

Looking for a used RIB?

# Your Ultimate RIB Buyer's Checklist

*"The Bitterness of poor quality remains long  
after the sweetness of low price is forgotten."  
(Benjamin Franklin)*

By Medianaut for RIBsONLY.com

In Collaboration With:

Adam Younger, Andy Squirrell,  
Arjen Maan, Fraser Mackie,  
Mike Tilley, Petter Martens  
René Haar, Robin Kilroy,  
Roy Andersen, Tim De Rick,  
and Tom Bettle

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# Colophon

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This document has been prepared for informational purposes only and with the best of intentions. It is indicative in nature and may not be complete or fully comprehensive. No rights may be derived from its contents, and no liability is accepted for any omissions, inaccuracies, or reliance placed upon the information provided.

Virtually all second-hand vessels will exhibit some degree of wear, defect, or imperfection inherent to prior use and age.

Not all of these checks presented in the document may be feasible in every situation. It is the buyer's responsibility to assess the associated risks and to decide what level of compromise they are willing to accept.

Where doubt or uncertainty exists, a qualified and insured marine surveyor should be engaged, as they assume professional responsibility and carry insurance in the event of error or negligence.

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# Preface

Before buying a RIB, take a step back. It's easy to get emotional and fall in love with a boat you may not actually need.

Surprisingly, budget shouldn't be your first consideration. Instead of starting with limitations, start with possibilities.

Begin by honestly answering these 4 questions:

## What Am I Going to Do with the RIB

Will you use the RIB for fishing, diving, racing, weekend trips, or relaxed cruising with your family?

If your focus is family boating, choose a size that comfortably fits everyone and offers enough storage for what you bring on board. For diving and fishing extra room on deck is required.

## How Frequent Am I Planning to Use the RIB

If you plan to use a RIB only during certain short times of the year, weigh your needs against how often you'll use it.

For the price of a new RIB, you can often charter one instead, making many chartering a more practical choice for occasional use.

## What's My Navigation Area

For calm inland waters, a wider RIB is suitable due to stable conditions.

For offshore or rougher seas, choose a RIB of at least 6 meters, as greater length improves performance in challenging conditions.

## What Distance Will I Be Covering

Whatever distance you plan to travel, ensure your RIB has sufficient fuel capacity.

Always carry an extra fuel canister on board (say 20 liters) for your own safety and to assist another skipper if needed. We take care of each other on the water.

# Here We Go

Buying a used RIB can be an exciting step but it will also raise plenty of questions.

That's exactly why this RIBs ONLY checklist exists.

Remember Benjamin Franklin's saying:

**"The Bitterness of poor quality remains long after the sweetness of low price is forgotten."**

This document is the result of hands-on experience from trusted marine specialists in the RIB market, each bringing their own expertise and perspective.

The guide is structured around two main sections.

## About Part 1: Your First Encounter

The first part is designed for the early stage when you're going to look at a RIB without an immediate intention to buy.

It helps you understand what to look for, what questions to ask, and how to build a solid foundation of knowledge so you can assess boats with a trained eye.

## About Part 2: Choosing the RIB

The second part is a thorough deep dive for the moment you're ready to move toward a purchase.

This section goes much deeper, covering detailed checks and considerations that matter when you're seriously evaluating a RIB and preparing to commit.

Whether you're just starting your search or getting ready to buy, this section is here to guide you clearly, practically, and with the insight of professionals who know RIBs inside and out.



# Part 1: Your First Encounter

## 1 :: Introduction - The Anatomy of a RIB

### 1.1 Congratulations on Your Decision

A Rigid Inflatable Boat (RIB) is without question one of the most versatile boats on the water. I assume you know what a Rigid Inflatable Boat is. Buying a RIB is fundamentally different from buying a traditional motorboat.

### 1.2. Why?

Because finding the perfect RIB for you is a process. It can take weeks, months or even a year or more. That is not unusual.

You're also dealing with a hybrid construction. The magic of a RIB lies in the combination of a rigid hull (for performance and directional stability) and inflatable tubes (for buoyancy and stability).

However, this connection is also the weakest link to check. Unlike a conventional fiberglass boat, a RIB requires you to assess the bond between two completely different materials.

### 1.3. Why this Checklist is Essential

In this guide, you'll learn how to inspect a used RIB like an expert so you can spot a "bad buy" instantly. You are going to spend a lot of money so take the process seriously.

### 1.4. The Golden Tip

If you cannot afford to lose the money you are investing then contract an experienced marine surveyor.

