

review

**Buccaneer  
550 Enforcer  
and Zodiac  
Open 5.5**

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# City Slickers

Rigid hull inflatables (RIBs) used to be the preserve of serious sailing coaches and Optimist mums but their comfort, safety and sparkling performance have got them noticed by a whole new market of boaties wanting flexibility and fun on the water.





**ABOVE**  
Buccaneer's new 550 Enforcer is a friendly, easy-to-tow fun boat.

**TOP** A new innovation from Zodiac - the Open series of RIBs.

**I**n the five-metre range, a RIB is a lightweight, easy-to-tow proposition for the family or bach owner who wants a sea-kindly nature, superb stability and ability to perform multiple functions. At this size they have a Swiss army knife, one-boat-does-it-all appeal that is beginning to be noticed by manufacturers.

On a cool and blessedly rainless Auckland morning, we got to sample a couple of the latest offerings in this range – from a local manufacturer diversifying into the RIB market with a new model, and a well-established international manufacturer who is reinventing the appeal of these fun boats.

### **BUCCANEER 550 ENFORCER**

Buccaneer has been manufacturing quality fibreglass boats for over 40 years. While its larger RIB (the Enforcer 630) has been in the water a couple of years the 550 has only just been released and fills the niche of a light, nimble boat on a single-axle trailer that has all the best features of its larger sister in a more affordable and compact package.

The 550 Enforcer has the attention to detail you would expect from Buccaneer. From the comfortable 6mm U-Dek floors to the well-engineered, welded PVC pontoons supplied by South Pacific Inflatables, the boat is a well-designed and finished package.

With 21° of deadrise at the stern carried through the deep-vee hull rough water performance is superb; any spray picked up by the hull is deflected by the chines or the pontoons making the ride both soft and dry.

The pontoons themselves are a maximum diameter of 450mm and sit on a substantial flange, which allows two-thirds of the tube to sit outside the chine giving maximum internal beam required to get the full walk-around experience. At rest, the aft sections of the pontoons are just touching the water, which gives good stability for fishing or picking up divers, skiers and wake boarders.

The pivotal feature of this package is the central console. There is a solid Perspex screen backed up with zip-in clears for wet weather. The dash contains analogue engine gauges and a 9-inch Lowrance chart plotter and



depth sounder. To port, the console is finished off with some vertical storage spaces, which collect all the gear that seems to accumulate around the helm station on any boat.

On the front side, there is a seat which cleverly disguises a hatch to the commodious dry storage area. Behind the console, the flip-back helm seats allow a variety of configurations to suit this multi-purpose vessel.

While the T-top bimini keeps the worst of the sun off and the support structure provides a sturdy handhold. At either end of the boat, there are a variety of seating arrangements for foredeck perching to the quieter motion of the stern seats.

The 90hp four-stroke Mercury provides more than enough power and its economy combined with the long-range 120-litre underfloor tank mean this is the ideal bach boat able to stay out all week without being restricted to staying close to a fuel bowser. Getting the power to the water is a four-bladed 13.5 x 15-inch prop, which seems to have quite a wide mid-range in an already powerful package.

On the water, the Enforcer 550 had the comfortable ride of a RIB with a distinct high riding, dry feeling at speed; the deep-vee hull soaking up the bumps of brisk southwesterly



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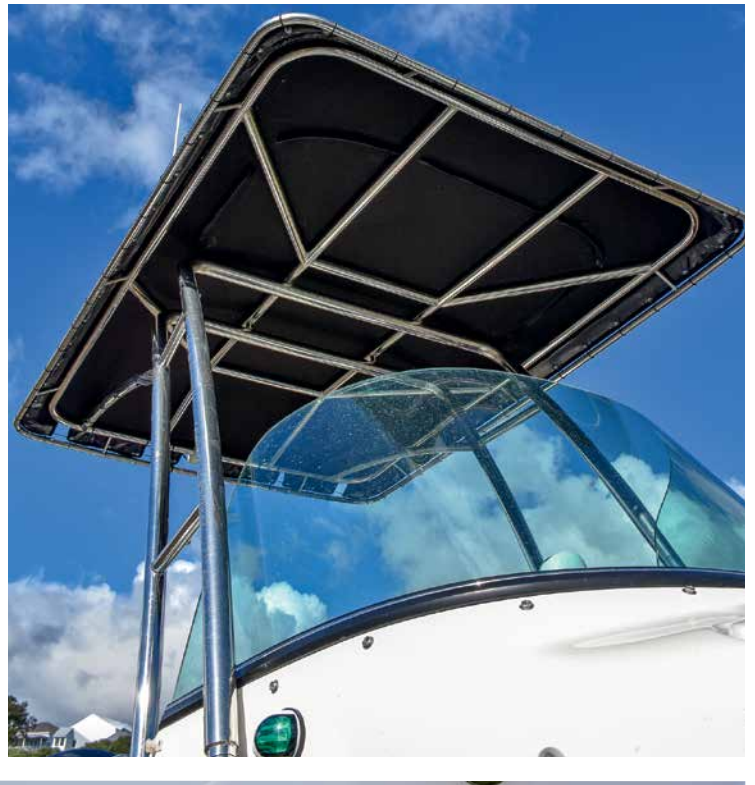
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**LEFT TO RIGHT** A handy anchor locker, a transducer for the fishos, and good cover from the sun.

