

Searching for the perfect RIBs



SALTY DINGO

One man's search for his ideal RIB model has resulted in a new line of luxury offshore vessels arriving in Australia.

MAIN: All Ribco vessels are Category B CE Certified, rated to 200 nautical miles offshore and wave heights to 4 metres.

OPPOSITE: The Venom 44 is powered by three 350hp Verado outboards.



If you've been out on Sydney Harbour recently, you may have seen a sleek new black RIB come cruising by, looking like something out of a Bond movie or maybe just the most fun you're ever likely to have on the water. Welcome to the Venom 44, the first of a new line of luxury RIBs to hit our shores from the European manufacturer, Ribco.

On the water, the boat is the epitome of sleekness but up close too it looks stunning, a blend of ultra-cool design, clever space-saving ideas and top quality manufacturing. It's the sort of boat that gets jaded boaties excited again. How it ended up in Australia is the result of one man's search for his own dream boat.

After owning several different RIBs and gradually becoming dissatisfied with their overall design quality and substandard offshore performance, local businessman Oliver Workman embarked on an extensive global search for the best RIB he could find. It wasn't long until he came across Ribco on the Grecian seas and, within a week of speaking

with the builders of the brand, he knew the search for the perfect RIB had come to a successful end.

"As a long time RIB enthusiast, I was completely blown away by my first encounter with Ribco," said Workman. "The Ribco team are the most passionate group of people I have encountered in my 20 years of business.

"No Ribco product leaves the factory without extensive scrutiny by one of the founders and every vessel is sea trialled to ensure the customer gets the finest possible experience each and every time.

"The detail is incredible, the workmanship second to none."

From the Med to Sydney

Having discovered the boat of his dreams, Workman quickly realised there was an opening for the brand in Australia, particularly among RIB users looking for that next step up in quality and wanting to experience a genuinely offshore luxury RIB.

Coming from outside the marine industry, Workman took the opportunity to follow his passion for RIBs and launch a new venture in the local market. The result is Ribco Australia, the first branded office for the manufacturer outside of the Mediterranean.

Although new to Australia, Ribco is one of the world's most highly-respected RIB brands, especially throughout the Mediterranean. The company was founded in 1994 in Athens by Stelios Ladopoulos and Nikiforos Valerianos whose goal was to take RIB design to new heights by combining the benefits of an offshore hull with the appeal of a Mediterranean deck. The result is a design which ensures boaters can be confident of a safe passage even in challenging conditions without sacrificing the onboard comforts typically found in a superyacht tender or luxury day-boat.

"Having conducted numerous extensive sea trials to test the quality and handling of the Ribco RIB, there is no other manufacturer that can compare in quality or seaworthiness," said Workman.

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COVER STORY



Inside the cockpit of the Venom 44.

SALTY DINGO

Following a trend towards larger, more versatile rigid hull inflatable vessels, Ribco Australia is offering vessels in the Maxi RIB category including the 28 ST (two-step hull), the Seafarer 36 and the flagship Venom 44 model. All vessels are Category B CE Certified, rated to 200 nautical miles offshore and wave heights to 4 metres. Ribco is also planning to introduce new models later this year, including a new Venom 39 and a 32 variant of the Seafarer.

The eye-catching Venom 44, which has already been sold in Australia, will feature for the first time on the marina at the upcoming Sydney International Boat Show.

The sleek, completely sealed cockpit is designed by renowned Greek designer Nikos Manifis, featuring convex sides, sharp lines and rounded targa to complement the aesthetics of the hull. Powered by three 350hp Verado outboards, the vessel offers true offshore capability with its seven bulkhead

"It is clear the Ribco range is perfectly positioned ... as the most seaworthy, well-built luxury performance RIB on the market today.

hull construction able to withstand winds of force 8 and waves of up to 4 metres. With a solid fibreglass composite three-step hull, designed by renowned naval architect Lorne Campbell, the Venom 44 is able to handle choppy waters with ease. It features durable non-slip Hypalon tubes, hand-laid teak decking, spacious seating area with huge rear sun lounges, and a roomy onboard shower and toilet.