This surveyor will usually find more faults to negotiate money off or to be repaired than their contract cost. It is often money well spent.

See the Disclaimer earlier in this document.

## 2 :: The Hull Is the Backbone

### 2.1. Must Know Information

The hull determines how the boat behaves on the water. Whether fiberglass (GRP), aluminum or DANU, damage here is often structural.

### 2.2. Checklist

#### ☐ Osmosis Check (Fiberglass):

Run your hand along the underside of the hull. Do you feel small blisters (like pimples)? This may indicate water absorption in the laminate. Walk away.

#### ☐ Aluminum Corrosion:

On aluminum hulls, look for white powdery spots (electrolysis). This usually points to electrical issues or poorly maintained anodes.

An anode is a sacrificial metal piece attached to the hull or other underwater metal components to prevent corrosion.

It works by corroding in place of the more important metal parts, protecting the boat's structure and equipment from electrochemical damage caused by water and electrical currents.

#### ☐ Keel Damage:

Inspect the entire length of the keel. Deep scratches penetrating the laminate can allow water into the core. A very bad situation.

#### ☐ Deck-to-Transom Connection:

Walk across the deck. Does it feel soft or spongy in certain areas? This often indicates a rotted wooden core beneath the fiberglass or a weak/damaged construction. Stay away from a RIB in this condition as it is unsafe.

## 3 :: The Tubes - The Life Support System

### 3.1. Must Know Information

Replacing tubes is one of the most expensive repairs on a RIB. Identifying the material is step one.

### 3.2. Checklist

#### ☐ Hypalon, PVC or Poly-urethane (PU):

Check the seams: glued overlaps usually indicate Hypalon (durable, costly), welded seams often PVC but could be PU. Hypalon may show light abrasion and small loose threads at the seams; PVC can become sticky from UV. PU turns brown due to UV. PU is the strongest material if properly sealed.

#### ☐ The Soapy Water Test:

Bring a spray bottle with soapy water. Spray valves and seams bubbles mean leaks. On valves, try and create a single bubble over the centre, if bubble grows, you have a leak, a brush might be easier for this. Sometimes they are repairable or replaceable. Ask why it didn't get repaired. Leaking seams on PVC or PU tubes are rarely repairable.

#### ☐ UV Degradation:

Signs of UV degradation vary between materials, Hypalon goes dry and chalky sometimes flaky in extreme cases. PVC goes sticky and PU turns brown and threads become visible, then top layer is lost and thread is then touchable too.

#### ☐ Repairs:

Small patches are acceptable but are they located in critical areas (near the transom or bow)? Large repairs may indicate a torn internal chamber. Re-tubing can be done but is very costly (thousands).

#### ☐ Mould Could Be the Deal Breaker

Mould typically develops in damp, poorly ventilated environments, such as under a RIB cover that does not adequately repel water and/or when the boat is stored in a humid location.

If the tubes show small spots, this may indicate the presence of mould. Some surface mould can be removed. But if it proves persistent or deeply embedded, the mould is usually a living mould and will continually reoccur. It has no effect structurally, but is unsightly. It is best to walk away.

## 4 :: Engine & Systems: The Heart of the RIB

### 4.1. Must Know Information

On a RIB, the transom endures enormous forces due to the leverage of the outboard engine.

### 4.2. Checklist

#### ☐ Transom Stress Test:

Shake the engine leg side to side. If the transom flexes or you see cracks near the bolts, proceed with caution. Best to leave that RIB alone.

Look for stress cracking in the gel coat. Especially around transom areas. Whilst not always a major issue it can be a pointer and shows where to investigate further.

With older boats be careful to check that if they have been re-engined that the weight of the newer engine has not gone above the recommended weight of the boat manufacturer.

#### ☐ Hydraulics:

Turn the steering fully left and right. Check for smooth movement and oil leaks. No hydraulic steering is not an issue.

#### ☐ Electrical System:

RIBs often have damp bilges. Check whether the wiring is marine-grade (tinned copper) or standard copper wire showing green corrosion. They're in the console and in the aft box.

#### ☐ Fuel Tank:

Do you smell strong fuel odours inside the console or hatches? Built-in fuel tanks in RIBs are difficult and costly to replace.

#### ☐ Oil check:

Check the oil for metal particles. These are signs of serious wear. Bring a mechanic to test it if needed. Think twice before buying that RIB.

