

I had the opportunity to be on the Infanta Inflatables 9 meter RIB during the Trans Agulhas 2019/2020. For those that don't know the Trans Agulhas is known as the toughest inflatable boat race in the World. I have worked in the Rescue industry for the last 10 years not just as a volunteer but also full time work; I have worked with many rescue organisations across South Africa in different settings including the aquatic rescue setting. I have worked on all kinds of water craft – from small to big – and not just in the rescue setting but also for fun I basically grew up on the ocean. I have been asked to join the Trans Agulhas rescue crew for the race 2019/2020, I immediately said yes as I have a big passion for the Trans Agulhas as well as for rescue.

My first question then was, but with what boat will we be doing this, they then told me about this 9 meter RIB that is being designed by Infanta Inflatables in Swellendam. My next question then was but what motors will they put on this boat because 9 meters is not small. So the boat got fitted with two 150hp Mercury four stroke motors, when I heard that I almost removed myself from the rescue crew as I thought the two 150hp motors is too small for this boat and at that stage I only believed in one brand which was not Mercury.

So the Trans Agulhas started and we launched the boat in Plettenberg bay. We were about 6 crew on board the boat. We went out the Keurbooms River Mouth with no problems, the cabin on the boat kept us dry while going through the surf. We were on the water for about 7 hours that day with big swell and that is where I got respect for this boat and the two Mercury 150hp motors. The boat handled the following sea very well. We got the swells from all sides that day and we had absolutely no problems. It won't be possible to explain the tough conditions that we had on the first day of the Trans Agulhas, but the Trans Agulhas veterans did admit that this particular day was one of the worst days (sea conditions) they have experienced on the Trans Agulhas in the last 32 years that the Trans Agulhas have been raced.

During the Trans Agulhas we spend 5 days on the water, we did about 440nm on the boat with a average of 6 hours a day on the boat. Some things that stood out for me about this boat was definitely the two shock absorbing seats in front where the pilot and co-pilot sits which makes things so much easier. The one day we towed two boats at once for about 5 hours, and that is where the GPS with the sound system did his job by entertaining us with some good sound and music. The cabin also made things very comfortable.

I can honestly say I am very impressed with this Infanta Inflatables 9 meter RIB , any boat expert will tell you that if a boat can do the Trans Agulhas and especially with the conditions we had, and not give you one problem then it must be a good quality boat. Infanta Inflatables can be proud of themselves; I am looking forward to the next one.

Jean Rossouw