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Grand Golden Line G850GL and Suzuki DF350A Review

With the most powerful 350hp Suzuki outboard ever, this stylish European RIB offers a sporty ride, plenty of comforts and abundant amenities for summer day-boating

After decades of failed attempts, it's taken till now for big Rigid Inflatable Boats or RIBs to finally receive the recognition they deserve as practical dayboats Down Under. Perfect for summer, the flagship Grand Golden Line G850GL with Suzuki DF305A cruised down the coast from Pittwater to greet us on Sydney Harbour for a compelling test with a difference.

OVERVIEW

Mark Riley has been around boats a long time — and that has led him to believe that big RIBs are a great way of getting around. Having restored classic yachts, sold luxury cruisers, and hosted trips north to the Whitsundays, he's come back to Pittwater doing what he loves most — getting aboard boats, various craft and toys that let you interact with the water — via his Marine Riley business.

This Grand Golden Line G850GL is his ultimate offering, the flagship of this European-made brand, and a stylish and practical RIB day cruiser that makes a statement. With a young family, Riley has been a fan of big RIBs like this for some time on his local Pittwater. But he will tell you this Grand Golden Line G850GL with [the latest Suzuki DF350](#) is by far the best RIB he's driven yet.

Made in the Ukraine, Grand services a global dealer network with inflatable boats from 2.50m tenders to this 8.50m centre console. This flagship Grand Golden Line G850GL offers plenty of comfortable seats, a wrap-around lounge and lunch table, a fridge and moulded amenities centre with sink, plus handy private step-down head.

On a day when the sun is shining, Riley and his wife Darja arrived keen to share with us the practical aspects of this big RIB. They came by sea from Pittwater to Sydney Harbour, travelling at high-20 knots for the speedy 20nm passage. There's not a drop on the windscreen when I step aboard and the couple look far from windswept, salt-splattered or dishevelled.

What we like!

- Impressive offshore performance
- Powerful 350hp Suzuki
- Ease of handling
- Ride and seating comfort
- Plenty of amenities for day boating

Not so much!

- Black fibreglass will get hot in summer
- No transom walkthrough

As I was to discover later, lunch was in the fridge along with a bottle of French champagne. But Darja wasn't just playing host, she drove the boat to demonstrate its ease of handling. Even with the potent 350hp Suzuki, the Grand Golden Line G850GL provides predictable and reassuring performance. It is exactly the kind of boat the wife and kids can take on their own from a waterfront or marina berth for a day at the beach.

From the forgiving inflatable tubes, to the direct and responsive steering, from the comfortable seating to the day-boating amenities, and the storage with a private toilet, the Grand Golden Line G850GL is a great boat for summer.

We can see this big RIB hitting up the beaches, towing the kids on tubes, acting as a dive and fishing platform, but also as a waterfront run-around, commuter and, of course, a luxury tender.



These practical aspects of the Grand Golden Line G850GL are what Riley is keen to get across as we zoom around Sydney Harbour, take in the sights, then drop anchor for a Friday afternoon lunch in the sun.

PRICE AND EQUIPMENT

With a 300lt fuel system and a 300hp Suzuki, the standard Grand Golden Line G850L will set you back a reasonable \$138,000. While Grand builds value into its boats, the Grand Golden Line G850GL we tested was a true luxury RIB with a lot of extras and upgrades.

The up-spec'd GL version gets swim platforms with a ladder, stainless bow rail, more storage lockers, and a waterski towing arch with GRP top (aka a whale tail).



The big-ticket item was the 350hp Suzuki, which costs about \$44k (rrp). Steering and installation added \$8k when fitted to this boat. As an option, you can also power the Grand Golden Line G850GL with twin 200hp outboards.

The DF350A engine had full electronic controls, digital gauges, a stainless duo-prop, plus a power-assist Seastar Tournament Hydraulic steering system.



Our test boat had a Raymarine Axiom 12in multifunction chartplotter and second 9in MFD, with full integration to stereo and Suzuki engine management system, Fusion integrated AV system with Amplifier and subwoofer, including colour-coded Superior speakers.

As tested, this loaded Grand Golden Line G850GL with the latest Suzuki DF350A had a \$209,650 ticket. It's pretty much the Rolls Royce of the Grand line-up and the importers did a stellar job of creating a luxury RIB day cruiser to showcase the brand and the appeal of this boating genre.

DESIGN AND LAYOUT

The photos speak for themselves, but this boat is more than just a straight-line rocket. At rest, we spent some time breaking bread and hanging out.



Up front, there is an anchor locker with concealed windlass and a large vented bow storage compartment. A moulded non-skid bow step and non-skid GRP foredeck under the sunpad cushion allow you to jump ashore or nose into a wharf and pick-up guests without worrying about losing footing.



The mandarin-coloured upholstery looks the goods against the black hull and tubes. Stainless steel grab rails trace the large sunpad, so kids could travel here as you fly down the estuary, bay or harbour to a beach somewhere. There are drinkholders and stereo speakers nearby.



The steering console has a front lifting seat, dry storage within, and we had the upgraded head that makes this boat doubly practical for family boating.

There is a twin helm seat with flip-up bolsters, plus a U-shaped aft seat or lounge with a supportive backrest. The moulded amenities centre with sink and fridge behind the helm seats feeds your lunch plans. Storage lockers abound.

The 'Black Impression' Hypalon fabric tube colour, Mocha and Black Sea-Dek soft touch decking, and Performance Black steering wheel were upgrades, along with a bimini top with stainless steel frame (to be fitted). There were also carbon inserts in the rubbing strakes and carbon trim and décor.



