

MULTI-PURPOSE RIB



The Highfield 660 Patrol is a fresh take on the successful Rigid Hulled Inflatable Boat (RIB) concept that New Zealand has embraced as part of the trailer boat scene.

by Richard Milner



Left: The Highfield 660 is a strong contender for anyone serious about form, function and safety.

Above: The hull was quiet and the tubes didn't sag in the water.

NEW Zealand is no stranger to the pontoon boats that offer comfortable riding in the rough while stable at rest with low entry to the water and safety to boot. Established in 2011 they have developed into a worldwide manufacturer with dealers in over 38 countries, including New Zealand and Australia. They have developed a line of RIBs, from 2.4m tenders to much larger blue water boats with both recreation and commercial use in mind.

Highfield boats are a French – Chinese owned company and the only manufacturer of RIBs with a dedicated factory in China that produces all components in house. Not only does this significantly reduce the build time and expense, but as with all things aluminium, allows the design to change to suit the customer much easier.

The Highfield 660 Patrol presents itself as a no-nonsense ready to go work boat. The patrol has come from a commercial background and has been used for surveillance, law enforcement, search and rescue as well as a whole load of fishing – now that got your attention didn't it.

The hull is constructed from CNC cut 5083 aluminium which not only offers easy care and maintenance but is also lighter than fibreglass, and is more practical for the New Zealand beach scene. The hull comes with a beautiful powder coated finish standard.

NICE SURPRISES

Loading the boat was the first of many pleasant surprises this boat had to offer. As some of you will know, the classic RIB is all floor and no storage or worse, hard to use storage and no floor. The Highfield 660 was a far cry from either situation. With three large storage compartments to tuck gear away dry and safe we quickly loaded up and headed for the ramp.

Launching was effortless on the specially designed Aakron Trailer, which looked stunning with its mag

wheels and black rollers – slick from start to finish.

The conditions on the day of the boat test were stellar. I joked with Jonathon from Aakron that the boat could have done with a typical wind against tide, 35knot day for the test. He remarked that I was invited back on any day I chose, to see how this boat would handle in the rough.

From Takapuna we thundered across to Rangitoto to get a feel for the boat. As soon as we were underway I had a grin from ear to ear. Having spent so much of my on water life on RIBs, I was worried that I would be too critical, as most RIBs are a compromise of one sort or another. At first glance I knew I was going to be impressed.

It immediately struck me how well the boat handled. The super deep V hull effortlessly moved the water away from the bow keeping us dry while the wide chine kept the boat stable and the double stepped hull allowed the boat to jump effortlessly onto the plane. Powered by a Suzuki 175 we were very quickly whisked away.

The hull was quiet and the tubes didn't sag in the water. The boat really performed like it was sitting comfortably and effortlessly on top of the water like a magic carpet.

Enough of this I thought and we put it through its paces. The boat turned beautifully and didn't let go easily. It would have thrown us overboard before the boat let go and it handled like it was on rails. The boat liked to be trimmed nose down and coupled with the low tube position gave fantastic sight over the bow. We were treated to wakes from several large boats and the Highfield 660 Patrol sailed through with no effort. At just over 38 knots the boat was under control, well balanced and while airborne didn't drag its behind touching down into the water as effortlessly as it had left. Very impressive. It was also about this time I realised just how little wake the boat produced under power. A further testament to the double stepped hull this design is well known for. It is fair to say that while

BOAT REVIEW
**HIGHFIELD 660
PATROL**



**Plenty of seating
but also plenty of
space.**

I am known to be a little heavy on the throttle this boat truly felt comfortable at all rpm ranges.

It sat beautifully on the plane at just over 8 knots, effortlessly rising on its steps, and at mid revs it was a delight to handle, light, nimble and truly effortless. In a recreational or commercial scene it is easy to see why these boats have become so popular. Recreationally you can enjoy your day, while commercially the boat is so easy to operate you can focus on your mission at hand.

PLENTY OF STORAGE

Under the shadow of Rangitoto Lighthouse we got into the walkthrough. The bow section is easily accessed from the helm and has a large anchor box with plenty of room for deep water anchoring. Just aft of this anchor box is the forward storage compartment with ample space to store equipment. It has a plush double seat which is idea for lazing around in a bay or waiting for the fish to wake up. Moving aft into the centre of the boat the floor space is not only large but also leaves you feeling quite safe. There is enough room here for at least four sets of dive gear or a couple of very large fish bins.