## 5 : : The Sea Trial – The Moment of Truth

### 5.1. Must Know Information

A RIB on the trailer almost always looks good. On the water, the truth comes out. Don't forget to put the kill cord on your leg before leaving. It cuts the engine in case of falling in the boat or in the water. And of course wear a life jacket.

Try to pick a day that reflects the kind of conditions you would use the boat in. Also be sure to try a boat in various directions of sea. It is very easy for a seller to show a boat in best light by being selective with sea conditions and directions.

### 5.2. Checklist

#### ☐ Your Position at the Helm:

The driving position should be adjusted in such a way that you can nearly reach and read all instruments easily, and that while in action. You should be able to maintain a good, upright seated posture.

#### ☐ Cold Start:

Ensure the engine is started cold for the first time. A warm engine can hide starting issues. Make sure the red kill cord is attached to your leg.

#### ☐ Cavitation Check:

Apply full throttle from standstill. Does the propeller ventilate (lose grip)? This may indicate incorrect engine height or wrong propeller selection. The engine height can be addressed but the cost may be high.

#### ☐ High-Speed Turns:

Execute a sharp turn at speed when safe to do so. Observe the tubes, they should stabilise the boat not grab, chatter, or vibrate.

#### ☐ Water Ingress:

After the run, inspect the bilge. A few drops are normal. Liters are not. Identify the source. This could be a deal breaker.

## 6 : : Documentation

### 6.1. Must Know Information

Without proper documentation, your investment loses its resale value instantly. Also do read this first: [What Exactly Do the CE Certifications Stand For?](#)

### 6.2. Checklist

#### ☐ HIN Code And CE Plate, Now Called WIN:

You find both usually on the transom. Do the hull numbers match the paperwork? Missing CE certification often indicates illegal import, home construction or a very old boat (built prior to June 16th 1998 in the EU).

In this article you can find the description of all CE categories. Make sure to read it beforehand. It impacts what your RIB is capable of and what not. The insurance will investigate it in case of an accident.

#### ☐ VAT Status:

Can VAT payment be proven (original invoice)? This is essential for international travel within Europe.

#### ☐ Service History:

Engine maintenance invoices are worth far more than the seller's verbal promises. Check the intervals of the maintenance. If none are present, you should walk away.

#### ☐ Chain of History:

It is useful to have the full history of previous owners from new. This usually with an invoice or a bill of sale from one owner to the next. This chain of title proves the ownership trail and shows it has never been stolen.

#### ☐ Originality of the Documents:

It is important you have the original paperwork and not photocopies. It is possible that if only copies are available then the boat may be subject to finance or a mortgage as banks will hold the originals until a loan is repaid.

## 7 :: The trailer

### 7.1. Must Know Information

If you're planning to take your RIB on the road, the trailer must be safe and well maintained.

### 7.2. Checklist

#### ☐ ID Plate:

You find it mostly on the side of the trailer. Does it match the paperwork? A missing ID often indicates an illegal import, home made or a very old one.

#### ☐ Condition:

When was it last serviced? What condition is it in? Does the rated weight on the plate match the approximate weight of the boat? Does the boat significantly overhang the back of the trailer?

Trailer safety on the road is critical, both for you and other road users. That's why you have to check the brakes and its cables if it has an automatic brake system.

It is not that easy to check for it requires the seller to drive the trailer and perform an emergency brake. If you feel (or hear) the trailer bumping the car, it needs service.

If the jockey wheel does lift when you hang on the transom then the boat is mounted too far aft on the trailer, or the trailer may be too small.

#### ☐ Paperwork:

Without proper documentation, your trailer loses its resale value. Ask for the original invoices of maintenance and most of all, the official proof of purchase.

## 8 :: Extra

### 8.1. Need Help with Your Final Decision?

At RIBsONLY.com, I offer over 2,200 videos and 2,500+ articles to help you understand every aspect of the Rigid Inflatable Boat. Including a how-to category. Use the search option or click the link in the footer: [All RIB Brands in One Spot](#)

### 8.2. RIBsONLY.com Is Here for You!

#### 1. The blog

Visit the blog for many video reviews and to stay informed.

If you already heard of a brand or have one in mind, go to the brand list page you find in the footer of the website ([All RIB Brands in One Spot](#)).

There are more than 280 RIB brands.

#### 2. The Facebook Group

Gather and share information via the Facebook group "[RIBs ONLY 2.0 - Home of the Rigid Inflatable Boat](#)" community. We're glad to help.

