

Ducking the trend with Infanta's 6.0 SRI

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Call them ducks, RIBs, inflatables or whatever you choose, but these highly versatile boats are here to stay, even if their popularity has dwindled somewhat since the heyday of the rubber duck boom in the early 1980s.



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Here's an interesting snippet of history: The rubber duck, or RIB as it's known today, couldn't have come about without the ingenuity of an ancient tribe of South Americans and the vulcanisation process, the accidental discovery of which is often attributed to Charles Goodyear in 1834. Once the manufacture of vulcanised rubber had been perfected a multitude of uses was found for it, including the manufacture of water craft, which, before this, had either been manufactured from wood, or – unlikely as it seems – apparently even from sewn-together animal skins that were inflated by mouth.

We've come a long way since then, and over the past 20 years the South African boat building industry has established itself as a world leader in the design and manufacture of these highly versatile craft. These days they are used for family fun, off-shore racing, fishing, water sports, and as highly responsive and manoeuvrable rescue craft.

We were recently given the opportunity to spend some time aboard the all-new Infanta 6.0 SRI, yet another well-designed and -engineered craft to

emerge from this Swellendam-based inflatable boat manufacturer, who has been at the forefront of rubber duck/RIB manufacturing since the early 1980s.

Wide range of craft

Today Infanta Inflatables manufacture a wide range of craft, from their 3.6 SR, which can be powered by a mere 8 HP engine, all the way through to their state-of-the-art 7.5 SR, which can happily be propelled by no fewer than the brute power of 250 horses.

For the purpose of this review the 6.0 SRI was fitted with two 50 HP 4-stroke Mercury power plants fed by two 25-litre fuel tanks.

Conditions

On the morning of our review at Germiston Lake, the Highveld weather was clear and warm but there was a relatively strong Easterly wind, resulting in somewhat choppy conditions.

Launching the Infanta 6.0 SRI was a fairly simple process that, once mastered, can easily be done by one person, but as we always like to stress, many hands make light work and a far safer environment. 



Stainless steel finishings in the form of a bow rail, fold up boarding ladder, grab rails and ski pole makes the Infanta very pleasing on the eye.



Deck layout

Immediately striking was the vast amount of space on board – the boat has an inside length of a whopping 5.1 metres and a beam of 2.5 metres, which allows up to 10 passengers ample room to manoeuvre while fishing, skiing or simply enjoying a day out on the water.

Seating is provided by a large, well-padded bench seat in the stern section, additional easily removable seating for two adults at the helmsman's station, another seat for two people in front of the centre console, and finally, there's plush seating up front in the bow.

Versatile craft

RIBs invariably offer something of a wet ride, which is of course part of the fun of owning one of these versatile boats, but there's plenty of packing space underneath the various seats if you need to keep your gear dry; the capacious space beneath the rear seat is suitable for wakeboards, skis, cooler boxes, etc.

Standard features on the Infanta 6.0 SRI include an integral anchor box underneath the bow seat in the nose for easy access and operation, and a separate fish hatch in the same area. The floor of the boat is manufactured from a special non-slip deck material to ensure comfortable and safe footing at all times.

If you enjoy diving and wakeboarding, a stainless steel boarding ladder on the port side and a handy stainless steel grab rail running around the bow make getting back on board easy. Added to this is a handy grab rope mounted on top of the pontoons and running virtually all the way around the boat. The stern features a robust, stainless steel ski wing which allows for a variety of towing and water sport activities.

Deep V hull design

Once out on the water the Deep V hull, wrapped by the large grey and blue striped Hypalon tubes with separate compartments for buoyancy, really came into its own, allowing the Infanta



LEFT: Flares and other safety equipment can be easily accessed should an accident occur. CENTRE: The steering wheel is well positioned, giving the skipper good forward visibility. RIGHT: Each outboard has its own throttle and trim and tilt button.



The Deep V hull cuts through the rough and choppy water with the greatest of ease, providing all on board with a comfortable ride.

6.0 SRI to be calculatedly thrown around to no ill effect.

Instrumentation includes a speedometer, fuel gauge, engine hours meter, volt meter and two rev counters.

Other standard features include a galvanised breakneck trailer; boat and engine covers; and a full sun canopy.

If you're quite adventurous or think you might enjoy a night out fishing, there are full navigation lights to ensure complete visibility and thereby prevent any accidents. All safety equipment comes standard and is mounted in a watertight container attached to the stainless steel ski wing.

Performance

Power from the twin 50 HP Mercury motors quickly got the RIB onto the plane in around 4 seconds, although we found that it tended to lift the nose rather high on take-off; this is a problem that no doubt would not exist with more equipment and more people on board.

Once on the plane, the Infanta was a sheer pleasure to drive, both when making long, fast runs under full power and when shooting over the wakes created by other craft. And the Deep V hull provided a relatively soft ride even at high speeds. 



Conclusion

Overall, this is a very well designed and well finished luxury family RIB that offers a host of features while delivering outstanding handling and performance. At the time of going to press, the exact pricing of the Infanta and the Mercury engines was not available as the industry was expecting another round of engine price increases due to come into effect

on 1st July – just another sign of the changing times in the industry as a result of the Rand/dollar exchange rate. But fear not, with the three big boat shows fast looming on the horizon, we are sure there will be many special offers over the next couple of months.

For more information contact Boating International on (011) 452 0286 or visit www.boating-int.co.za. ■

At a glance



Test engines:	2 x 50 HP Mercury 4-Stroke ELPTO
Length:	6 m
Length on trailer:	6.5 m
Beam:	2.5 m
Inside length:	5.1 m
Seating:	10 people
Fuel Capacity:	2 x 25-litre tanks
Dry weight:	300 kg

