

Zodiac Open 5.5 (2019-)

Brief Summary

The Zodiac Open 5.5 from Zodiac Nautic is a hard-bottom, deep-V, center-console inflatable that has been paired with the brand new and recently announced Evinrude 115-hp high-output 3-cylinder E-TEC G2 outboard engine. The company positions this boat as having “modularity”, meaning they believe it is a versatile all-around boat suited for many tasks from fishing, to diving, to watersports.

Price

Base Price

Price Range27496.00-40000.00

Key Features

- Self-bailing cockpit
- Hard bottom
- Deep-V hull
- Hinged center console
- Bumper cones

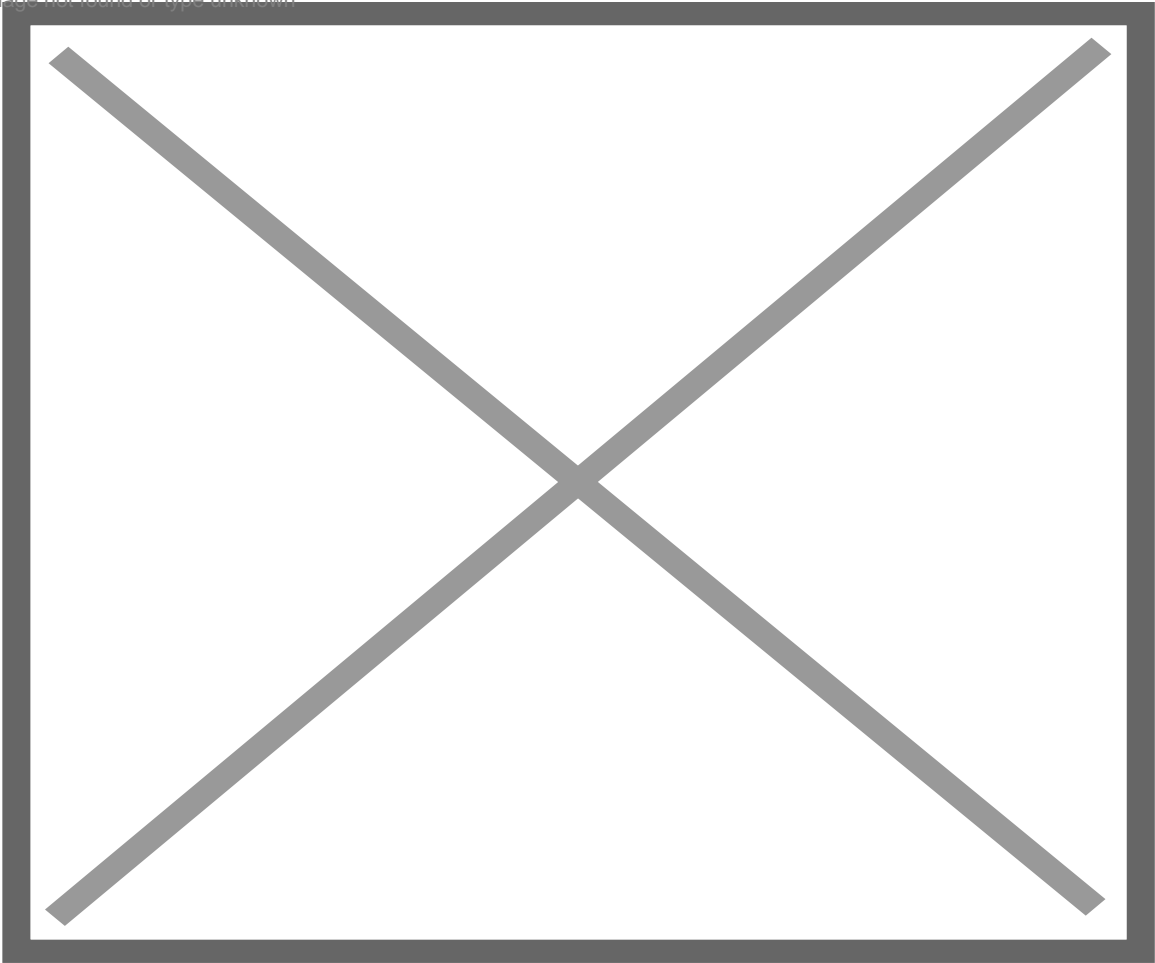
Test Results

RPM	MPH	Knots	GPH	MPG	NMPG	STAT. MILE	NM	dBa
650	3.1	2.7	0.2	15.5	13.5	368	320.2	65
1000	4.9	4.3	0.4	12.3	10.7	291	253.1	70
1500	6.4	5.5	0.9	7.1	6.1	168	145.8	72
2000	7.9	6.9	2.5	3.2	2.8	77	66.6	77
2500	16.3	14.2	2.9	5.7	5	136	118.2	79

