



# WELL, THEY LISTENED

Sealegs have listened to their customers and developed a very functional mid-sized day boat with a cockpit and cuddy cabin that Kiwis expect in a boat this size. Richard Milner checks out the first of their all new 6.5m alloy amphibious on a blustery Auckland Harbour.

Let's face it we all like a bit of cover whether we are lake boating, towing toys or taking the family to catch kai for the Sunday dinner table. With an amphibious boat such as the new Sealegs 6.5 you don't even get your feet wet. The Sealegs 6.5m offers the mum and dad family orientated day boater a sensible, practical, and considered option. It took some organising after the Auckland Boat Show to get a ride in the new 6.5. The response at the show was exceptional according to the boys at Sealegs, with constant demos in the weeks after the show. However, finally I got my turn and for a change Auckland harbour was not glassy smooth.

There is nothing worse than a flat calm day to review a boat and for a change Auckland Harbour had a brisk 15 knots NE with a short sharp chop and a few lumps to put this new boat through its paces. I must admit my first sighting of the boat was on the way to the ramp, as I caught sight on the road. It stood out and had mana. Its nicely presented with a wrapped hull and bright orange accents. I felt sorry for the tinny right next to it which frankly looked very dated. At the ramp it's always hard to get a feel as the boat is driven off its trailer – probably the most unnatural part of boating with an amphibious boat so we can put that aside. But I must admit that the boat was effortlessly and expertly taken from trailer to ramp.

## BOAT TEST\_SEALEGS 6.5M ALLOY CUDDY



### IN ITS NATURAL ELEMENT

On the beach the Sealegs 6.5 straight away had people looking. It's a testament to Sealegs for developing such a great looking, serious, and yet well thought-out boat.

At first glance it looked small for a 6.5m boat, but perhaps that was just that with the wheels down the boat stood high. More on that later.

The sharp lines and swept windscreen with tall topsides really stood out. The large negative planning strake to help move spray away filled me with enthusiasm for the moments to come. Down aft the outboard seemed about right at 150hp and the transom has a nice

feature of inbuilt two boarding steps. This is a really neat feature as you can climb up the wheels in the down position whether on the beach or in the water like a swim platform and then easily transition from the transom to the cockpit. I really like this clever feature on both sides. For divers or water toy enthusiasts this is a big bonus.

### OFF WE GO

I've spoken before about how nice it is to not get your feet wet and it still hasn't worn off that cheeky grin I get as I get on the boat dry. When normally I'm waist deep and even before I head out I am frankly ready to go home. So with all that forgotten, I learn how to drive the Sealegs on the

beach and into the water.

Firstly you will find the steering for the wheels easy to use. Two buttons and the Series 61 system powered by a Honda GX1800 petrol engine with its 28hp drives the boat effortlessly. A good feature is that the outboard and the amphibious system share the same fuel tank. Very convenient. On wheelie power the system is quiet and responsive. It's a three-speed system, but all through the test there was no need for the high speed. You have control over how fast you move and using the boats steering it really is just like driving a car. I love it. Once into water and with enough depth for Yamaha 150hp outboard, with the touch of a few buttons the outboard goes down and the wheels come up. Simple, easy and effective.

### PRACTICAL LAYOUT

The layout is very traditional Kiwi for a boat of this size, but Sealegs have made the most of a bolster seat for the helm which I felt was uncomfortably close to the windscreen grab rail for my size and build. Sealegs will move that if required to more suit the owner's needs.

It has a King and Queen seat on the port side with the forward bolster able to turn around for towing water toys or relaxing in the bay. Underneath is a tray system for your cooler bin, which I really like and haven't seen before. Nice one team.

Aft we have a centre bait board with drawers, live bait tank with the obligatory window and rubbish bin over the top of the engine for the wheels. There is plenty of storage in the floor for gear around the 80L in floor fuel tank.

