



Part of the Parker Marine Group of Companies

1966 Mason Sports Clipper 23

Price: \$95,000



1966 Mason Sports Clipper 23

A New Zealand Classic. Beautifully Restored. Ready to Enjoy.

There are boats that transport you across the water—and then there are boats that transport you through time. **Raroa** is one of those rare boats.

Designed by legendary New Zealand boatbuilder **Tony Mason**, the Mason Sports Clipper 23 represented the very pinnacle of trailer boating when she was introduced in the 1960s. Elegant, beautifully proportioned and remarkably sophisticated for her era, the Clipper 23 quickly earned a reputation as one of New Zealand's most desirable trailerable cruisers.

Today, fully restored and further enhanced with approximately **\$50,000 of improvements**, Raroa presents an exceptional opportunity to own a genuine piece of New Zealand boating history. She combines the character and craftsmanship of a 1960s classic with modern mechanical reliability, including a **brand-new Chevrolet Blueprinted 383 405hp marine engine installed in 2025**. For the collector, classic-boat enthusiast, syndicate or simply someone who appreciates beautiful boats, Raroa is something very special.

THE MASON SPORTS CLIPPER 23

The epitome of 1960s trailer boating

Tony Mason was one of the pioneers who helped establish New Zealand's reputation for exceptional boat design and construction.

The Clipper 23 was conceived as considerably more than a trailerable powerboat. It was a fast cruiser, a genuine weekender and an elegant launch capable of providing comfortable overnight accommodation. Its sweeping lines, deep-V hull, generous cabin and beautifully finished timber interior created a boat that was as much about style as performance.

More than half a century later, the design remains remarkably appealing.

And unlike many boats of her era, Raroa has been given the attention required to preserve and enhance her for another generation.

RESTORED. UPGRADED. READY.

Raroa underwent a **full restoration during 2020/21**, followed by approximately **\$50,000 of further improvements**.

The result is an exceptionally attractive classic vessel with the visual character of her 1960s origins combined with contemporary mechanical capability.

Major mechanical upgrade

Installed by the current owner in **2025**:

Chevrolet Blueprinted 383 — 405hp marine engine

The engine is coupled to an:

Alpha 1 Generation 2 sterndrive

This combination provides a significant performance upgrade while retaining the versatility of a sterndrive—particularly valuable for beach landings, shallow-water access and convenient trailer launching.

ACCOMMODATION

Despite her compact dimensions, the Clipper 23 makes remarkably clever use of her interior space.

Sleeping accommodation

- Forward cabin with **2 berths**
- Main saloon with **2 additional berths**
- Accommodation for up to **4**

Classic interior

- Beautiful timber trim
- Built-in **cocktail cabinet**
- Fresh-water sink
- Fresh-water pump
- Coleman Tryton 2-burner stove
- Gas bottle and hose
- Dometic 970 Series portable toilet

The interior retains the unmistakable atmosphere of a classic New Zealand launch, with the kind of timber craftsmanship and thoughtful design that has largely disappeared from modern production boats.

EQUIPMENT & INVENTORY

Navigation & Communications

- Hummingbird Helix 5 CHIRP GPS G2
- Fishfinder
- VHF radio

Electrical

- Additional house battery
- 2 x bilge pumps
- 1 x automatic bilge pump

Anchoring & Mooring

- Maxwell anchor winch with rope and chain
- Manson galvanised 15lb anchor
- 2 x inflatable double-eyelet mooring fenders
- 6 x docking lines
- 30m beaching line
- Boat hook
- Wooden oar

Safety

- 8 x life jackets
 - Chubb Dry Powder marine fire extinguisher
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TRAILER & COVERS

Raroa is supplied with a substantial **fully galvanised twin-axle trailer**, making her particularly attractive to owners wanting the flexibility to explore New Zealand's waterways.

Trailer specification

- Fully galvanised twin axle
- New hydraulic braking system
- Dual coupling
- Manual winch
- Current WOF/REGO
- Registration: **84KBX**

Covers

- Made-to-measure boat cover
 - Purchased late 2022
 - Full duck-board covers
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PRINCIPAL SPECIFICATIONS

Specification	Details
Make / Model	Mason Sports Clipper 23
Year	1966
Name	Raroa
Designer	Tony Mason

Specification	Details
LOA	22.67 ft / 6.91 m
Beam	7.67 ft / 2.34 m
Maximum Draft	4.50 ft / 1.37 m
Approx. Weight	2,500 kg
Fuel Capacity	130 litres – 2 tanks
Water Capacity	Approx. 150 litres
Engine	Chevrolet Blueprint 383
Power	405hp
Engine Year	2025
Drive	Alpha 1 Gen.2 sterndrive
Berths	4
Trailer	Galvanised twin axle
Location	Queenstown
Transport	Can be shipped around NZ
Asking Price	\$95,000

WHY RAROA?

A collector's boat with genuine provenance

Raroa isn't simply an old boat that has been tidied up.

She is an important example of one of Tony Mason's most celebrated designs, carefully restored and subsequently upgraded to provide many more years of enjoyment.

She offers:

Classic New Zealand design

A genuine Tony Mason Sports Clipper 23.

Exceptional restoration

Fully restored during 2020/21, with substantial further investment since.

Modern mechanical performance

A brand-new 405hp Chevrolet Blueprinted 383 installed in 2025.

True weekend capability

Four berths, cooking facilities, sink and toilet.

Trailerable freedom

A fully galvanised twin-axle trailer with upgraded hydraulic braking.

Collectability

Mason Clippers have become increasingly sought-after among New Zealand classic-boat enthusiasts.

THE VERDICT

Some boats are built to last. Some become classics.

