



The supercharged Mercury Verado engines are well matched to the performance hull.



The optional hardtop canopy on the R11, which also features a day head.



The R10 (left) with its inboard and transom step, alongside the R8 with an outboard and stainless steel rear arch.



Plenty of room to stretch out in the spacious forward deck with the optional sun bed.

Wild at Heart

Looking for a roomy tender with some serious panache? The New Zealand-built Cougar range should be on your list.

words: Matt Henry

With a long history in powerboat racing dating back to 1969, the Cougar brand has spent decades carving out a reputation in the world of high performance water sports. Today, with its lineup of rigid inflatable boats (RIBs) aimed at the consumer market, the Cougar brand is offering an alluring mix of raw, race-bred performance and stylish good looks, with the quality finish you would expect of a top-end superyacht tender. Although based in the UK, the Cougar boats available in Australia are actually manufactured under license in Tauranga, New Zealand, by Cougar Marine (NZ). The range is aimed at a broad audience, from day-tripping families through to adrenalin-charged thrillseekers – but also superyacht owners (who may fall into either category!). According to the Sydney distributor, Eagle Yachts, since its introduction to the Australian market at the Mandurah Boat Show last year, the Cougar RIB offering has been generating a lot of interest among this last group.

VARIETY SHOW

The Cougar range has four basic models: the entry-level R8 (8.4 metres) and R9 (9.00 metres), which both seat nine passengers, and the beamier R10 (10.15 metres) and the R11 (10.70 metres), which can take 10 passengers. However, in reality there are really six model variations to choose from, as the R10 and R11 both can be kitted out with an optional day head and cabin area for longer day trips. And with the addition of the full cabin R11 version with twin single beds, the Cougar brand continues to grow the breadth of its offering.

Cougar also offers a variety of engine packages to suit the buyer's particular performance demands and budget, with the choice of Mercury Verado outboards on the R8 and R10 models and Mercruiser inboards in the R9 and R11. Consider this: the base spec R8 (priced from \$69k plus options) comes fitted with a relatively "humble" 175hp outboard, while at the other extreme, the top of the range, twin-inboard R11 (priced from \$210k plus options) can be fitted with a 900hp petrol powerhouse! And there's simply too many engine options in between to list. Add to this an extensive list of optional extras such as teak flooring, carbon fibre dashboard, transom shower, forward sun-bed and seating, stainless steel rear arch, custom electronics packages, user-selected fender colours and many more trimmings, and you can end up with a highly-personalised package.

HOLD ON!

Step onboard the Cougar R8 or R9 and no doubt the first thing you will notice is the central array of 'saddle seats' for four passengers. These funny-looking perches can be replaced with a more traditional double bolster if you prefer, but Cougar assures us these are comfortable and highly-functional. With two grabrails protruding from the dashboard and others mounted on each seatback, the cockpit seems to shout, "Hold on! You're in for a ride!" But far from being a triumph of brawn over brain, Cougar powerboats have developed a reputation for the sort of sure-footed poise and precision movements associated with the magnificent wild cats from which they draw their name.

"The Cougars are a good sea handling boat with a great hull," said

Eagle Yachts sales manager, Brad Rogers, who regularly leaves the shelter of Sydney Heads for a bluewater blast up the coast to the Pittwater aboard the Cougar R8.

"The tubes add great stability and they are also ideal for coming alongside other boats without fear of damage, which is why they are gaining a lot of interest among the superyacht owners," he said.

The stepped hull speaks of this boat's racing pedigree and provides a level ride and speeds in excess of 60 miles per hour. From a performance standpoint, these RIB's are hard to top.

EASY LIVING

Moving on from the cockpit and continuing the tour forward past the central console, with its sporty, well-appointed dashboard, takes you up into a spacious bow area. This can be fitted out with a sun bed, chairs and even an optional table, or left open. Photos barely do justice to how much space there actually is up the front. This is a very usable area for relaxing at anchor, riding while underway or for use as a scuba diving platform, among a myriad of other possible options. In the R10 and R11 Cabin versions, there's also a forward day head with a hinged door for privacy – an ideal option for extended day trips exploring beaches and coves away from the yacht.

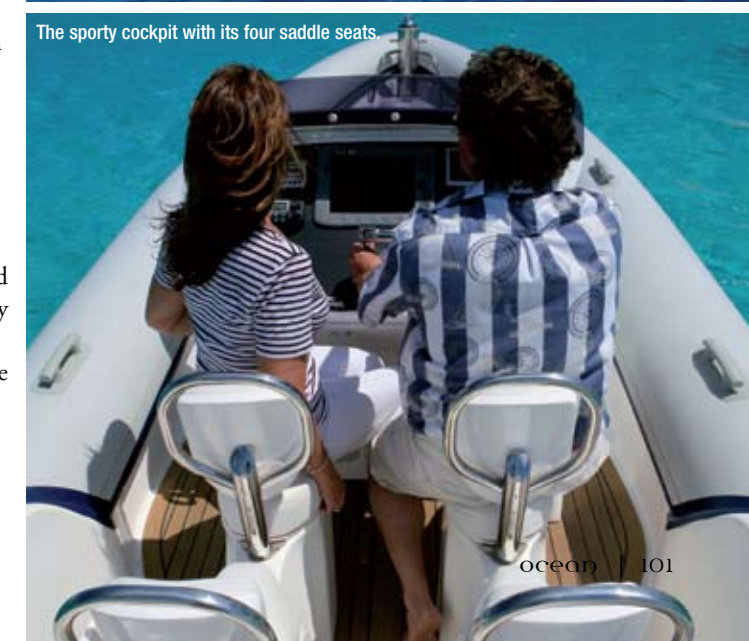
Bordering the entire hull are tapered, seven-section Hypalon tubes, which are guaranteed for 10 years. In addition, because they are raised out of the water most of the time, they rarely if ever require anti-fouling. Cougar hulls also come with a five-year warranty.

With the power and poise of a big cat, there's not much that will stand in the way of one of these Cougar RIBs. All that's left is a simple ultimatum: will you be predator or prey?

For further information contact Brad Rodgers at Eagle Yachts, Tel: (02) 9660 6022 or email brad.rodgers@eagle-yachts.com.au



There's a good reason for the grabrails in the cockpit!



The sporty cockpit with its four saddle seats.