

COBRA NAUTIQUE 8.2M

PBR sets out to discover whether this Cobra Nautique 8.2m really is a nautical charmer ...

The history of the British love affair with RIBs is long and varied. Brand names have come and gone but some still remain, Cobra being one of them. With over 30 years behind them, this British company has become renowned for its quality leisure RIBs. It has some competition, but this truly home-grown product maintains an identity, a level of build and a price that always seem to keep it ahead.

The classic Cobra-badged coamings on each quarter of the Nautique 8.2m are as distinctive as the superbly crafted low-level stainless A-frame that sits between them. Some things benefit from

historical continuity, and this boat is one of them. Not that surprisingly, it has the same hull design as its siblings.

The Nautique range is built on what is referred to as the 'Evolution' hull - a development of the original Dave Picton 7.5m hull. It has a very sharp transom deadrise angle of 26.5 degrees and a twin-chine set-up. The lower chine produces a similar effect to that of a Petestep hull as it channels water aft beneath the boat, improving performance and ride. This chine is downturned slightly towards its edge, which has the effect of tucking the water downwards and under the boat. Cobra claim that as

well as providing a drier ride, it also increases efficiency by around 5%, while enhancing stability in tight turns.

In typical Cobra fashion, the boat is styled as a luxury performance RIB that can keep its occupants safe and comfortable, even when the helmsman is piling on the power. Rightly there is a heavy design emphasis on the helm set-up, which offers a perfect balance of comfort, ergonomics and seating position. The seats, though they do not appear it at first, are gas-assisted sprung seats, with concealed suspension units built into the seat backs providing around 2in of travel. The seat





1. The helm has great ergonomics.

buckets reassuringly hold you in situ and the footboard is angled and located perfectly. You can, if you want, flip up the seat bolster and stand, which has always been my preference. However, I found that the height of the seat in relation to the line of sight over the bow, and the degree of comfort provided, kept me sitting during most of the test.

The console is designed so that it can be built with either a left-hand or right-hand helm position, which is a great idea. I like the throttle in the left hand, but many people prefer otherwise, especially

This is a very capable boat built by a company with a lot of experience in big luxury RIBs.

those that are left-handed. Having a centrally located Garmin multifunction display through which everything, including the Fusion hi-fi, is controlled is a good idea on a fast open boat. I also found it helpful to have the engine display located on the top right-hand side next to the Garmin. Being just off my line of sight, it was easy to keep an eye on the tachometer and the engine trim level when throwing the boat about. There is no doubt that plenty of thought has gone into the helm ergonomics, as everything comes easily to hand, and is easily seen.

In the back of the helm seats are what you presume to be triple storage compartments. The top two open to reveal neatly lined compartments. The top one is equipped with a phone-charging socket, so you can leave your phone in this waterproof compartment



2. The seats have concealed suspension units.

on constant charge. The middle compartment has no secrets inside, but the large bottom one could have. In the test boat it was a large dry locker, but the sister camera boat had the optional built-in DC-powered Dometic chiller compartment, complete with two wine bottle racks on each side. This is a great feature that I can't imagine you would ignore on the options list, and a perfect example of the behind-the-scenes attention to detail that this company is known for.

The chiller is not the only concealed surprise, as lifting the centre section of the aft seating section reveals. With this hinged back on its two gas struts, you not only have the system switches conveniently mounted on a transom moulding, but a concealed stainless steel and teak cockpit table. This simply swings out forward, placing

itself ready to receive the contents of the chiller in an instant ... Clearly the designer got their priorities right.

Attention to detail and on-board practicality does not end with sustenance. If you want to access any of the under-seat storage compartments you will not find the usual pop stud secured cushions (which inevitably pull off at some point) sitting atop a hinged GRP locker lid, but hard-based seat cushions that hinge out from the inside of the boat. This makes them easy to open and shut, held in position by the seat back cushions, which fold up to enable the seat base to open. This simple and highly effective concept extends to the forward seating area as well. All of the seat bases sit on a raised lip, preventing any water ingress. There is the option of a toilet in the forward section of the console

behind that obligatory single forward seat. This is accessed by the seat section hinging up to reveal a chemical toilet if specified. Our test boat did not have this, but rather a large storage compartment, and a waterproof hatch to access the rear of the console electronics.

Driving the Cobra

The hull is well balanced and responsive to the wheel, and reassuringly steady when thrown into hard turns - even in some of the confused water off Calshot. Its non-stepped hull is predictable, though if you are minded to, you can induce a small degree of hull slip through heavy-handed throttle use - although it is easily steadied again if you do. You have the bonus of a twin counterrotating propeller outboard engine, which grips the water in a dogged manner. This also provides superb acceleration and mid-range response. Here, I should say that the single-prop 300hp V8 Mercury-powered version is reported to be slightly faster, but slower off the mark. In the rougher water it paid to run the leg out about a quarter if you were running into the weather, or pushing the boat hard in a turn. It is not so much a forgiving drive in the rough

SPECIFICATIONS

LOA: 8.2m
Beam: 2.55m
Transom deadrise angle: 26.5 degrees
Displacement: 1825kg (dry)
Power options: 300hp to 400hp
Fuel capacity: 400L
RCD category: B for 12
Test engine: 350hp Suzuki DF350

PRICE

From: £102,028 (inc. VAT) - with 300hp Mercury V8
As tested: £120,941 (inc. VAT)

PERFORMANCE

49 knots (2-way average), 50% fuel, 1 crew

CONTACT

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1. The hard-wearing Diamante upholstery is a £960 extra. 2. The teak table is superbly finished. 3. Heads or more storage - the choice is yours. 4. The table folds out in the blink of an eye.



1. An infill creates a sun pad. 2. Cobra's distinctive plaque has been used for years. 3. The splash well is very deep on the Cobra.

ENGINE OPTIONS

Suzuki: Single DF300 and DF350, and twin DF200

Yamaha: Single F300 and twin F200

Mercury: Single 300hp V8 Verado, 350hp Verado (supercharged) and twin 200hp

FUEL CONSUMPTION

(Suzuki fuel flow meter)

Engine speed	Knots	NMPG
1000rpm	5.0	5.4
1500rpm	7.0	4.1
2000rpm	9.0	3.6
2500rpm	13.0	3.2
3000rpm	20.0	3.2
3500rpm	28.0	3.6
4000rpm	32.0	3.2
4500rpm	37.0	2.7
5000rpm	42.0	2.3
5500rpm	45.0	2.3
6000rpm	49.0	1.8

but an easy one, which is helped by its robust construction and soft-riding hull. At no point did I hear a single complaint from the boat, even when banked over running on the chines in the rougher water.

Natural fore and aft trim is very good - you get none of that climbing nose effect when popping up onto the plane. Unusually this boat will plane at engine speeds of around 2800rpm, which relates to 17 knots or so. This is the product of good weight distribution, hull efficiency and the low/mid-range thrust of a twin-prop engine. What is more impressive is that the mid-range efficiency of the DF350 at the start of its 'torque flat' at 3500rpm produces 3.6mpg.

Verdict

This is a very capable boat built by a company with a lot of experience in big luxury RIBs. It is pleasing to see that the Cobra has not lost

its bite, as it does a very good job of combining a credible offshore powerboat with a luxury superyacht tender, and with a wide range of engine options to boot. The fit and finish is superb, enhanced by a GRP ceramic coating. Within moments of being on board, the attention to detail is obvious. Also, it deserves

credit for being cheaper than its closest UK competitors, and without sourcing any production overseas. ■

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A ceramic coating has been applied to this Cobra by Ceramic Pro UK.