

# 'Parakeet Bay Express'

## Kirby Naiad for Rottnest eco-tourism

By MIKE BROWN

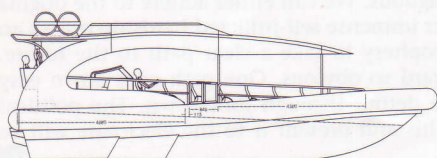
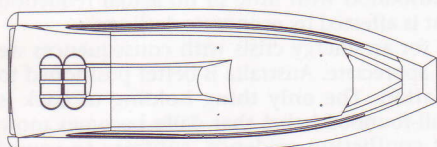


Kirby Marine's grip on the supply of RIBs to the adventure-eco tourism industry grows tighter. The latest customer for a 12.5 metre Naiad RIB is Rottnest Express, the fast ferry operator serving the Perth and Fremantle to Rottnest Island tourist route.

A subsidiary, Rottnest Eco Adventures, has taken delivery of 'Parakeet Bay Express', a near 50-knot, 42-passenger vessel, offering additions to the straight ferry service.

Based in Fremantle, it also provides a high-speed alternative to the island in the morning with return in the evening, but its main purpose is circumnavigations of the island. They give island visitors new views of the bays, close-ups on the big surf breaks at the west end, and high speed thrills. The south side of the island is subject to fresh winds on summer afternoons, but selection each day of the bays to be visited gives a variety of geography.

'Parakeet Bay Express' follows the layout of earlier 12.5 Naiads. Ranks of seats are tiered, cinema style, to aid forward viewing by rear passengers, and side viewing is impaired only by two slim awning pillars on each side. The low-slung nature of RIBs ensures that passengers are closer to nature than on conventional boats. The coxswain's console, located well aft, also houses the toilet. In total, a simple layout that aids quick embarking and disembarking.



Although overall length is 12.5 metres, measured length at a whisker under 12 metres allows the holder of a coxswains' certificate to master the 'Parakeet Bay Express', and no extra engineering qualification is required.

Power is provided by three 224kW Mercury Verado four-stroke supercharged outboards. Many tourism operators who have done whole-of-life costings comparing diesels with outboards have found that fuel costs are largely balanced by buying and service costs. Outboards retain the advantages of temporary replacement for repair work, economic trading-in early in the life cycle, and, in this case, the redundancy that allows operations to continue with only two motors functioning.

Quietness has always been a characteristic of the Verados, and to this the new-generation models have added electronics that have greatly improved fuel consumption. Maximum speed is 49 knots, and cruising will generally be between 26 and 30, ensuring a low-stress life for the motors as well less noise due to their operating at small throttle openings.

Low noise is a highly desirable feature for a trip that interacts with nature, and hull, as well as motor, noise has been subdued: Kirby Marine chose to foam-fill the hull's void spaces.

With the exception of very few days, a high cruising speed will be possible virtually regardless of weather. The hull has an extremely high deadrise and a deep and sharp entry. Combined with the stability and shock absorbing provided by the inflatable collar, the hull form will provide considerable comfort for the passengers.

The hull's bottom has two steps aft of midships. Much shallower than traditional hydroplane steps, they have a significant effect on performance and behaviour. At speeds from mid-cruising and upwards, the aeration aft of each step reduces wetted surface and eases the hull. Speed is increased by two knots or so at a given

throttle opening, and vertical movement of the bow is reduced.

'Parakeet Bay Express' is an example of a long-established tourism operator making an additional investment to get extra revenue from a static customer base. It has all the indications of being a great success.

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### 'Parakeet Bay Express'

#### SPECIFICATIONS

Type of vessel:	Adventure tourism RIB
In survey to:	USL 1C
Home port:	Fremantle
Owner:	Rottnest Express, Western Australia
Designer:	Naiad, New Zealand
Builder:	Kirby Marine, Western Australia
Length overall:	12.5 metres
Length, measured:	12.0 metres
Beam:	4.1 metres
Displacement, full load:	6.6 tonnes
Hull construction material:	Aluminium
Main engines:	3 x Mercury Verado outboards, 224kW ea
Maximum speed:	49 knots
Cruising speed:	28 – 30 knots
Sounder:	Raymarine
Radar:	Raymarine
GPS:	Raymarine C80
Radio:	Icom VHF
Compass:	Plastimo
Paint:	Wattyl
Windows:	Betta Marine Windows
Fuel capacity:	2,000 litres
Fresh water:	170 litres
Sullage:	75 litres
Passengers:	42