Raroa has achieved both.

She represents an era when a small launch could be beautifully styled, thoughtfully engineered and finished with genuine craftsmanship.

With her comprehensive restoration, significant subsequent investment and brand-new 405hp V8, she offers an unusually compelling combination of **heritage, beauty and performance**.

Whether destined for a private collection, a boating syndicate or an owner who simply wants to arrive at the marina in something nobody else has, Raroa is a boat that will always attract attention.

Currently located in Queenstown — nationwide transport can be arranged.

YESTERDAY'S CHARM

Boating New Zealand — 8 July 2021

The following feature was written by Boating New Zealand in July 2021 and is reproduced here as a historical feature about Raroa and the Mason Sports Clipper 23.

When Mason Clippers were advertised in Sea Spray magazine in the '60s the byline read:

"The world's finest powerboat – for those people in the position to demand it."

New Zealand, at that stage, was a nation that prided itself on being egalitarian and such statements were only for the bold or foolish.

Tony Mason was undoubtedly the former and paved the way to our current reputation for designing and building the best boats in the world. His clipper designs were about as regal as a trailerable powerboat could get. They were a status symbol for their pipe-smoking owners, and a well-designed one at that.

In 1951 Mason and his old Airforce buddy Cliff Sutton started Sutton Mason Ltd selling household detergent. After a year of that, they thought boatbuilding was a better idea and began production of Marlin powerboats. In 1957 Tony sold his interest in Sutton Mason Ltd and went back into the Airforce for a short time before forming Mason Marine in late 1959. Undoubtedly the most luxurious and outstanding boat in its class, the Mason Clipper 23 epitomized the elite end of trailer boating.

The Tony Mason-designed Clipper 23 was well ahead of its time – being a fast cruiser and a true weekender in every sense. If you find a Mason Clipper for sale today you must be quick as they are usually snapped up smartly and have become collector's pieces in a burgeoning classic boat market.

Some people have a perverse ability to attract beautiful things like classic boats. One of these is Whangamata-based master craftsman Harry Nordberg. He is the rare sort of person who gets offered Mason Clippers. A toolmaker and furniture maker by trade, Harry certainly has the credentials, but there is something else that you can't quite put your finger on, something in his cheerful demeanor that hints that he might also be a master serial boat restorer.

Harrys just finished restoring a Mason Sports Clipper 23 called Raroa. He was offered the boat by Nelson boatie Glen Common as it had been sitting in a shed for 10 years – his intentions of having it restored never realized.

While Harry was returning to his Whangamata base after collecting Raroa from Nelson he stopped for petrol in Taihape. "As I cast my eye over the boat I noticed the front windscreen had popped out of its frame. Then I noticed the front stays of the cabin were rotten and that the whole cabin top was in danger of peeling off!" With visions of bits of a Mason Clipper strewn along the desert road, Harry strapped everything down to ensure Raroa made it to Whangamata in one piece.

Over six months of full-time work he set about her restoration. Structural members of the cabin were replaced, and the cladding was strengthened with 4mm strips of solid mahogany inside and out. The extensive cabin windows were removed and new perspex windows rebated and sealed with Sikaflex to make them waterproof.

The deck was re-glassed and sealed while the glassed cedar strip-plank hull was given a new coat of Altex defender inside and out. Raroa was originally fitted with a 210hp Ford Interceptor engine coupled to a Paragon V-Drive. This was replaced with a near-new 230hp five-litre Mercruiser V8 with an Alpha 1 Generation 2 sterndrive.

The sterndrive made her more versatile for beach landings and hauling onto the trailer. A surplus trailer for a Mason Clipper 24 was modified to suit the 23-foot model and its twin axle arrangement complemented by the Sensotronic braking system finished off the deal. This is Harry's third restoration and when I asked him how it rated next to the others he paused briefly before saying – "they are all hard."

To step aboard the Mason Sports Clipper 23 is to step back in time to the pipe-smoking, cocktail drinking and Jaguar XJ6-owning 1960s. This is no boat full of plastic gadgets – instead there's elegant space and timber trim.

There is the double happy effect of Tony Mason's original design having been given the benefit of Harry Nordberg's experienced eye and attention to detail and it is everywhere aboard.

Raroa has the classic 60s indoor-outdoor flow with the aft end of her cabin open to allow a seamless transition from the open aft deck to the protection of the generous cabin. Headroom is improved with a small step down along the centreline which keeps the cabin proportions sleek.

Seating is either outdoors on either side of the engine box or along bench seats inside the cabin. The forward end of these has fold-down seats for the helmsperson and passenger which are complemented by two sliding hatches above. This gives the option of a heads out, wind in your hair, tank commander style position.

At the aft end of the bench seats are the well-disguised sink and cooker arrangement hidden in mahogany-paneled benchtops on either side of the cockpit. Perhaps the defining feature of Raroa's interior is her built-in cocktail cabinet on the port side dash. Harry even has an image of Tony Mason discussing the details of the cabinet with the first owner Gordon Truscott during construction. Surprisingly, neither of them has a drink in his hand.

There is no mistaking Raroa's Mason style as she hits the water. A flared transom and soft chines folding into a deep vee not only looks good but makes her ride like a waterbed. She is most definitely a launch rather than a powerboat and proves it by soaking up the leftover northeast swell off Whangamata with ease.

The throaty purr of the V8 only adds to the allure that attracts admiring looks from the surfers on the infamous Whangamata bar. Raroa comes from a time when style was comfort, and she is a welcome breath of fresh air in a boating world full of aluminium and fibreglass.

Raroa — a piece of New Zealand boating history, ready for her next chapter.





For more information or to schedule a viewing, please contact Mike.

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