



**Top:** The Silver Line 650 clung to the sea during high speed turns  
**Right:** The simple and solid dash console  
**Below:** The built-in bow roller and cleat for secure mooring



# Silver Line Speeding

Nautech's range of Grand Boats proves the modern RIB is not a lot of hot air

I do believe it was the French Navy officer and biologist Alain Bombard in the 1950s who was the first to combine the idea of an outboard engine, a rigid floor and a boat-shaped inflatable, but despite the idea being embraced by legendary diver Jean-Jacques Cousteau, the armed forces and commercial markets, it still took many years for the idea of a 'rubber dinghy' to filter into the

yacht owning consciousness. Even as late as the early 1980s, having an inflatable tender was often seen as a novelty and it was not uncommon to be jeered at while inflating a tender with the ubiquitous foot pump. How times have now changed in the major yachting markets, such that it is almost impossible to find a yacht with anything but an inflatable to hand, which naturally led into the growth of the RIB market.



**Specifications**

**LOA:** 6.5 metres  
**Beam:** 2.6 metres  
**Weight:** 0.65 tons  
**Fuel Capacity:** 150 litres  
**Engine options:**  
 Outboard up to 175hp  
**Top speed:** 60 knots  
**Guide price:**  
 AED 80,000 (AED 130,000 w/ engine & trailer package) (US\$ 21,780 – 35,400)

Nautech RIBs are built in Canada and the Ukraine:  
 www.grandboats.com

Distributed in the GCC by Nautech  
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An acronym from the descriptive Rigid Inflatable Boat title, a brand new type of boating branched off from the traditional power/sail divide, providing a safer, cheaper and easily transportable way for non-yachtie watersports enthusiasts to get out on the water – and at speed. Using the wide inflatable ‘bumper’ to provide low speed buoyancy and high speed stability meant that RIBs could be built lighter and faster, quickly popping onto the plane without the usual hull weight a similar-sized powerboat would be carrying. Still not often treated as a ‘proper’ boat, some modern RIBs are approaching 20 metres in length, the rubber ‘ring’ being more of a fashion statement than a safety feature.

“It goes without saying that the GCC market is quite a particular place to try and sell into,” explained Jerry West, Managing Director of Grand RIB importers Nautech. “It will take time for it to mature, and the undeniable relationship that market growth has with the finishing of all these residential projects.” Standing on the beach at JASC, Jerry instantly noticed my anti-RIB prejudice. “RIBs are certainly not new to the Middle East – in fact there are a couple of companies building them here, but the market is still young and sees RIBs as more of a commercial/utility boat. That should change when people see the performance, price and functionality of the Grand series.” Bringing in four ranges from the Grand

portfolio, Nautech offers sizes from the 2.8-metre ‘boat in a bag’ tender, right up to the top-of-the range Silver Line Cruiser 650GL, which sat on the beach beside her smaller Golden Line 480 GL sibling, and bespoke RIB applications through the professional range, which comes with a thicker High Stepped Hull and stronger tubes to provide 80-knot speeds.

Pushing the Silver Line 650 off the beach, the deep-V hull immediately bit to demonstrate her inherent stability, yet at the same time offered no excessive weight to drag around. “The advantage of a RIB is that you can make weight savings in the hull as the inflatable chambers act as stability at slow speeds or when turning,” continued Jerry. “So with only a single 175hp outboard we can easily get 60 knots on flat water.” Certified for up to 12 guests, the sturdy Hyperlon tubes, which are not integral for the buoyancy of the RIB, are split into five chambers on each side for added safety and sport strong webbing handholds and built-in grabrails around the bow area.

Built off a standard platform, all the units that make up the RIB are bolted on, so can be chosen to suit the needs of the owner, or removed and replaced as the purpose of the boat alters. For instance, the central twin bolster seat console with windshield could be replaced with straddle suspension seating for four divers. In this model’s current layout, the bow area allowed for three people to sit comfortably, or with the inclusion of a fill-in panel, the whole bow area turned into a sunpad. With a solid GRP prow built into the tubing to accommodate the bow pop-up cleat,

an anchor could easily be launched from the deep anchor locker through the roller to allow the tender to rest to her own tackle for a substantial time, without any concern over wear to the tubing. Due to the maximum 1.5-metre interior beam, with the addition of the central console, moving around the deck was quite tight, but this was something I found to be of benefit when travelling at speed, as it meant the body was constantly braced, and there were always plentiful handholds.

With the hull accommodating an integral stainless steel fuel tank and buoyancy, it is left to the external structures to provide storage, which is to be found in the forward anchor locker, under the double-folding transom seat (where the batteries are also to be found) and in the hollow central console. Above the double transom bench seat, the chunky radar arch allows for all communication and navigation antennae to be elevated for reception and to be kept out of the way. Dropping a shadow down on the outboard bilge, the innovative hull design indicates why it can achieve such high speeds, with a diffuser stretching out from the hull either side of the prop to ensure a smooth flow around the tubes. This does not disturb the bathing ladder that drops down to allow easy access back on board for anyone getting out of the water, with an automatic bilge pump clearing any water brought back on board quickly.

While the whole boat can be sheltered with an optional bimini, for fishing or greater performance, the open model gives a more uninterrupted view around when sliding behind the helm console. Opting for a braced

**Clockwise from main:** Nautech recommends the four-stroke Suzuki for quiet operation, performance and maintenance; banking required holding on; rising quickly onto the plane; riding high is good for head-on waves  
**Right:** Plenty of deck space for toys or guests  
**Below:** The Golden Line behind her Silver Line sister



Words: Toby Haws Photography: Efraim Evidor



**Above:** While not currently a common sight, RIBs will undoubtedly take off as the population increases

**Left:** The windshield provides good helm protection

**Below:** Sizes for all activities

standing position over sitting on the drop-down seat, the wheel and throttle came instantly to hand, and it felt almost too natural to power up having passed the speed restricted area. Popping out and on the plane at just over 12 knots, the log needle rose like the speedo of a Ferrari right up to our 48-knot best run of the day. What impressed me the most was the seeming effortless required for the RIB to hit such speeds, without any real need for trim or balance consideration. The windshield was exceptionally effective in protecting the helm and co-pilot from the ravages of wind travelling at such speeds, further adding to the driving experience.

While immensely fun and safe to drive, even throwing the helm over at 30 knots did not phase the hull in any way, the ride in the smaller Golden Line 480 was a different kettle of fish. As reactive as a waterjet boat, the smaller hull easily leapt through the waves, the direct steering needing constant control and the over-powered motor providing an instant g-force. Playful and powerful, an ideal ski boat or fast yacht tender. **BOME**



## Verdict

While conditions did not allow us to test the Silver Line in rough conditions, the small chop created by the Golden line RIB was chewed through as if it didn't exist. Often entry level boats leave the owner with a taste for more, but with this RIB package, Nautech are certainly offering one of the cheapest ways to get out on the water at high speed. However, with only one outboard, running costs are also considerably reduced compared to a traditional sportsboat. Great fun in a safe and purposeful boat, my attitude towards RIBs has certainly been challenged.