

# SEA LEGGERY



## Walk in water.

It is early in the morning and we are waiting on the shore of some distant beach looking out to sea watching and waiting for the first sign of the mythical beast.

It starts as a small black speck in the distance and grows ever larger as it approaches. No sight of any engine noise yet as we begin to make out the details of its matte black form. There is no trailer or

" ...the wheels rotate to their 'cruising' position..."

winch in sight as the 7.1 metre long Rigid-Inflatable Boat or RIB roars worryingly close to the shore. Suddenly it slows to a crawl and approaches the beach with intent. A slight pause and then the 3 three thick, knobby wheels at the bow and stern of the RIB rotate down into the water and below the surface, take the weight of the boat and begin it to propel it towards the beach, then out of the





- 1. The solid looking nose wheel assembly is robust and performs steering duties
- 2. Even the rear wheels assemblies look and feel extremely solid
- 3. The inboard engine and fan, this makes the skipper's seat rather hot when used for prolonged periods and can burn your calves a little when standing at the console
- 4. Officially, there is space for 8 passengers, but in reality it can take a lot more
- 5. The fuse box is simple and well laid out, accessible at the bottom of the console
- 6. Looks complicated, but the folks at Sealess (bless their little kiwi hearts) have taken pains to make the whole thing easy to use and understand

water, then up onto the grass. The outboards have cut out now and the inboard engine is clearly audible above the lapping to the waves. Completely out of the water now and looking comfortable on the dry land, the Sealegs is standing tall as a crowd of passing fishermen gather around the craft to try and understand the strange looking contraption; a little too tall in fact as I wonder how we are going to get into the boat. As if on cue, the stern of the vessel begins to lower as the hydraulic arms attached to the rear wheels being to retract. The boat stops just short of sitting on the sand allowing us to step onto one of the enormous rear wheels and climb aboard the Sealegs without so much as a suspicion of getting wet. Off we trundle back into the sea and as soon as we are clearly floating, the skipper presses a button on the dash and the wheels rotate up into their 'cruising' position as the twin Rotax outboard engines take over the job of propelling the RIB.

The Sealegs is an interesting concept in the world of amphibious vehicles. It completely does away with the need for a trailer by using three electrically driven wheels, one at the bow and two at the stern of the RIB to allow it to drive itself out of the water and on to the shore. It will even drive around short distances on land, and climb surprisingly sharp gradients as well, for example you can drive it right up to your towing vehicle which may be parked some distance away, where it can then be attached to a tow hitch and towed away as if it was on a trailer.

On the water the 7.1m Sealegs, which is the big daddy of the range, behaves as you would expect for a RIB of its size. It is substantially heavier than comparable inflatables – largely due to the added weight of the inboard engine, larger batteries and the wheel assemblies. Nevertheless it is competent and very stable on open water and the deep-V front makes even the choppiest of seas a stable affair. The rear of the hull flattens out considerable



allowing the Sealegs to plane extremely comfortably and from a passenger's perspective, the craft is amongst the most comfortable in its class. The dead rise of 21° makes the Sealegs as at home out to sea as it does inshore and gives it a very sharp turning circle. The weight of the craft is very much loaded towards the stern, and at lower speeds

**"...they have succeeded where many automakers have not: there is a functional iPod connection"**

this is very apparent as the boat does struggle a little to get onto the plane at first. Even at cruising, there is definitely a weight bias to the rear of the craft and you may find yourself having to distribute your passengers around a little to get a nice weight distribution.

Heading back towards the beach and the inter-

nal engine comes into play. Switching it on and lowering the legs is a very simple process and clearly marked switches make the whole process child's play. There is a throttle lever to control the torque output from the motor, which essentially functions as a generator as the wheels each have a small electric drive unit attached to their hubs that do all the work. Driving forward and backwards is done courtesy of a direction lever that also controls speed (be warned, the Sealegs is not a fast mover, but thanks to the electric motors can handle some impressive gradients). Steering is controlled via the wheel and the steering mechanism is directly linked to the engine, so the engines turn with the wheel and the nose wheel turns with outboard engines – quite useful when maneuvering at sea as you only need to look forward to know which way the outboards are facing. Driving is very smooth, despite the agricultural noise generated by the inboard





+	<b>PROS</b>
	Fun to use
	Extremely practical
	There is nothing else quite like it.
-	<b>CONS</b>
	Very heavy and the weight distribution could be better
	Very pricey
	A bigger outboard could do no wrong

Prix indicatif sujet à variations : Rs. 2,400,000

engine and the steering is excellent giving good feedback. The knobby tires will tackle most anything except sludgy mud, where the 1.3 tonnes of the Sealegs may render things a little difficult. However on sand, grass and coral the craft is in its element. The standard drive is produced by the rear wheels, but there is also the option of all wheel drive for greater traction and control – very useful when conditions are a little slippery. The inside of the RIB is very functional and whilst

not quite Spartan, it is very reminiscent of a military vehicle. Matte black everywhere with lots of handles and storage compartments. The Sealegs logo is discreetly applied to just about every item you can imagine, whilst managing to remain tasteful. With approximately half a metre draft, you can imagine that there is a lot of space inside, however much of this is taken up with the centre console and the inboard engine block, underneath the skipper's position. A couple of nice touches

include a full 3-zone marine speaker system, navigation and spot lights and, it should be pointed out that Sealegs have succeeded where so many automakers have not. There is a functional iPod connection. So you can listen to your tunes out to sea.

The controls are kept as simple as possible. The lower part of the control position houses the breakers for the batteries as well as the fuse box for the various electrical functions. Higher up

