



INFLATABLE EXPERTS

'78 ACHILLES
LEISURE GOODS

THE inflatable boat, which has become a very popular accessory for today's boating community, has been around since 800 BC - if you consider inflated animal skins used to float people and goods across rivers an inflatable boat. The actual beginning of the inflatable boat as we know it today was around WWII - used as landing craft. It wasn't until the late 1970's that the inflatable boat came out of the commercial segment and was offered to the leisure public.

Initially, the inflatable consisted of a tube going all the way around (no wooden transom). Today the inflatable boat selection is almost overwhelming with the number of possible options to choose from. This large variation has been developed due to the demand for bigger and more usable craft. We have divided the variations in the following groups:

Soft Bottom

- a) **Dinghy Style** has an inflatable transom (tube around way around) and minimal floor supports
- b) **Roll-Up style Inflatable Boat** - the floor of the inflatable boat rolls up inside the boat when deflated and stored. This floor can be simply slats, narrow hinged panels, or the newest type, the high pressure air floor
- c) **Foldable style Inflatable Boat** - the floor of the inflatable boat must be removed from the boat when deflated and stored. This floor is made up of large panels, which can be of wood, plastic, or fiberglass

Rigid Bottom

- a) **Basic RIB style Inflatable Boat** - the inflatable boat has a one piece rigid hull. These boats cannot be folded. The air can be let out and the tubes pulled inboard to reduce the size for storage. Most of today's RIBS are of fiberglass however, aluminum and plastic are also available
- b) **DELUXE RIB style Inflatable Boat** - This is a RIB with steering console and seating. Many of the newer designs will have built-in fuel tanks. These boats are comparable to the fiberglass runabouts, except they are more stable, lighter, and in most cases have more seating room

The variations of inflatables are considerable, as can be your uses, which brings us to the factors for determining which you need:

1. **How are you planning on using the inflatable?**
 - a) Just to take the dog to shore?
 - b) Use it to explore - expand your boating fun
2. **How will the inflatable be stored when not in use? You should consider:**
 - a) Is weight important?
 - b) What is the maximum size?
 - c) Are you planning on packing it away after most usages?
 - d) Do you want it always available to use, without the little "oh it's too much trouble" excuse for not using it?
 - e) Do you want (need) a davit system for storage?

The initial answers to these questions will help you to narrow your search and

choices, as well as help you understand your needs. You may want to make your first choice based on what is available new and then expand out to other variations to help understand what is available and what you may be giving up based on your original requirements.

After determining your requirements, if cost becomes a factor you can also look into the availability of a used inflatable boat. Purchasing an inflatable boat is like purchasing a new car, where there are numerous options and variations to consider and decide on. And yes, like the car a lighter and cheaper model is often less comfortable, less durable and less enjoyable. Prior to a final decision, you should address your requirements again with regard to the importance of each (i.e. does weight really matter that much and will I need a davit system?).

Consideration regarding the purchase of an inflatable should include: the inflatable, the outboard, the davit system or some plan to deal with the inflatable and outboard when not being used, how it will meet your needs so it will be used and how it will fit your existing main vessel?

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