Imagine this thrilling scene from an action movie. A rigid inflatable boat pounds through an ocean tempest to rescue a soggy victim. Its powerful outboard churns away at the surf and wide tubes buffet the roiling water. Piloted by a foul-weather-gear-jacketed operator, the RIB arrives to save the day. Scenes like this depict the noblest calling for a RIB. If a boat ever was built for emergency work, the RIB is it.

Indeed, RIBs nowadays are used for more rescue, emergency and service work by military, police and fire and rescue than ever before. However, manufacturers have greatly expanded how RIBs—also known as rigid hull inflatable boats, or RHIBs—are built and used. Some RIBs are utilitarian and built for durability, while others are loaded with comfort features such as soft seats, carpet and ski tow-eyes for recreational towing of tubes, skiers and wakeboarders.

For some, a RIB may be their only boat—the perfect launch for exploring the nearby water. For others, it’s the tender to a large boat or yacht, towed or stowed on board and ready to deploy when needed. Here’s a look at some of today’s top rigid hull inflatable boat builders and their models, and how they may suit your needs.

**AIRSHIP 330**

The builders of the Airship 330 concentrate on quality, safety and durability, with a nod toward high performance. The Airship 330 (33’ LOA, 10’ beam) features a twin-step hull design coupled with vacuum-resin infusion. The hull features varying density foam cores and vinylester resins that help make for a very lightweight but also an extremely strong structure. The tapered tubes offer all the benefits of a RIB yet also provide unique styling that makes the Airship 330 stand out on the water. A product of the lightweight structure is a top speed above 70 mph with twin 300-hp Mercury Verado outboard engines, while providing a 50-mph cruise speed and fuel economy of 2 mpg. The 200-gallon fuel capacity allows for extended time for cruising, fishing and water sports. The base Airship 330 comes nicely equipped and has unlimited options to help support any use for this rugged SUV of the water.

[airshipribs.com](http://airshipribs.com); (440) 967-1073

By Doug Thompson
Aquascan has been building custom yacht tenders for more than 20 years in outboard and jet-drive propulsion configurations. The Fort Lauderdale-based builder’s latest launch is the Aquascan WideDeck 12, part of the new WideDeck series. The Aquascan WideDeck 12 is built using hand-laid fiberglass and high grade Orca collars, which comprise the foundation for a tender that planes effortlessly and offers a smooth, dry ride. The WideDeck 12 (12’6” LOA, 6’1” beam) is designed with a spacious interior and yacht-quality detailing. Powered by a 40-hp outboard, top speed is 30 mph and the boat has a 20-gallon fuel tank. A mahogany steering wheel, mahogany railings inlaid with LED lights, stainless-steel seats and custom-colored collars and upholstery are just some of the limitless options available. The WideDeck 12 is built in the USA, with manufacturing plants in Fort Lauderdale and Palm Beach, Florida. Other models planned for the WideDeck line range from 12 to 18 feet. aquascanribs.com; (954) 463-0579

The Fossati Group has launched a full range of new Aruba fiberglass-hull RIBs. The product line ranges from compact tenders to full-featured center console models with offshore capability. The new Aruba Comfort Series appeals to users who carry multiple passengers and who travel through open water. Six tiller outboard models—the C8 (8’2”), C9 (9’3”), C10 (10’ 3”), C12 (11’6”), C13 (13’2”) and C14 (14’2”)—provide a range of choices. All Aruba Comfort models feature a double bottom with a constant V-hull and strakes along the entire length of the hull. This hull design helps get the tubes completely out of the water when running on plane for a fast, comfortable and dry ride with good manners in choppy waters. Aruba Comfort models are rated for outboards from 10 to 50 horsepower, with the largest C14 model capable of carrying eight people or a total of 2,440 pounds. All models are available with rugged inflatable tubes built using a choice of Valmex® PVC or advanced Orca® CSM material—allowing owners to configure a quality Aruba model that best fits their boating locale/climate, lifestyle and budget. arubaboats.com; (305) 257-1290
**EVOLUTION M10**