The front of the console has a seat large enough for one and this raises to reveal more storage and the helm controls. I would venture a guess that while not super private a marine toilet could be fitted here as well to keep the whole family happy. It is also really nice to see accessibility to helm controls which is often overlooked on many other vessels of this size.

The helm station itself is a king and queen arrangement with enough room for two larger people side by side. On this particular model the helm is positioned in the centre of the boat but depending on your needs could also be set to starboard.

The helm station is functional offering space for

MFD screens, gauges, Fusion stereo, VHF and any other marine equipment you may need. There is enough space for an additional MFD or work related equipment. The vertical windscreen lets you maximise the space available. I feel that a T-Top would finish this space off well and give you somewhere to hide from the UV in the hotter months.

Seating at the helm is a double folding bolster type seat and while underway the boat lends itself to driving standing up however at rest the seating is comfortable and functional. In the seating position a foot rest is also factory fitted with one of the few logos of the boat in the covering material. A great addition for the long days out on the boat.

Moving Aft the rear seating arrangement is on top of one of the largest storage compartments I have ever seen. It was seriously impressive. The storage not only starts under the seat but extends almost all the way to the transom giving an unprecedented amount of storage space for the water toys, family stuff or work equipment. The outboard well is mounted on top of this storage area behind the aft seating arrangement. This brings the engine into the boat while on the trailer reducing the maximum length of the load but also gives more functional space while on the water.

HYPALON OR PVC

The Patrol 660 comes standard with a radar arch fitted with navigation lights and an elevated eyelet for the water toys. It's a perfect height for the wakeboard.

The tubes are factory fitted with Hypalon but PVC is an option as well. The tubes have six cells with flush mounted valves plenty of D rings and rope handles. Cleats are found aft near the transom and a large bollard at the bow. There are no rod holders on this boat however the Starport fittings came up in conversation and I find them to be an outstanding

solution as we are all different and like to set our boats up how we like to use them. The cockpit is self-draining through two venturis, with a 150 litre underfloor fuel tank.

As tested the boat was fitted with a Suzuki 175 but power options are from 150hp-200hp. I feel for the power achieved the 175hp is a great option and as rigged at just on \$NZ98000 the boat is a strong contender for anyone serious about form, function and safety.

SUMMARY

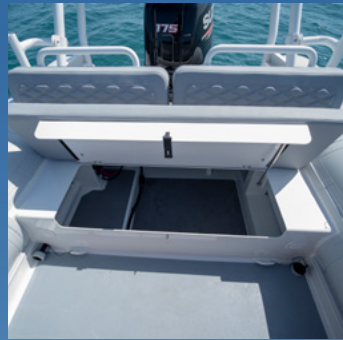
I came away from this boat test marvelled at how technology coupled with the pedigree of its predecessor combined, has crafted a truly outstanding boat. I was really impressed with how comfortable and easy the boat was to operate and really made a day out on the water in a RIB enjoyable. It's not just a work boat but has safety features, storage space and just enough panache to entice families away from traditional cabin or sport boats. While we barely stretched its legs in the inner Hauraki Gulf I would have no hesitations taking this boat to the Barrier and beyond.



The bow section has a large anchor box ahead of a storage locker and fuel filler recess.

More storage under the rear bench seat.

The helm station is functional offering space for the MFD screen and any other marine equipment you may need.



SPECIFICATIONS

Make & Model:	Highfield 660 Patrol
Priced from:	\$NZ84950
Price as tested:	\$NZ98000
Type:	Centre Console
Construction:	RIB
LOA:	6.54m
Beam:	2.49m
Deadrise:	26deg
Height on trailer:	2.40m
Trailerable weight:	1185 kg
Test Power:	175hp
Power options:	Outboard
Power Range:	150-200hp
Max Speed:	38.4 knots as tested
Propeller:	Watergrip 15x21R
Fuel capacity:	150L
Trailer Make:	Aakron AX630R
Manufacturer:	Aakron Boats www.highfieldboats.com
Supplied by:	Aakron Xpress www.aakronxpress.co.nz

FUEL & PERFORMANCE DATA

Fuel capacity: 150 litres

RPM	Knots	L/h	L/NM	Range(NM)
1000	3.1	2.3	0.750	180
1500	4.7	4.4	0.940	140
2000	6.3	6.3	1.000	130
2500	8.5	9.5	1.200	110
3000	15.3	12.2	0.800	160
3500	19.4	16.8	0.870	150
4000	24.0	21	0.880	150
4500	28.2	28	1.000	130
5000	31.9	37.2	1.200	110
5500	35.3	50.8	1.500	90
5950 ^(WOT)	38.4	57.7	1.600	84