An optional removable table with four drinkholders, rear sundeck with cushions, stainless steel refrigerator, freshwater shower, 100lt water supply and sink, electric WC with 60lt blackwater tank with charcoal filter, keel protector, and electric anchor winch add to the user-friendliness of this big RIB.

HULL AND ENGINEERING

Like most big RIBS, the Grand Golden Line G850GL is exceptionally seaworthy. Think nothing of powering offshore to islands, remote reefs, a mothership 20nm away swinging on anchor, a secret surf or dive spot, or a nearby port of call.



Grand rates its Golden Line G850GL for force 8 winds (40 knots) and on seas.

With an aerodynamic helm console designed on CAD, and Hypalon tubes using the top-shelf ORCA material, the Golden Line G850GL looks sharp and appears well built. The mouldings were pretty fair, with perhaps room for a better finish inside the head compartment, where there isn't a full liner.

Externally, the black tubes and hull and matching black Suzuki DF350A add to the luxury European superyacht-tender look, although the dark finishes might get hot Down Under in summer. There's a good spread of sturdy stainless-steel fittings like cleats and tow eyes.



The deep-vee fibreglass hull is designed for a smooth ride, while the heavy-duty hypalon tubes, with overpressure valve, create incredible stability at rest and underway. The boat features a self-bailing cockpit, so no issues if you take some green water when crossing the bar or beach.

The installation on the flush-mounted Raymarine 12in and 9in screens added to the sophistication, while the boat had a triple battery upgrade for plenty of house power for the fridge and electrics when away from dock.

With the generous 100lt water supply, you will get plenty of quick deck showers and flushes of the toilet during the course of your day-boating trips. Just add fuel and lunch, as Marine Riley had done, and you're set.

ON THE WATER

We zoomed around Sydney Harbour in all directions and ran up to almost 50 knots top speed for our trials. Marine Riley has actually cracked 50 knots with a lesser load, we're told, but what struck us most was the acceleration throughout the rev range.

As we conveyed in this article about the [5 things we love about the biggest ever 350hp Suzuki outboard](#), a story we wrote post-haste after this boat test, we we're flawed. Being a sports RIB, we took this Grand Golden Line 850GL for a grip-it-and-rip-it run.



But as much as we love the latest Suzuki, the set-up deserves some of the credit. The top-shelf power-assisted Sea Star steering and the unique (to an outboard engine) duoprop remove any torque steer or load at the wheel, making this 350hp a snap to drive — fast — while also adding to the cruising pleasure and confidence at the helm.

Driven hard, the Grand Golden Line G850GL and duoprop DF350A didn't let go in tight turns. The prop bite and reduced slip also leads to great hole shot. Beyond the economical setting of 3500-4000rpm, which gave a sprightly 29-30 knots for 38-46lt/hr, the DF350A engine seemingly kicks into another gear. After 42 knots at 5000rpm, the top 500rpm with the prop trimmed up are exciting, with more power that arrives with a roar.



In this way, the Golden Line G850GL and 350hp Suzuki offered everything — from predictable performance and easy driving for mums and even kids, through long-range ocean economy for reeling in the sea miles, to big water performance for expedition boating, towing grunt (off the waterski tower) in summer, and high-speed flatwater-running trimmed-up on the way home. Yeeha.

The flip-down bolster seats, wheel and flush-mounted Raymarine screens at the helm, and wrap-around windshield, give comfort and sophistication when cruising on this terrific RIB day cruiser. What's more, you will look very cool driving this eye-catching boat at speed and just mooching around the anchorage.

VERDICT

With a 12-person capacity, the Grand Golden Line G850GL can carry a crowd in a commuter role. Anchor down, the big RIB plays the part of consummate host and will provide a comfortable lunch setting for a couple up to, say, two families of four or eight in total.



We put this entertainer role to the test. The Moët and charcuterie were chilled in the fridge, the spread was set around the moulded table, we melted into the plush wrap-around lounge, as the water lapped at the ladder.

While Sydney Harbour played the perfect stage, it could just as easily have been Whitehaven Beach, Tangalooma, The Basin or Rottnest Island. The Grand Golden Line G850GL with powerful 350hp Suzuki opens up a lot of possibilities for today's way of just-add-water day cruising.

PERFORMANCE - SPEED AND ECONOMY

RPM, KNOTS, LT/HR

1000, 4.3, 4.2

1500, 5.9, 8.0

2000, 8.1, 12.0

2500, 12.8, 19.1 (planing)

3000, 19.0, 27.1

3500, 28.8, 38.4 (cruise)

4000, 31.0, 46.4

4500, 37, 68

5000, 42.0, 81

5600, 47.7, 101

Specifications: Grand Golden Line G850GL

Price as Tested: Loaded Grand Golden Line G850GL with the latest Suzuki DF350A cost \$209,650

Priced From: With a 300hp Suzuki, the standard Grand Golden Line G850L will set you back from \$138,000

LOA: 8.50m

Internal Length: 6.40m

Beam: 2.95m

Deadrise: 30-25 degree at transom

Tube Diameter: 60cm

Chambers: 5

Bare Boat Weight: 1200kg

Load Capacity: 2000kg

Passengers: 12

Boat Category: CE Category B

Engine Rating: 400hp max

Engine Weight: 480kg max

Transom Height: 30in

Engine on Test: Suzuki DF350A

Supplied by [Marine Riley](#)

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