In this group no sales are allowed. For that information visit "[RIBs ONLY Sales 2.0](#)".

#### 3. The RIBs ONLY Insider

The weekly newsletter delivers the latest news straight to your inbox. You can subscribe here or share the link: [Get the RIBs ONLY Insider](#)

# Part 2: Choosing the RIB

You've chosen your preferred size, brand(s), aesthetic and budget and have now seen the RIB that is the best compromise for you.

## 1. Checklist Description

### 1.1. Next Step Is to See The Boat in Person in a Deep Dive

Here are some key things to check/look for:

The amount of due diligence you do will depend on your knowledge, the price of the boat and how much tolerance you have for unexpected costs (its wise to factor in 10% of the purchase price to fix issues and for changes to make it yours).

If you have little experience or the cost is high, try to take someone more knowledgeable with you, or a professional. It's super important that you don't let emotion rule you during this process.

### 1.2. Know When to Walk Away

Virtually all second hand boats will have some level of defect.

Small defects can be fixed before purchase or a reduction in the price. Larger defects can lead to large discounts if you have the time, patience and money to fix them. You could end up with a boat you couldn't otherwise afford.

Unless there are multiple issues, get professional advice is the best thing to do.

The boat won't lie to you, but the seller will. If you don't trust them it's time to walk away.

Don't be pressured by "there's 3 people waiting to see it", especially if it's been up for sale for a while.

### 1.3. First Thing to Look At Is the General Condition

What is your first impression? Ask if the boat has been stored in a dry place.

The advert says "engine flushed in freshwater after every use" but there's mould on the tubes, leaves in the bilge, rips in the upholstery.

Do you believe the basic maintenance has been done, never mind the hard/expensive stuff? If there are layers and layers of anti-foul on the hull build up this suggests a lack of appropriate care to strip it back before applying new stuff.

## 1.4. Tubes

It's important to know the age of the tubes. The glue is just as important as the fabric and decent fabric doesn't automatically mean degrading glue or vice versa.

If the tubes are 15 years old or more, you should factor in the cost of a e-tube within the next few years. The cost can be significant, depending on the size of the RIB.

The owner may not allow this: if they are equipped with overpressure valves go as close to the opening pressure while doing an overpressure test and leak test with soapy water. No overpressure valves? 1,5 time the stated working pressure. Pull with some minor force on all fittings on the tube.

Check bonding strips, are there lots of small lifts or worse? The underneath attachments should be fully bonded onto the edge of flange and therefore there should be a smooth consistent line along the flange, if this is inconsistent, chances are the strips are pulling away from the tubes.

Cone ends and cone panel seams are very common places for leaks to occur on PVC tubes. If this is the case, the issue is only going to be resolved via a retube. These looks are caused by the PVC cone ends going brittle or the PVC tube material going brittle due to work hardening causing cracking and therefore leaks.

PU tubes are difficult and uncommon to repair which is a limiting factor of the material, this should be taken into account when purchasing the RIB.

Stay clear of painted tubes, this is usually done as a last resort fix and is likely to be hiding a multitude of sins under the paint!

## 1.5. Electronics

- ☐ Do the plotter(s), gauges, light, VHF, stereo, radar all work?
- ☐ Are the charts up to date.
- ☐ Take a handheld VHF if you can and test the VHF on board or the handheld of the owner. If any issues insist on fix before sale or reduction in price.

## 1.6. Paperwork

Be sure to get all CE/documents, and be aware that CE category is approved by the builder.

## 1.7. Outboard Engine

- ☐ Make sure the documents include the outboard and its serial number. If different from the original VAT invoice, is there a VAT invoice for the new one?
- ☐ If possible, have a professional run a diagnostic protocol on the ECU. Also, check the cold start: does the engine start immediately?
- ☐ Take the cowl off and do an inspection for damage, corrosion, and fluids. It should be clean and dry.
- ☐ Check oil level.
- ☐ Is the engine already warmed up by the seller? Walk away!
- ☐ What's the condition of the prop? A new stainless prop will be up to a high amount of money and even fixing one can run into the low hundreds.
- ☐ Shaking the outboard will show bad mounts or a loose steering.
- ☐ Putting load with your knee on the tilted lower part will also show bad mounts but also show a weak transom.
- ☐ The owner may not allow this: You can even step on the rear end of the anti-ventilation plate and carefully jump a bit. If the transom flexes, step away.
- ☐ During the test run, the engine needs to reach the stated maximum RPM range and as close to its upper value as possible.
- ☐ Test run at least 5 better 10 minutes wide open throttle (push the gas handle completely forward).
- ☐ Is the engine well maintained? Does it look okay?
- ☐ Does the engine idle well?
- ☐ A four-stroke engine should not produce exhaust smoke. If it does, ask why.
- ☐ There should be no funny smell of what ever unburned residue.
- ☐ Fuel filter? If a boat mounted filter bowl is rusty, so is the rest of the boat.
- ☐ Smell the fuel. Does it stink and bites your nose like acid? It is bad and old.

