, they needed another boat.

First Impressions

I guess there's no better advert than a returning customer and earlier this year, Mike and Richard returned to Ribcraft for a second 9m RIB. They learned one or two things from the first boat but there were in fact very few changes made to the second, which I guess says loads about the product. The maximum number of passengers they can carry is twelve (with two extra crew) and a slight modification to seat spacing has made it easier (and quicker) for loading and disembarking - important when time costs money. The helm position at the stern has been raised a little, but apart from that it's much the same boat.

My instinctive reaction to the two 225hp two-strokes was the huge cost of running them, but as the boat is used only for bona fide commercial work, the duty paid on commercially used marine petrol is a fraction of that which we pay on car fuel and hence running costs are not significantly different to running a diesel.

Layout

At almost 30 feet in length, this is a huge RIB and heavily constructed too! With an unladen weight of almost two and a half tons, you'd think it would behave like a

RIBCRAFT 9m SPECIFICATION

TECHNICAL DATA	IMPERIAL	METRIC
Length overall:	29' 6"	9.00 m
External Beam:	9' 10"	3.00 m
Draught:	1' 8"	0.50 m
Weight:	5,292 lb	2,400 kg
Carrying capacity:	15 people / 2,800 kg	
Fuel Tanks (2 x 136 litres):	60 gallons	272 litres
Sponson material:	Hypalon	
Chambers:	7	
Transom deadrise:	22°	
CE Category:	'B'	
MCA Commercial Category:	'4'	
Minimum recommended power:	250 hp	
Maximum approved power:	500 hp	

FEATURES

Single seat jockey console with access hatch	Stainless steel transom mounted towing eyes
Stainless steel backrest complete with padded bolster and rear grab rail	Aft deck collection sump with drain bung
Hinged upholstered seat with securing latch	Rule computerised bilge pump
Heavy duty No Feed Back cable steering with soft grip steering wheel	4" deck drainer, Elephant trunk style
'D' section rubbing strake	Under deck trunking system for all cables
External lifelines, looped with tube patches	Anti slip deck finish
Anchor locker, hatch & stainless deck cleat	Stainless steel bow winch eye
	Foot pump and repair kit
	Colour choice of hull and tube

OPTIONS (as fitted)

12 passenger jockey seats	Icom M421 VHF radio
Raised helm position	Ritchie steering compass
JRC 500F Plotter	Liferaft

PRICES (incl VAT)

Price (as tested)	£54,050 incl. VAT	With twin Mercury 225hp outboards
Price (from)	£48,468 incl. VAT	With 12 passenger seats and 2 x Suzuki 200hp 4-strokes

MANUFACTURER

RIBCRAFT LTD

EDWARD CLOSE, HOUNDSTONE
BUSINESS PARK, YEOVIL, SOMERSET,
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T: 01935 411846
E: jason@ribcraft.co.uk
W: www.ribcraft.co.uk

SPEED TESTS

Mercury 225hp Optimax Outboard

Sea State: 0.0-0.5 metres

From forward gear engaged to planing: 4.74 secs
(with two adults on board)

ENGINE SPEED	IMPERIAL	NAUTICAL
1,000 rpm	5.2 mph	4.5 knots
2,000 rpm	9.2 mph	8.0 knots
3,000 rpm	26.0 mph	22.6 knots
4,000 rpm	41.6 mph	36.1 knots
5,000 rpm	51.9 mph	45.1 knots
5,200 rpm	60.9 mph	52.9 knots

These speeds were taken using a Garmin 12 channel GPS measuring two (or more) equal and opposite runs

dog... but read on. The helm position is positioned aft on a raised platform with 3 x 4 individual jockey seats set out in front. The yellow hull and sponsons are broken up by black fendering and non-slip deck panels. I've seen so many yellow Ribcraft RIBs in recent years, I was beginning to think they'd bought up a job lot, but Mike specifically wanted yellow as it attracts attention and the kids love the idea of going out in 'the banana boat'. As you can imagine, it is bristling with safety equipment including fire fighting appliances and a liferaft.