RPM	MPH	Knots	GPH	MPG	NMPG	STAT. MILE	NM	dBa
3000	23.2	20.1	3.7	6.3	5.4	149	129.3	80
3500	29	25.2	5	5.8	5	138	119.6	84
4000	34.8	30.3	5.9	5.9	5.1	140	121.9	84
4500	40	34.8	7.3	5.5	4.8	130	113.2	87
5000	44.8	38.9	8.7	5.2	4.5	123	106.9	89
5350	46.5	40.4	9	5.2	4.5	123	107.3	91

[View the test results in metric units](#)

Image not found or type unknown



Specifications

Length Overall	17' 9" (5.41 m)
BEAM	8' 4" (2.54 m)
Dry Weight	1,290 lbs. (585 kg)
Tested Weight	2,283 lbs. (1,036 kg)
Draft	N/A
Draft Up	N/A
Draft Down	N/A
Air Draft	N/A
Deadrise/Transom	
Max Headroom	open
Bridge Clearance	N/A
Weight Capacity	3,109 lbs. (1,410 kg)
Person Capacity	12
Fuel Capacity	26.4 gal. (100 L)
Water Capacity	N/A
Length on Trailer	N/A

Height on Trailer	N/A
Trailer Weight	N/A
Total Weight	2,283 lbs. (1,036 kg)
Aft Deck	
Salon Inside Width	
Salon Fore & Aft	
Salon Height	
Salon Volume	
Galley Volume	
Master SR Width	
Master SR fore & Aft	
Master SR Overhead	
Master SR Volume	
Eng. Room Volume	

Acceleration Times & Conditions

Time to Plane	3.5 sec.
0 to 20	

Ratio	2.08:1
Props	RX3 14.5 X 21
Load	2 persons, full fuel, no water, 50 lbs. of gear
Climate	74 deg., 37 humid; wind: 8-12 mph; seas: 1-2

Captain’s Report by Capt. Peter d'Anjou

Zodiac not found or type unknown

Zodiac name was made famous by Jacques Cousteau and is synonymous with all inflatables. The hard bottom deep-V hull of the Zodiac Open 5.5 had a WOT of 46.5 **mph in our tests.**

RIB not found or type unknown

At 17’9” (5.41 m), the Open 5.5 is the smallest RIB (rigid-hulled inflatable boat) in Zodiac’s Open Series.

Mission

Like other boats in Zodiac’s Open series, the Open 5.5 offers modularity, performance, and storage. A combination of a very low center of gravity, a deep-V hull, and added stabilization from the tubes give the rigid-hulled inflatable speed and sea-crossing capacities without compromising comfort or safety.

Zodiac Nautic is headquartered in France, however, the boats are built in Summerville, South Carolina. The compartments in the deck will accept gear for all water-based hobbies.

Distinguishing Features

- Thermobonding
- Removable tube
- 12-person capacity

Major Features

- Hinged center console with below-deck storage
- Bow mooring bollard
- Strongan (PVC) or Neoprene (Hypalon) fabric

- Flexible seating
- Double grab line

Design

Zodiac sees its RIB boats like the Open 5.5 as 4x4s of the sea. The buoyancy tubes of Zodiac boats have several compartments, separated by waterproof partitions. Thanks to its air reserves, the boat keeps its ability to float and stays conceptually unsinkable when fully loaded, even with a deflated compartment.

Design

Image not found or type unknown

Fiberglass boat building techniques for molding the hull greatly add to the Zodiac Open 5.5's performance over "soft bottomed" RIB.

Layout

Image not found or type unknown

The Zodiac Open 5.5's hinged center console design gives better side-to-side access to the in-deck storage.

Performance

Engine

Image not found or type unknown

Our Zodiac Open 5.5 test model featured Evinrude's new 115-hp high-output 3-cylinder E-TEC G2 outboard engine.

Pairing this 1.9-liter, 3-cylinder, direct in-the-cylinder, fuel-injected two-stroke engine with a RIB makes sense, since all RIBs benefit from the torque and performance of two-stroke outboards.

Our Zodiac Open 5.5 test boat has a LOA of 17'9" (5.4 m) and a beam of 8'4" (2.54 m). With an empty weight of 1,290 lbs. (585.1 kg), 26.4 gal. (99.93 liters) of fuel and 2 people onboard, we had an estimated test weight of 2,283 lbs. (1,035.55 kg).

Port side cruising

Image not found or type unknown

Zodiac's Open 5.5 RIB had a test weight of 2,283 lbs. (1,036 kg).