## 1.8. Inboard Engine

Typically you ask a marine engineer to inspect the motor and they will plug into the ecu and take oil samples etc. This is usually contracted separately to a marine surveyor who will check the boat and give a high level overview of the engine.

## 1.9. Fiberglass Hull

- ☐ Have a good walk around on deck and check for cracks.
- ☐ Open every hatch and look for water / mould / cracks.
- ☐ Take out the drain plug at the outside bottom back of the RIB. How much water comes out? If it flows strongly for more than 20 seconds there's a lot of water in there so probably a leak in the deck or been stored for a long time without a cover.
- ☐ If it's a sealed bilge, this is a very bad sign.
- ☐ Some RIBs have so called "scuppers" or quite simply "deck drains" that canals the water that is on deck out.

## 1.10. Osmosis

Anti-foul can be used to hide a multitude of sins including osmosis. If it is or you're in any doubt, get professional advice. Osmosis never sank a boat, but it massively impacts resale value if not properly treated. If its not bad, and you intend to store the boat on a trailer or dry stack you could grab a serious bargain.

- ☐ Rough hull could be badly applied anti-foul.
- ☐ Pop the blister with the point of a key or pen knife. If liquid comes out that smells of vinegar, it's osmosis.

## 1.11. Aluminium Hull

For a soapy water or leak check, use a crack detection system on all welds and other areas that are weak points.

## 1.12. On Deck

Have a good walk around on deck.

- ☐ Open every hatch and look for water / mould / cracks. Can you move safely in the boat. Are the cushions in good condition, and is this also the case especially?
- ☐ Is there enough storage for your use or enough room on deck.
- ☐ If there are suspension seats, try them seriously. Do they bounce enough? Do they look okay? Are they maintained well?

## 1.13. Equipment

- ☐ What is on the boat and is it included in the sale?
- ☐ Fire extinguisher, lines, fenders, anchor, cover, kill cord, life jackets, etcetera. If you need to buy them yourself, it can add up to a significant sum.

## 1.14. What You Can't See Matters Most

From a technical perspective, when inspecting a used RIB it is essential to focus on what lies below deck. Take a marine surveyor with you to perform these tasks. He or she knows exactly what and where to look for parts.

- ☐ Assess the quality of the fiberglass work, the condition of the stringers, and the state of the fuel tank. It can be made of plastic, stainless steel...
- ☐ Moisture and mould can indicate weakened wooden stringers if the fiberglass does not provide proper sealing, which can compromise the structural integrity of the vessel.

# Conclusion

This document guides you step by step through the thorough and methodical process of assessing a RIB.

It helps ensure no critical details are overlooked and supports informed decisions based on observation rather than assumption.

Whether buying from a private seller, broker, or dealer, take your time and proceed systematically.

A RIB is a significant financial investment, and a careful inspection helps prevent unexpected costs, safety issues, and future repairs.

A patient, systematic approach builds confidence in your purchase and provides peace of mind on the water.

Also read the disclaimer earlier in this document.

Feel free to provide feedback of this guide through the website's [contact page](#).

## Why this Document

Created with RIB experts, this checklist makes buying a used RIB simple, exciting, and stress-free. By highlighting essential details and common pitfalls, it empowers buyers to make confident decisions and enjoy every step of the journey.

## Acknowledgements

My sincere gratitude and admiration are owed to the specialists named below. Without their expertise, this work would never have achieved the scope it truly deserves:

Adam Younger, Andy Squirrell, Arjen Maan, Fraser Mackie, Mike Tilley, Petter Martens, René Haar, Robin Kilroy, Roy Andersen, Tim De Rick, and Tom Bettle

## About RIBsONLY.com, Home of the Rigid Inflatable Boat

RIBsONLY.com is a blog dedicated to RIB boating, reviews, covering news, insights, trends, expert commentary, and so much more from within the RIB marine industry.

RIBsONLY.com does not sell RIB boats nor marine products.

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