Sea keeping, handling and performance

Two and a half tons and up to 14 on board - you'd think this boat would have the handling characteristics of an ancient Pacific 22! How wrong can first impressions be? We took off at a breathtaking rate to be planing in less than five seconds which is pretty impressive in anyone's RIB, but in a 9m one built like the proverbial brick what'sitsname, it was outstanding. But it didn't stop there; we continued on up to a staggering 52.9 knots, that's over 60 mph in US marine speed! Now you could argue that on a flat calm day it was no real test, but we went off seeking wash and found it. Still she rode the sea in a positive and dignified way with her 22° deadrise at the transom and I began to understand why Mike had chosen to stay with Ribcraft. His first boat had more than stood the test of time and maintained her clean good looks and this one was even better. The argument on fuel consumption goes out of the window when low duty petrol comes into the equation and, for uninitiated land lubbers wanting a thrill, what could be better than the deafening roar of those petrol-injected Optimaxes?

Value for money

At almost £55,000 including VAT this is a considerable investment and loads of trips around the islands will be needed to recoup it. But when you see the boat in action and the gleeful looks

MERCURY 225hp OPTIMAX SPECIFICATIONS:

HP @ Prop:	225
kW @ Prop:	165
Max RPM (WOT):	5000 - 5750
Cylinder/Configuration:	V-6 (60 degree vee)
Displacement (CID/cc):	185.9/3032
Bore & Stroke (in):	3.63 x 3.00
Bore & Stroke (mm):	92 x 76
Cooling System:	Water-cooled w/ thermostat & pressure controlled
Ignition System:	PCM 038
Starting:	Electric
Gear Ratio:	1.75:1
Gear Shift:	F-N-R
Steering:	Remote
Alternator Amp:	60 (belt-driven)
Alternator Watt:	756 (belt-driven)
Trim System:	Power trim
Exhaust System:	Through prop
Lubrication System:	Electronic multipoint oil injection
Recommended Oil:	Mercury OptiMax/ DFI Engine Oil
Fuel Induction System:	2-stage direct fuel injection
Shaft Length (inches):	20/25/30
Shaft Length (mm):	508/635/762
Dry Weight (lbs.):	497
Dry Weight (kg.):	225
Warning System:	Overheat, low oil
SmartCraft:	Yes
CARB Star Rating:	2
Warranty:	3 years
Counter Rotation:	Available
Digital Throttle and Shift:	Available

FINANCE OPTION

Finance example supplied by the Bank of Scotland

Cash Price:.....£54,050

Deposit (say 20%).....£10,810

Number of monthly payments

(e.g. 10 years is equivalent to 120 months) 120

Amount to be borrowed:£43,240

(Marine Mortgage) 8.2% APR typical

Monthly Payment:£524.62

Subject to offer and acceptance

Bank of Scotland Marine Finance

T: 02380 333 467 www.bankofscotland.com/marine/

on the punters' faces, most of whom have never been in any sort of a boat before, you begin to understand that if you go into business seriously like Mike and Richard have, it is possible to make a good living if you have the right equipment and there seems no doubt that Mike and Richard have certainly achieved that.

Summary

A hugely substantial workboat custom built to tight requirements giving Bay Island Voyages just the platform they want to attract visiting tourists and introduce them to the thrills and spills of fast powerboating.

RobertAvis



BAY ISLAND VOYAGES

30 minute inshore trips £7 each (£4 for kids)

60 minute coastal passages £12 each (£6 for kids)

90 minute sightseeing of Flatholm island £18 each (£10 for kids)

120 minute sightseeing of Flatholm and Steephholm islands £22 each (£12 for kids)

Or hire the RIB for a private party (up to 12)

30 minutes £60

60 minutes £96



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