



Island Inflatable & Parsun 3.6hp Combo

And Now . . . For something completely different . . . We invited one of our favourite local families and fishos, Jeff, Linda, Mark and Michelle, to join the F&B test team - and throwing caution to the winds, we launched them in this beaut li'l \$1,999 inflatable package, and cast 'em off . . . for this special report.

Inflatable boats use to be the domain of a few European manufactures with brands like Zodiac, Avon and Bombardier supplying most soft and combo RIBs (hard bottom inflatables) to our waterways. They offered quality product but pricing often saw the public looking at other boat building materials for a small boat, such as aluminium.

With the manufacturing revolution in China and relatively cheap freight for a boat that is extremely lightweight and compact when deflated, it was only a matter of time before the Chinese became the dominant supplier worldwide.

Prices have crashed with the influx of Chinese inflatable boats on the market, but consumers still need to

take care in choosing the brand as the quality of the range in the market place is as varied as the prices. I have noticed that inflatables are now more common on the waterways and as a small boat they have a lot of advantages. These include:

- As a tender it will not damage the main boat when they bump and rub together
- Light and easily carried
- Can be transported in a carry bag when deflated
- Only needs minimal horsepower due to their light weight
- No need for a trailer
- Easy to launch from foreshores
- Cheap
- Large carrying capacity for size
- Safe and seaworthy
- **FUN!**

Most cruisers that we see in the marinas and on the water have an inflatable dinghy as their tender, and given all these advantages, no wonder!

Sea Media provided me the Island Inflatable 2.6 metre boat with a 3.6 hp Parsun 2-stroke outboard, and F&B Editor, PW, laid it on the line: *Go forth and give it a thorough family test - just be back by Christmas, okay ?*

Design

The Island Inflatable is 2.6 metres long or 8 1/2 foot in the old scale, with the inside length of 155cm. Overall width is 160cm, with an inside width of 75cm. The tube diameter is 44cm and is one of the largest in this size range. It has a 3 person capacity. All up capacity is 350kg. Not bad for an eight footer.