The M10 Jet is the smallest offering from Evolution Tenders at just under 11 feet LOA. This package was specifically designed for today’s yacht tender garages and small swim platforms. Equipped with Evolution Tender’s signature collared fender system, the M10 has a small footprint while allowing for comfortable seating of up to four adults. The RIB boasts abundant storage for dock lines, anchor and life jackets. Powered by a 110-hp Yamaha four-stroke outboard mated to a 155mm high-pressure jet pump, the M10 has plenty of get up and go for watersports or a quick trip to shore. This power package offers excellent performance and fuel efficiency and worldwide serviceability at hundreds of Yamaha-certified service centers. The M10 also comes standard with Yamaha’s vessel security system, which allows you to set the engine performance to 50 percent power to limit its capabilities or completely disable the ignition as a theft deterrent. In addition, the M10 is available with Evolution Tender’s full array of accessories, including Bimini tops, covers, custom hull and collar colors, as well as a wide assortment of upholstery, navigation and entertainment options. evolutiontenders.com; (954) 655-9060

**CHAPMAN TRANSITION**

The Chapman Transition is a yacht tender or family fun boat with monohull performance. Its 34-inch-wide hydraulic bow ramp provides easy access off the front of the RIB, and can also be equipped with a ramp extension allowing for a roll-on/roll-off wheelchair, a scooter or other boating gear. The ramp itself will lift four adults with no sign of stress. The boat’s V-hull provides lots of below-deck storage along with finished lockers under all the seats (and a bonus compartment in the outboard layout) so you can haul everything in one trip. The Transition is available in four models, 28’, 26’, 22’ and the new Beachcraft 20-footer with diesel sterndrive, jet-drive or outboard power options. All models have ample seating for 10 to 14 people depending on the model. Built to yacht-quality standards and CE certified, the Transition has a lengthy list of practical features: LED lighting; lockers that open without unsnapping cushions; comfortable walking room; toe-kick space under the seating; and lots of hand rails and cup holders. The standard electronics package includes a 12” touchscreen chartplotter, VHF and sound system. The ramp, folding helm and engine compartment hatch are hydraulic. chapmantransition.com; (954) 801-6551
Highfield’s Classic Line is designed for versatility and all-around performance, with models from 8’6” to 12’6” LOA. Like all Highfield RIBs, the Classic line features a maintenance-free, powder-coated aluminum hull with integrated transom supports for strength and durability. Conveniently placed lifting eyes make it easy to lower the RIB into the water and back on deck. Highfield’s CL310, CL340, CL360 and CL390 models feature a built-in bow locker, and upon order, the CL260 and CL 290 models can have the built-in bow locker or anchor well. The maximum horsepower ranges from an 8-hp outboard on the CL260 to a 25-hp outboard on the CL390. Highfield RIBs feature aluminum hulls and transoms—a lightweight alternative to heavier fiberglass-hulled RIBs. While marine-grade aluminum is highly resistant to corrosion and does not rust, Highfield goes one step further and powder coats all aluminum parts. The powder coating process electrostatically bonds the powder to the aluminum. Five different models of Highfield inflatable boats are available, from the 6’7” Roll-Up to the 17’1” Ocean Master. Every Highfield model includes a high-volume air pump, aluminum paddle and a repair kit, and tubes feature a heavy-duty fender or rub rail, flush-mounted valves for each chamber and are available in either CSM synthetic rubber or PVC fabrics. highfieldboats.com; (305) 257-1290

Novurania’s LX 750 is a versatile yacht tender and serves many roles—from transporting up to 12 guests to providing the platform for watersports activities. The LX 750’s refined design places emphasis on comfortable seating, easy boarding and a walk-through to the swim platform. The LX 750 (24’7” LOA, 9’ beam) offers proven offshore sea-keeping capabilities and the boat’s aesthetics set her apart from her predecessors. Wraparound aft seating with solid stainless steel supported backrest, modern console with instrument pod, and bow seating are creature comforts worth noting. With easy access to the LX 750’s molded-in swim platform, getting in and out of the water is enhanced by the installed swim ladder. A freshwater shower, custom hull and deck colors, teak decking, full electronics package, cushion fabric, and custom tube colors are available. Power options range from a Volvo Penta D3 220-hp inboard diesel to twin Yamaha 150-hp outboards. A jet version is available in similar sizes, and the Launch range is available in both diesel sterndrive and outboard models from 19’8” to 24’7”. novurania.com; (772) 567-9200
The new Ribcraft 7.8 pushes the boundaries toward ultimate adventure, and is built in the USA, headquartered in Marblehead, Mass., the birthplace of the American Navy. The Ribcraft 7.8 (25’ 7” LOA, 8’9” beam) is adept at handling rough seas, utilizing a signature deep V-hull to cut through the water and chop, while heavy-duty Hypalon tubes provide cushioning and seakeeping. The Ribcraft 7.8 provides a smooth, dry ride and serves as a multipurpose recreational boat. The center console has excellent offshore range and offers a 55-mph top end when powered by a 300-hp outboard. It features plenty of deck space for passengers, an optional T-top and water sports equipment. Seating options and configurations abound for all types of boating applications. The Ribcraft 7.8 was originally designed for safety professionals and military agencies. Designed as a fast response craft, this 25’ RIB with its long steep shear toward the bow and impressive deep V hull offers rough-water performance and safety.

