

# SALPA SOLEIL 23

Salpa are hardly a mainstream brand name in terms of RIBs in this country, but in Italy this yard has been building RIBs longer than many UK RIB manufacturers. **Greg Copp** reports on one such example, Salpa's Soleil 23 ...

**L**ike us, the Italians have always had a passion for RIBs, and their design concepts have proven popular for some time now. The Salpa Soleil 23 is typical of this Italian ethos. It offers plenty of

deck space, a big sunbed, a large wet bar/galley and sheltered seating for all. For a 23-footer, it really packs in all the features. Twin bathing platforms flank the engine, deep enough to compose and dry yourself on before

clambering forward. Your waterskis are safely stashed in a starboard side ski locker, and the forward sunbed covers a massive expanse of under-deck storage, big enough for any inflatable toy – and more. There is more storage under the console and fender storage on the starboard quarter under the seating, and opposite there is easy access to the boat's twin batteries – always a wise move. If this is not enough, then lifting the aft bench seat enables you to carry even more gear. To keep everybody fed and watered, you have two galley options for the

under-seat wet bar: a sink and large icebox, or a sink, gas hob and fridge.

For those sitting aft, the U-shaped seating set-up, like the helm, is very sheltered. Enclosed coamings sit on each quarter, enhancing this feeling of security while providing a firm base for the detachable A-frame and stern cleats. Deck movement is easy as this boat has plenty of beam, and this girth relates to being able to create a relatively wide blunt bow, which, capped in synthetic teak, provides



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Ergonomically the helm set-up works well. The ‘Med-style’ bow is capped with good-quality synthetic teak. A hidden windlass makes good sense. A huge forward locker and some meaty longitudinal stringers.



a bow step - crucial for stepping onto tall Mediterranean docksides. The Hypalon sponsons are suitably armoured with a deep rubbing strake.

SPECIFICATIONS

LOA: 7.15m  
Beam: 2.79m  
Displacement: 1050kg (dry)  
Power options: From single 150hp Mercury outboard to single 250hp Mercury outboard  
Fuel capacity: 205L  
RCD category: C  
Test engine: Single 150hp Mercury outboard

PERFORMANCE

37 knots (2-way average), sea conditions moderate, crew 2 and fuel 50%  
0-20 knots: 6 seconds

PRICE

From: £46,980 (inc. VAT)  
As tested: £49,950 (inc. VAT)

CONTACT

Gibbs Quay Boat Sales  
14-17 West Quay Rd  
Poole  
Dorset BH15 1JD  
www.gibbsboatsales.co.uk

The Soleil 23 is competitively priced at around £50,000. I say this because this boat was on a special offer, but even so, it only cost another £7,000 at its full list price, and being well specified in basic form the extras list is fairly short – so much so I will not bother to write about it. Critics will argue that the Soleil 23 does not have lined lockers, and some of the wiring could be encased in conduits, but this boat is solidly built and well finished externally, and this counts for a lot.

Driving the Salpa Soleil 23

Increasingly it seems that ‘middle of the road’ RIBs are becoming more driver focused. Ten years ago, a cost-effective family boat would have been exactly that. It would have had enough room for the extended family, dogs and all, and driven like a sharpened bathtub – though its occupants

THE SOFT RIDE

No banging or slamming, no need to back off, and I even had the motor trimmed out 30%.

Most RIBs at this price are made in the Far East, but Salpa are one of those Italian yards that build RIBs at home – entirely.

FUEL FIGURES (MERCURY FUEL FLOW METER)			
RPM	Speed (knots)	LPH	NMPG
1500	6.3	5.8	4.9
2000	7.8	8.9	3.9
2500	11.5	11.4	4.6
3000	16.5	14.6	3.2
3500	20.8	20.1	4.7
4000	26.0	26.0	4.5
4500	27.8	35.0	3.6
5000	33.1	49.3	3.1
5600 (WOT)	37.7	56.0	3.1

would have probably not minded back then. Well, the Soleil 23 does have enough for a full family, but it does not drive like a sharpened bathtub - quite the opposite. However, it is not a sports boat in the true sense. It does not dive into hard turns with impunity, simply because it has wide low tubes that prevent this, and the steering is not super-responsive. On this note I will say that the steering is composed and predictable, and it gets going once you start to turn, but it is not a two-finger job. The Salpa hangs on regardless of how much power you pile on, driving out of a tight turn, though it will cavitate slightly if you overdo it. It does only have 150hp on the transom. I say this because it is offered with 250hp, which probably makes this boat a more ‘focused driving experience’.

