

'Silver Gull'

Tasman Island Cruises' 12.5m Kirby Naiad

By Mike Brown



Tasman Island Cruises operate cruises that combine spectacular scenery and wildlife experiences with, frequently, exhilarating transport experiences in high-speed craft.

Tasman Island Cruises are operated by Bruny Island Charters which, as the name suggests, also offer cruises to Bruny island. Based near Tasmania's Port Arthur, the Tasman Island cruise vessels travel the coastline of the Tasman National Park, past Tasman Island to the south of Cape Pillar's 280-metre basalt cliffs, and on to Eaglehawk Neck.

On the way, passengers are guaranteed seal sightings year round, and near-guaranteed sightings of dolphins, gannets, sea eagles, albatross and falcons; seasonally, two species of whales turn up.

This all takes place in waters that are frequently subject to adverse weather. The economics of the operation, not to mention its reputation, rely on the minimum number of days when the service does not operate: and, just as importantly, on the level of passenger comfort and perceived safety when it does operate.

The fleet originally used diesel-powered catamarans, but the operator had an unacceptable number of non-paying days due to weather, and periodic engine

maintenance and repairs. Bruny Island Charters' has now settled on Kirby Naiad RIBs powered by four-stroke outboards; the reviewed vessel is its fourth.

The intent, in powering by triple outboards, was the redundancy that allowed the possibility of trips taking place with only one motor, and maintenance schedules that could use spare motors rather than taking the boat out of service.

The sixth vessel has been fitted with Mercury Verados rated at 224kW instead of the previous 204kW. The increase in maximum speed by a couple of knots to 49 is of no significance, cruising speed remaining at 28-30 knots. The owner was interested in possible longevity and fuel consumption advantages from maintaining the same speed at lower throttle openings.

These Verados are a new generation model of the supercharged motors, featuring the latest in electronic engine management, so fuel consumption was already likely to drop dramatically.

The overall length of the 'Silver Gull' is 12.5 metres, but the measured length of 12 metres allows mastering by the holder of a Coxswain's certificate. With a beam of 4.1 metres, she seats 42 passengers spaciouly in a layout designed for best possible

viewing. As the ranks of seats move aft, so their height increases.

The Naiads are extremely weatherly boats with the shock-absorbing effects of the steep deadrise bottoms and soft collars, but the operator exposes passengers to as little pain as possible. Depending on weather, passengers travel by boat to Eaglehawk Bay and return by coach, or vice versa.

The control console is aft of the passengers, in a vessel widely praised by the passengers themselves, as well as the coxswain for its comfort.

For further information contact: Kirby Marine, Western Australia. PH: (08) 9410 2270, FX: (08) 9410 2280, Email: office@kirbymarine.com, Web: www.kirbymarine.com

'Silver Gull'

SPECIFICATIONS

Type of vessel:	Adventure tourism RIB
In survey to:	USL 1C
Home port:	Hobart
Owner:	Bruny Island Charters, Tasmania
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
Construction material:	Aluminium
Main engines:	3 x Mercury Verado outboards, 224 kW each
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
Freshwater capacity:	170 litres
Sullage:	75 litres