ribcraftusa.com; (866) 742-7872
Walker Bay Boats is adding to its Odyssey RIB line with the Superlight Center Console. The design ingenuity allows for this 10-foot-long RIB to comfortably plane during operation carrying two average-sized adults. Powered by a 9.8-hp engine, the boat has a maximum load capacity of 1,357 pounds and is built using DURATECH™ foam core fiberglass construction. As with other Walker Bay RIBs, there is more V to the hull for a smoother ride and the hull shape deflects spray down and out of the wind so you won’t get wet as with other small RIBs. A flatter rear hull shape with a pronounced chine promotes earlier planing while being stable in turns. The Superlight is designed for ride comfort and legroom, and there are easy-to-grab stainless steel handrails. The dash can accommodate different gauges and additional options such as stereo, GPS and VHF radio, while the fuel tank has its own storage compartment in the rear seat. An innovative floor design has drain channels that keep water away from your feet and allow for a lower drain-plug location. walkerbay.com; (855) 307-3177
Williams Performance Tenders recently launched the second model in the Sportjet range, the Sportjet 520. The Sportjet 520 (17’1” LOA, 6’7” beam) combines the safety and fun of a jet drive with the high performance of the BRP Rotax® 4-TEC 200-horsepower engine. With a top speed of 52 mph it has the power to tow water skiers and wakeboarders. The boat is light enough to be towed behind a vehicle or easily stored on the platform of a yacht. The Sportjet 520 is also easy to handle around the docks and while underway. New features include a large sports platform area, rear-facing sports lounge seats, convertible backrest for sunbathing, folding helm with windshield, SeaDek footwell and platform, and large storage lockers. A windscreens, ski pole, navigation lights, and bathing ladder are fitted as standard. The convertible seat backrest can be folded forward to create a sun lounging area or provide protection from the sun by the optional bimini. A large bathing platform allows for easy access to and from the water. williamsjettenders.com; (954) 648-6560
ZAR's new tender line focuses on function, performance, and reliability, and the ZAR 49 SL (Sport Luxury) stands out from other RIBs in its class with its distinctive style. Built in Italy for more than 35 years, ZAR's product line ranges from 11 feet long to more than 33 feet long. The 49 SL (15' LOA, 7'2" beam) offers a deep-V hull for performance and comfort, and some owners use the 49 SL as their only boat. The boat's rigid bow structure allows for a more spacious interior and the ZAR 49 SL seats nine people and is easily able to get on plane. Powered by a 90-hp engine, the 49 SL runs to more than 48 mph and has good range with a 19-gallon fuel tank. Interior features include an anchor locker, three large front storage compartments and a wide rear-storage compartment. The center console area features a storage compartment, tilt-mechanical steering and a sport-drive steering wheel. Optional equipment includes front and rear sunbathing extensions, a telescopic Bimini top, a shower station, and Flexiteek decking. zar-formenti.net; (954) 712-1598
Zodiac’s NZO 760 serves dual duty as a high-performance craft while underway and an entertainment platform while at anchor or at the docks. The NZO 760 (25’ LOA, 10’ beam) is powered by a 300-hp engine that pushes the V-hull bottom RIB to a top speed of 53 mph. With a 75-gallon fuel tank, the NZO 760 has excellent range and a passenger capacity of more than six people. Features include a molded anti-slip deck, aft swim platform and self-draining cockpit. The NZO 760 offers entertainment areas on both the fore and aft of the boat. A new bow sunbathing system called Reverse & Sun, allows an extensive sundeck to be put in place quickly. A kitchenette incorporated in the leaning post includes a sink, hotplate and refrigerator, while the space inside the console can accommodate a chemical toilet for additional comfort. High freeboard, due to the size of the tubes and the unique design of the hull itself, provides a feeling of security inside the RIB. zodiacmarineusa.com; (844) 340-1300

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