With the Evinrude E-TEC G2 115 H.O. outboard fitted with an RX3 3-blade 14.5' x 21" propeller powering our Open 5.5 test boat, we reached a top speed of 46.5 mph (74.8 kph) at 5,350 rpm. The best economic cruise came in at 3000 rpm and 23.2 mph (37.3 kph). It was at that speed that the 3.7 gph (14 lph) fuel burn translated into 6.3 mpg (2.66 kpl) and a range of 149 statute miles (239 km).

For acceleration, the Zodiac Open 5.5 got on plane in an average time of 3.5 seconds and went from zero to 20 mph (32 kph) in an average of 6.5 seconds and on to 30 mph (48 kph) in 10.2 seconds.

Handing

We had calm conditions for our test with wind speeds around 10 knots and a slight chop, so we can't really comment on how the Zodiac Open 5.5 performed in any kind of seas.

Boat Inspection

The Stern

Stern not found or type unknown

The hard-bottom hull has a molded transom height of 12". Note the tow rings on the transom on either side of the engine.

The maximum horsepower recommended by the manufacturer is 130-hp and a long shaft engine is required. The Evinrude E-TEC G2 115 H.O. comes in both a 20" or 25" long-shaft version.

Rigging tube not found or type unknown

With Evinrude's internal steering, the rigging tube provides a simple and clean installation. This new Evinrude can be adapted to existing hydraulic steering, cable steering, and also has a tiller option, but here the choice is the industry-first internal steering. The rigging tube is stationary when the engine turns, reducing wear.

The transom has two round inspection ports plus the center engine well access panel.

Engine tilt not found or type unknown

The engine can be tilted completely out of the water by a switch on the engine or by a control on the throttle. As with all Evinrude E-TEC G2s, the engine tilts 81-degrees, getting the lower unit completely out of the water. In addition to the local tilt switch on the engine itself, a remote tilt control on the throttle allows for underway trim adjustment.

Maybe this feature surprised Zodiac because when we tilted the engine all the way up it touched the seatback, so we simply removed the seatback.

Back seat not found or type unknown

The three-person rear seat is designed so the seatbacks can be removed. The seatback supports plug into rod holders. The center of the seat is a cushion on top of a 54-quart cooler.

Rear seat grab not found or type unknown

The rear seat has grab handles to either side that double as cleats for tying up. The wraparound seatbacks are neatly stitched.

Wide open back

With the seatbacks removed, **it is wide open in the back.**

Seat leaning post

In front of the rear cooler seat is a powder-coated leaning post **for the helm that measures 34” (86.36 cm) x 10” (25.4 cm) fore and aft.**

The fixed pedestal leaning post has a footrest and is open below, where there is another access port into the hull. On either end of the leaning post’s bench are convenient grab handles. And across the back is another handhold. The bench hinges forward to reveal storage below the seat.

Helm

Just in front of the leaning post is the center console. The bottom of the console is part of the molded deck. The upper part has a forward clam-style front door that hinges up on gas shocks to access the storage space within the console. The entire upper console can hinge forward for even greater access to the in-deck storage area.

Front console storage

With the front of the console opened up on gas shocks, storage is revealed. Note the hinges below the opening on which the entire console can hinge open.

Front console

The front of the console has a powder coated frame for the windshield that also makes a good handhold. A powder-coated frame is attached to the console sides and holds the blue-tinted plexiglass windshield and does triple duty as grab handles as well as the base for an arch over the console, holding the all-around navigation light. There is an optional canvas T-top available.

Footrest

The base of the console provides a two-level angled footrest with a non-skid deck.

No nav displays

Our test boat did not have any navigation displays but there is room to add them.

The upper plastic console houses the dash. The simple helm has a fixed steering wheel. An Evinrude engine gauge is just above the wheel. To starboard of the wheel is a row of rocker switches and then the

Evinrude DTS throttle & shift. The starboard side of the dash has USB and 12v charger ports, 2 cupholders and a grab rail. The ignition is below the throttle.

Windshields

The windshield has minor distortion where it's bent (just to starboard of the support post). Wrapped around the top of the console is an arch that holds both the windshield and the all-around navigation light. The windshield does have some minor distortion in the corners.

Side Deck

Top view

This top view shows how the helm console is placed off center.

Port side walk through

The helm console is offset to starboard, so the preferred path forward is up this wider, 13" (33.02 cm) port side. Since the wheel is on the port side of the console, this positions the helmsman almost on the centerline of the boat - a good thing.

Moving forward from the helm on the port side is a side deck clearance of 13" (33.02 cm). The whole helm console is offset, creating asymmetrical side decks.

Helm offset to starboard

The starboard side deck is only 3" (**7.62 cm**) **wide and not passable**.

Grab handles

Hand lines on the 13" (33.02 cm) tubes run fore and aft the length of the boat for grab handles. The freeboard amidships is 25" (63.6 cm).

Windshield grab handles

Again, the lower frame for the windshield acts as a grab handle for going forward along the port sidedeck.