**BELOW** Reversible backrests – a cool feature for those keeping an eye on the skiers behind.



## BUCCANEER 550 ENFORCER



**ORAKEI**  
MARINE



# ZODIAC CADET INFLATABLES

## CADET RIB ALU

LIGHT AND STRONG



### RIGID HULL TENDERS

6'5" 2m      10' 3m      13' 4m

Ultralight versions: 240, 270, 300, 330, 360  
DL: Deck & locker versions: 300, 330, 360, 390

## CADET

THE MARKET'S STANDARD



### Two Floor Types

Aero (inflatable): 200 > 350

Aluminium: 270 > 350



### INFLATABLE HULL TENDERS

200, 230, 270, 310, 350

**PHONE** Thornton 021 0299 0460

**EMAIL** zodiac@orakeimarine.co.nz

**WEB** orakeimarine.co.nz



## ZODIAC OPEN 5.5



...a RIB is a lightweight, easy-to-tow proposition for the family or bach owner...

chop. Without doubt, Buccaneer's design pedigree has helped with its foray into the RIB market. Whether fishing, skiing or diving the versatility of the well-presented Enforcer 550 will make an impact on the simple, affordable summer fun market.

### ZODIAC OPEN 5.5

Zodiac's been in business for over 120 years and, of all things, began with the manufacturing of airships. Today, Zodiac has come back down to earth and is now recognised as one of the world leaders in inflatable powerboat production.

It offers an extensive range of both rigid hull powerboats and soft hull inflatables. The Open range is the company's latest innovation, with the Open 5.5 proving to be a strong contender in the New Zealand centre-console RIB market.

The Open 5.5's removable tubes, which are available in Strongan™ DUOTEX™ or premium Hypalon Neoprene™ fabric, connect seamlessly to the deep-V hull. Each side has grab ropes along the tubes and one on the inside of the tube to aid divers and swimmers returning from their adventures. She also benefits from a sturdy bow bollard and several cleats and rings for mooring and towing flexibility.

The centre console is the dominant feature of the Open 5.5, with a whopping 780 litres of storage capacity inside, accessed through a top-hinged, swing-up lockable door. This is perfect for storing dive tanks, wakeboards and even naughty children!

A very substantial U-shaped frame supports a large tinted,







curved windscreen and contains the dash and instruments. This particular model has been fitted with a 12-inch Garmin plotter and fishfinder.

Behind the console is the two-person leaning post/helm seat with removable backrest for pilot and co-pilot. The curved ends to the backrest provide great support and leave the hands free for tight corners or rough conditions. Housed within is a tidy 'glove box' for items such as handheld VHF.

At the stern of the Open 5.5 there is a moulded full-width bench seat with removable upholstery and backrest, seating three comfortably. Beneath the cushion is the standard integrated portable cooler for liquid refreshments.

Up forward there is an optional sunbed system, which infills the bow area to create the perfect lounging platform. This boat came with the optional swim platforms and transom-mounted, three-step telescoping stainless steel swim ladder, which make getting out of the water easy and convenient.

The powerplant chosen for this Zodiac is the Honda 100hp four-stroke, which has plenty of boogie to drive the lightweight hull. She seemed comfortable cruising at 3,500rpm and 18 knots but has the power to easily reach 35 knots if needed. With 22° of deadrise at the stern and a full deep V through the hull, the ride is soft and the cornering sharp. At rest, the pontoons create a very stable and workable platform.

As the Swiss-army knife description suggests, there are plenty of options for the Zodiac Open 5.5. This modular flexibility combined with the well-proven hull means she can handle everything from relaxing day trips to the frenetic activity of skiing and fishing – the mark of the true all-rounder.

This boat is now available for sea-trials from Orakei Marine's floating office within Orakei Marina, 12-14 Tamaki Drive. [BNZ](#)

**TOP** Moulded backrests give great support in a boisterous seaway.

**RIGHT** The 100hp Honda delivers plenty of zip.

**BELOW** The Buccaneer's multi-straked hull offers a secure ride.



## Buccaneer 550 Enforcer

**BASE PRICE**  
\$56,446

**MANUFACTURED BY**  
Buccaneer Boats  
[www.buccaneer.co.nz](http://www.buccaneer.co.nz)

### SPECIFICATIONS

**loa** 5.50m  
**beam** 2.50m  
**deadrise** 21°  
**towing weight** 1140kg  
**hp range** 60-130hp  
**construction** GRP/PVC tubes  
**cruising speed** 23 knots  
**max speed** 32 knots



## Zodiac Open 5.5

**BASE PRICE**  
\$62,000 NZD

**MANUFACTURED BY**  
Zodiac  
[www.zodiac-nautic.com](http://www.zodiac-nautic.com)

### SPECIFICATIONS

**loa** 5.40m  
**beam** 2.54m  
**inside beam** 1.39m  
**hull weight** 595kg  
**max hp** 130hp  
**construction** GRP/Duotex  
**cruising speed** 25 knots  
**max speed** 35 knots