The oversized helm houses a large 12+ inch MFD, stereo, VHF, Zipwake interceptor controls, gauges, inbuilt switches, and the wheel controls. Its functional and tidy. When

I say oversize Sealegs do plan to reduce the helm station, but their focus is still on comfort of the skipper as much as access to the forward cuddy cabin. The cuddy cabin is not designed for sleeping although I reckon a couple of kids could have a nap there. It's designed to keep your gear dry in a sensible place. Underneath there is two storage lockers of which the two batteries are housed. This keeps some weight forward which helps in the boats trim when underway. You can move around the cockpit of the boat with ease, and no one gets in the way. We had three onboard and it certainly wasn't cramped.

The boat came in this spec with an optional T Top and in the harsh UV environment in NZ I feel this is a key consideration of any boat. It all was solid, has a 1.9m standing head height and is well manufactured. For the fishing readers there are ten rod holders on the gunwale's and another six overhead in the rocket launcher so you're well covered. Up forward there is no bow rail but with the optional drum winch there is no need to climb up front.

### SO HOW DOES IT GO?

Under power it took quite a few revs to get the boat on the plane. As tested the outboard had a snag or two so the full power of the motor couldn't be demonstrated. Sealegs assure me that the boat isn't short on power and that it can achieve 38 knots. Although we could only achieve 27knots. In calmer waters the boat thundered along well but when the chop got up the boat felt a little small for a 6.5m and for good reason. The boat is marketed as a 6.5 from bowsprit to the rear of the engine, so people know that it will fit in the garage. But on the waterline its closer to 5.2m. Coupled with the 550kg of wheels which roughly equates to 7



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adults plus the three onboard it started to make sense why the boat just didn't go as I expected.

Having accounted for this my opinions changed and as a sub six metre boat it actually performed okay. Its not going to win bragging rights on a poker run, but that's not what this boat is all about. The bow cuts through the chop well and does move a fair amount of water clear. Of course, with the short sharp chop that means getting water over the windscreen and a potentially wetter ride, but for many in a boat of this size, the conditions were becoming marginal. Sealegs assured me more power would fix the hole shot and higher speeds were easily attainable.

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## BOAT TEST\_SEALEGS 6.5M ALLOY CUDDY

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### SO, WHAT DO I THINK?

I feel the Sealegs 6.5 is a clever all-round package in an already competitive market for the NZ boating community. It addresses many of the challenges we all face with water access, with crowded boat ramps. It makes boating more enjoyable right from when you leave your home and it is very easily managed. I would be very happy to take the 6.5 out on my own. A true testament to Sealegs .5 is when I reviewed it, Sealegs had already taken 26 deposits and already the wait time is more than 12 months. I do wonder how the boat will perform given its high weight for its waterline size with more power and I guess time will tell. My only other niggle is it's not a true 6.5m. Its 5.2m with large appendages. So, providing people are clear on that, I really like this example of kiwi boating in the midsize category and look forward to seeing them become a kiwi icon of amphibious boating. ↓

### SPECIFICATIONS

Design Name Sealegs 6.5m Alloy Cuddy  
Price \$NZ3777  
Year Launched 2023  
Builder Sealegs  
Hull Type Amphibious Cuddy  
LOA (Wheels Up) 6.79m  
LOH 5.20m  
Beam 2.31m  
Deadrise 19 deg  
Height on Wheels 2.44m  
Trailerable Weight kg  
Max Speed 36 knots  
Land Speed 10 km/h  
Construction 5mm Alloy  
Fuel Cap 80 litres  
Engine Yamaha 150  
Flooring U-Dek  
MFD  
Ent System  
Contact SEALEGS.COM

### PERFORMANCE DATA : YAMAHA 150

RPM	Knots	L/h	L/NM	Range (nmi)
1000	3.2	2.7	0.850	84
1500	4.3	4.2	0.980	73
2000	5.7	6.6	1.200	60
2500	6.7	11.4	1.800	40
3000	7.0	16.4	2.400	30
3500	8.2	25.7	3.200	22
4000	13.0	34.1	2.700	26
4500	17.7	40	2.300	31
5000	23.0	48	2.100	34
5500	27.0	61	2.300	31

Range is calculated on 90% of 280 litres.