

Going nowhere **SLOWLY**

Words and pictures by Scarlett Steer

Picture this. It's a balmy summer afternoon, the skies are clear, the water sparkling, and the breezes gentle. If you close your eyes you can hear the quiet passing water, laughter, chatter and the rhythmic strumming of Jack Johnson's guitar. While others fight for a patch of sand on a crowded beach, you are stretched out on a swathe of two-toned vinyl, ice cold G&T in hand, with 14 of your closest mates. Reckon this kind of scenario belongs only to the rich and famous? Reckon again.







In terms of onboard seating the Leisure Liner is certainly not short of space and can accommodate over 14 people.

Initially aimed at the dinghy and hobie market, Knysna's Tait Marine was founded over a decade ago in 1994, by Chris and Liz Tait. The pair soon realised that there was a rapidly growing demand for outboard engines and powered craft, and expanded their business to include the manufacture and selling of craft. One such inclusion is the Leisure Liner – a sexier, sassier version of your basic pontoon design. The craft is the essence of on-water entertainment, with ample space for guests, luggage, drinks, food and the like. Although I was told that she seats 14 comfortably, I reckon you could get quite a few more people on board – there's just so much room.

The Leisure Barge comes in three different sizes – 16 ft, 21 ft, and 24 ft. Her hull is constructed from aluminium sheets that have been rolled into tubes with a 650 metre



diameter, complete with cross-bearing aluminium channels that enhance structural brawn. Aluminium is an extremely low maintenance material, requiring little more than an annual coat of anti-foul, keeping unwanted costs to an absolute minimum. She is super stable, not only on the tame waters of the Knysna lagoon, but

on bigger swells as well. Although ideally suited to more protected bodies of water, these solid boats should not be discounted for a comfortable cruise to Clifton. The Leisure Liner we tested was powered by a 115HP Mercury outboard, which is slightly over the top. In the nicest way possible, these boats are more

Driving Miss Daisy than *The Fast and the Furious*, so a 60HP Mercury Big Foot is more than enough for a comfortable cruising speed of 10 knots, and with a top speed of 20 knots making the craft eligible for use as a ferry.

As I said earlier, the Leisure Liner has no shortage of onboard space. Directly at the bow is a lockable hatch for the anchor and various ropes and chains, as well as stainless steel cleats and a wrap-around stainless steel bow rail. Cushioned U-shaped bench wraps around the bow's seating area, with a removable table complete with drink holders in the centre. The helmsman controls the boat from a swivel skipper's seat set in front of a side console unit. Instrumentation is plain and simple, monitoring rpm, mph, trim and voltage, a switch panel housing controls for lighting, and a radio and CD player under a protective cover. Cable steering comes standard, with hydraulic as an option.

An L-shaped bench seat, also comfortably cushioned in two-tone vinyl, makes up the rest of the onboard seating arrangements.



A swivel skipper seat is set into a side console unit.

There is also place for a second table to be fixed in this area. All cushions can be removed to reveal cavernous storage space for spare clothing, safety equipment, and valuables. Plenty of soda and beers can be tucked away into two self-draining cooler boxes, and a 12 V mini-refrigerator can be made use of on longer trips. And while we're on the subject of longer trips, the Leisure Liner also comes in a sleeper version, able to

accommodate four people with bags of room to spare. Removable, waterproof canvas covers fit all around the boat, converting the craft into an aquatic caravan for a dry and cosy overnight stay. These covers are also extremely handy if the wind picks up or the weather turns inclement, and are easy to put up and take down. The entire deck is fitted with non-rot Balogotex carpeting, ensuring a comfy, non-slip under foot ▶





A 115 HP outboard is a little over the top for a cruising craft . A 60HP Mercury Big Foot is ideal.

experience. The deck is also fitted with floor lights for those parties that go on long after the sun has sunk beneath the horizon.

The stern consists of a spacious, carpeted deck complete with a braai and optional onboard flush toilet and enclosure. Boys – this is a great extra to opt for if you have a hope of attracting the fairer sex onboard – no matter how liberating you may think it is to relieve yourself in the open, women just do not feel the same. A boarding ladder and slightly submerged swim platform make swimming just that more convenient and carefree.

A boat with so much onboard room and able to accommodate so many people is going to be fairly big in size. Big boats are often quite cumbersome and awkward to manage in terms of

docking and taking out of the water. Not so the Leisure Liner. I was really surprised by just how easy the boat was to manoeuvre and take on and off a trailer. Remarkably, the Leisure Liner only weighs about 650 kilograms (without the engine), so is much easier to tow than you might think. Obviously don't try it in your Tazz, be sensible, but your regular bakkie should do the trick nicely. While we're on the subject of towing, it is interesting to note that Tait Marine are also an SABS approved trailer manufacturer, meaning that all their trailers are custom made to fit their boats.

In my humble opinion, Tait Marine's Leisure Liner is a fantastic option for families, friends or the corporate type looking for a slightly different way to entertain. Her layout is functional and ergonomic, her construction



The stern deck makes a great place to braai.

Standard features

- Carpeting*
- Full upholstery*
- Moulded seating*
- Railings*

Basic boat retail pricing

<i>16 ft Leisure Liner</i>	<i>R75 000</i>
<i>21 ft Leisure Liner</i>	<i>R80 000</i>
<i>24 ft Leisure Liner</i>	<i>R90 000</i>

Optional extras

- Coleman bar fridge*
- Stainless steel custom bow rail*
- Stainless steel grab rail*
- Stainless steel mooring cleats*
- Ladder*
- Sun canopy*
- Steering systems*
- Battery x 2*
- Battery boxes x 2*
- Boat cover*
- Gas braai*
- Table and base*
- Ice box*
- Onboard flush toilet and enclosure (remember what I said guys)*
- CD player*
- 4 x waterproof speakers*

Trailer

- 16 ft and 21 ft galvanised trailer*
- Submersible lights*
- Adjustable jockey wheel*
- Winch strap*
- White epoxy-coated wheels*
- Winch*
- Cable*
- 24 ft double axle trailer*

Motors

- Mariner/Mercury 25HP 2-Stroke*
- Mariner/Mercury 40HP 2-Stroke*
- Mariner/Mercury 60HP 2-Stroke*

solid and stable, her pricing fair, and her possibilities for having fun unlimited. Contact Don or Stuart at Tait Marine on (044) 382 4460 or mwctait@mweb.co.za, or visit their website at www.taitmarine.com ●