All this having been said, this beamy, blunt-nosed boat is no ‘Bouncing Betty’, as it cuts a surprisingly mean path through chop. Our test day was pretty mild, but Old Harry conveniently always has some overfalls to put a boat

... this beamy, blunt-nosed boat is no ‘Bouncing Betty’, as it cuts a surprisingly mean path through chop.

through its paces. This is where the Soleil 23 surprised me, as hitting this confused patch of water at 30 knots was much softer than I expected. No banging or slamming, no need to back off, and I even had the motor trimmed out 30%. Trimming down possibly made it a touch softer, but to be honest, I did not really feel the need. This boat is well constructed, and I have been reliably informed it has a deep-vee hull with an incredibly sharp transom deadrise angle of 28 degrees – confirmed from the factory specifications sheet. This is the tightest deadrise I have ever come across, but the way the boat drives certainly relates to a deep-vee.



With the cushions in you get a large sunbed.



The drop-in table normally lives in the huge forward locker.





It drives well and is capable of getting its crew back if things blow up unexpectedly, without feeling like they have survived crossing Lyme Bay on a bad day.



A big claw anchor comes with the windlass option.

Its stepped hull also pays dividends. There is no doubt that the stern picks up well from the extra dynamic lift of an 'effective' hull step, as the fore and aft trim is as good as it gets, which helps running into the weather. Consequently, she planes at 15 knots should you need to. She does need a good 30% of trim out on the outboard to get the last 3 knots from her, which comes with a notable increase in engine tone as she quickly picks up, hitting an easy 37 knots. At wide open throttle, even with the wind on the beam, she is steady, with no leaning into the wind and no porpoising. Much of this is down to her low tubes, but having only 206kg of engine hanging on the transom is a bonus. One thing is obvious and that is that the windscreen does exactly what it should, for both helmsman and navigator. Unless you step out around the console, you are totally cut off from the elements, and in mid-autumn this was certainly appreciated.

Verdict

This boat is one of many vying for attention in a well-subscribed sector of the market, so what makes it any different from the plethora of Med-spec RIBs that have proven popular on our shores? In a word, price, as at sub-£50,000 at its current special offer it is hard to beat. Most RIBs at this price are made in the Far East, but Salpa are one of those Italian yards that build RIBs at home – entirely. Only behind the scenes does it lack a degree of finesse in the form of unlined lockers, which is fair enough, all things considered. It drives well and is capable of getting its crew back if things blow up unexpectedly, without feeling like they have survived crossing Lyme Bay on a bad day. [PBR](#)

FOR

- Fast
- Solid build quality
- Soft ride
- Space and Storage
- Wide helm seat
- Good wind protection

AGAINST

- The steering is a touch on the heavy side.



The full wet bar galley option.



Beneath the sunbed there is a wealth of storage space.

SALPA SOLEIL 42



A full standing headroom head with shower. The forward cabin has a huge double bed. Looking aft into the guest cabin.

Powered by twin 425hp XTO Yamaha outboards, the 52-knot Soleil 42 is the latest flagship of the Salpa shipyard. The hull, designed by Adam Younger, is characterised by a vertical stem, two steps and three spray rails. The sharp bow and the 24-degree transom deadrise angle create a sharp entry, providing a soft ride in all but the hardest conditions. The deck and interior layout, designed entirely by the technical team at Salpa, are focused on maximum comfort, while providing optimal space and good ergonomics. The dash has the space to accommodate two

large plotters and two separate helm seats, all protected by a high windscreen. The wet bar/galley is a good size, providing a high-volume refrigerator, a sink, a double gas stove and a large storage space. Wide port and starboard side decks lead to the bow area, which with its deck cushions can be turned into a huge sunbathing area. What really makes the Soleil 42 stand out is the presence of two spacious cabins. Opening the sliding door next to the helm reveals steps leading to the below-decks accommodation. This area feels all the more spacious

due to the long hull windows of the main cabin, located beneath the tubes, providing a fantastic sea view. On each side of the cabin there are four storage cabinets, while the huge bed can comfortably accommodate two adults. The front portion of the mattress folds up and creates a big sofa, forming a U-shaped lounge area. For a little extra privacy, the dividing curtain at the end of the forward cabin allows the separation of the main cabin from the rest of the interior. Although there are other 12m RIBs with a second sleeping cabin, it

is very difficult to find one with such a spacious aft cabin. The aft cabin of the Soleil 42 is equipped with two single berths, so it can accommodate children as well as guests in comfort.

SPECIFICATION

- LOA: 12.75m
- Beam: 3.9m
- Water capacity: 230L
- Fuel capacity: 720L
- Engine options:
  - 2 x 425hp XTO Yamahas or
  - 3 x 350hp Mercury Verados

Powered by twin 425hp XTO Yamaha outboards, the 52-knot Soleil 42 is the latest flagship of the Salpa shipyard