Bow

Bow

In front of the console, the non-skid foredeck measures 44" (111.76 cm) wide and there is another access port in the center of the foredeck. The bow has a molded-in front seat 14" (35.56 cm) off the deck. The hatch that acts as a seat base has a non-skid surface. There is storage below that doubles as an anchor locker. The seat opens with a lift-and-lock latch.

With the hatch swung up on two side hinges, the fuel fill for the 26.4-gallon (100-liter) integrated tank is revealed. There is a drain right in front, which seems an odd place for a drain given the proximity of the fuel fill. The anchor locker/storage is alongside.

Easy push valves

Image not found or type unknown

The red arrows indicate two of the semi-recessed easy-push valves for inflating the tubes. The tubes have 5 chambers, one forward and two to each side.

Just in front of the anchor locker is a bollard for tying off the anchor rode, a raised plastic housing that Zodiac calls a “polyester bow davit and tilting sheave”, and the anchor roller. The sidelights and a set of chocks are mounted on the sides of the housing.

On the starboard side we can see the push valves for inflating the tubes . The foot pump inflator has a manometer to get the pressure just right - a critical aspect of maintaining any RIB is to keep it properly inflated.

Anchor roller

Image not found or type unknown

Freeboard forward is 33” (124.91 cm), with a cockpit depth of 25” (94.63 cm) from the deck to the top of the tube. There is a D-ring on the hull below the anchor roller. An optional bow rail is available.

Construction

Internal stringer

Image not found or type unknown

An internal stringer is located between the Open 5.5’s hull and deck. The three are glued together with methyl methacrylate in a “conformer” that aligns the pieces to make a single structure to which the buoyancy tube can be attached.

Zodiac uses a chop-gun to shoot resin and glass stands into the molds, then adds layers of glass cloth in high load areas to build the hull and deck for the Open 5.5. The stringer adds strength and support for tankage.

PVC piping

Image not found or type unknown

A PVC pipe is glued inside the hull and a channel is routed through it from the outside to facilitate sliding the tubes onto the hull.

Two types of tube material are available: PVC, for which Zodiac uses the trademark of Strongan, or Hypalon, a rubber material that uses the trademark Neoprene. PVC is cheaper, more susceptible to breakdown in sunlight, and not quite as resistant to puncture as Hypalon. The Neoprene (Hypalon) version is available in two colors, black or light grey – the Strongan (PVC) version is only available in light grey.

Knowing which fabric is used on a RIB is critical, if repairs are necessary, since each requires different glues and prep for repair. In a nutshell, there is a reason the Hypalon is \$2,660 more expensive on an Open 5.5 – it's better. Either will last a long time if kept properly maintained and inflated.

U-shaped hull

The U-shaped tube can be removed from the hull for maintenance, repair, transportation, or storage. This is an unusual trait in RIBs and is made possible in Zodiacs by the insertion of a PVC tube in the hard-bottom hull, which is channeled to accept the tube.

Optional Equipment

- Swim platforms w/boarding ladder (\$2,450)
- Bow anchor locker cushion (\$203)
- Bow rail (\$1,777)
- Backrest for leaning post (\$808)
- Roll bar/ski mast (\$2,065)
- Synthetic teak deck EVA, gray or black (\$1,575)
- Synthetic teak deck EVA platforms, gray or black (\$370)
- Console mooring cover (\$415)
- Bolster mooring cover (\$208)
- Bolster mooring cover with backrest cover (\$286)
- T-top (\$4,720)
- Fishing rod holder 90-degrees (\$106)
- Flag holder (\$97)
- Lure holder (\$62)
- Cup holder (\$67)
- Venture VB-2200 trailer (\$2,249)

Top views

This top view shows the optional swim platforms and bow rail available.

Full view

This Zodiac Open 5.5 includes black Neoprene tubes, optional bow cushion, sunpad, T-top, synthetic decking, leaning post backrest, and ski tow.

Pricing

The Zodiac Open 5.5 PVC boat without engine lists for \$27,496 plus dealer prep and freight. The Hypalon boat without engine is \$30,156 plus dealer prep and freight. The PVC boat with competitors' 115-hp engine ready for water, is listed at \$36,995 (Defender) plus prep and freight.

Evinrude's pricing for the new E-TEC G2 115 H.O. averages \$11,957.

Observations

Zodiac's versatile 18-footer can accommodate a crowd and is both safe and fun to drive, especially when paired with the all-new Evinrude E-TEC G2 115 H.O. It's a tidy package for around \$40,000.

The move of G2 technology into the mid-range engine market will shake up the industry. No other engines in class can boast of the torque, light weight, low emissions, fuel economy, or driver-centric features these engines have.

Keep an eye out for our continuing tests of boats powered with this engine and reviews of her new three-cylinder stablemates, the 140-hp and the 150-hp.