The electric/hydraulic steering system and Isota marine wheel with power steering delivers precise handling for a large RIB. The two bolster seats with hydraulic shock absorbers allow drivers to travel at 65 knots while sitting in comfort. The cockpit has full visibility and side curtains to fully enclose the cockpit in heavy weather.

"With the growth in popularity of larger RIBs in Australia it is clear that the Ribco range, including the Venom 44, is perfectly positioned to enter as the most seaworthy, well-built luxury performance RIB available on the market today," said Workman.

Ribco Australia is located at the Sydney Superyacht Marina in Rozelle, Sydney, providing local clients with access to new models ahead of other markets while also offering local support.

ribcomarine.com.au

EURONAUTICA BRINGS IN BELLA

SYDNEY-BASED agency Euronautica has expanded its line-up of models on offer by teaming up with Finnish boat builder Bella to bring in new brands such as Flipper and Falcon. Euronautica also handles the Compass boat range from Greece, presenting an impressive line-up of European-styled and manufactured powerboats.

Having originally teamed up with Compass a couple of years ago, Euronautica director Dan Hanoumis has been scouring boat builders across Europe looking for new brands to bring to Australia. There are literally dozens of boat builders across Europe producing powerboats on a small scale but Hanoumis was on the look-out for something very specific in terms of finding the right product for Australia.

"It took a good 18 months to find a factory to work with and that's where Bella came into play," he said.

The appeal of Bella according to Hanoumis is that the boats are all manufactured in-house in Finland, rather than block manufactured in Poland, there are four distinct brands being produced – Bella, Flipper, Falcon and Aquador – meaning there's something for everyone, the factory is staffed by people who are keen boaters and, although a sizeable manufacturing operation, the company is still small enough to care about everything it does.

"They just gelled very well, particularly in terms of the quality of finish and how the styling has evolved to be more appealing to the Australian market," he said.

Bella is also a third owned by Brunswick Corporation which means it has some very solid financial backing.

In Australia, Euronautica has kicked off the new arrangement with the Flipper models, a 50-year-old brand aimed at the higher end of the sports boat market. Hanoumis says the brand offers something unique to the local market in terms of style, form and function. For instance, the 600 Sport Top model, currently in Australia, offers a variation on a cuddly-style cabin but

without a bulkhead, creating a very roomy cabin and lots of deck space.

"My experience with Compass told me that customers are wanting more functionality out of compact boats. The volume market is the 6 to 7 metre boat sector but people are a bit over the old bow rider, they want something unique."

Part alloy, part glass

Other Falcon and Bella models are also on their way to Australia to augment the line-up. The Falcon range is something a bit different too, not just to Australia but throughout Europe, in that it combines a plate aluminium hull with a fibreglass cabin.

"Many markets are torn between alloy and fibreglass boats. The whole pitch of Falcon is that it offers the best of both worlds," said Hanoumis.

To help establish the brand, he is making the Falcon boats available to a group of plate boat owners in order to get first-hand feedback on how they perform as well as giving exposure to the brand on the water without having to rely on the vagaries of boat reviews.

It's a strategy which is akin to another unique feature of Euronautica called Compass Boat Club. This allows boaters to join for a very reasonable fee and have access to the range of Euronautica boats in and around Sydney. It's not a full-blown boat share scheme for its own sake but is more aimed at prospective owners who get to try out the boats with a view to maybe purchasing one in the future. The club can then be used by owners waiting for their own boat to be delivered.

Currently there are 16 members in the Compass Boat Club based out of Sydney Boathouse and Akuna Bay. For Hanoumis, the club provides a ready-made fleet of demonstration boats which also generates income. He gets first-hand feedback on how the boats are performing and it means that almost every day the boats are out on the water where they can be seen, generating leads rather than sitting in a showroom.

It's an innovative approach to reaching the boating market, particularly with brands that are new to Australian waters, and one which is unique to this type of boat.

While Euronautica is the exclusive agent for Bella and Compass, Hanoumis says his goal is to set up a dealer network around the country, supported by initiatives such as the Compass Boat Club. Currently Chapman Marine Group is the Bella dealer for NSW and Hanoumis says the brands are now 'dealer-ready' for expansion into other states.



"Customers are wanting more functionality out of compact boats," – Dan Hanoumis with the Flipper 600 ST from Bella.