

PROBE SEMI-DRY WETSUIT REVIEW

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Over a year ago we finally had to give up on our old wetsuits, which had mysteriously shrunk over the years, and look for new dive suits. Even though we are based in Brisbane we dive throughout Australia and especially love the diving in Southern Australia, so were after wetsuits that could be used in water temperatures ranging from 14°C to 26°C degrees. We looked at a number of brands and finally decided on the range from Probe Wetsuits.

Probe Wetsuits are a Victorian based company and all they do is make wetsuits. Over the last few years they have revolutionised wetsuit design with their 100% super stretch dive suits. Probe Wetsuits produce a range of wetsuits for diving and surfing, but we were most interested in their semi-dry dive suits.

For the last 15 years we have only been using custom made wetsuits, which were made to order, so buying off the shelf was at first a daunting prospect. We envisioned we would be trying on half a dozen wetsuits to find one that would fit, but a quick review of the Probe sizing chart, weight verses height, told us the size that would be best for us.

Probe Wetsuits make two semi-dry wetsuits, the iFlex and the Inferno, both have similar features, but the newest of the two, the iFlex, incorporates the latest in wetsuit technology – patterned body panels for more comfort

and water tightness and the new incredibly flexible iFlex 360° dive neoprene. The Inferno also sounded good, so we decided to get one of each, Helen getting the 5mm iFlex and Nigel the 5mm Inferno (both these semi-dry wetsuits come in 3mm, 5mm and 7mm sizes).

The first thing we noticed about the Probe Wetsuits was how light they were, much lighter than the weight of our old wetsuits. They also looked great, with superb finishes and smooth lines, with all the seams double glued and bind stitched, with tape covering stress points for extra strength. The super stretch neoprene felt nice to the touch, with the internal material silky smooth, while all the neck, wrists and ankles feature seals to restrict water entry.

The first test was to get the wetsuits on, always a bit of a challenge with a new wetsuit, but both wetsuits slipped on so easily that we were worried that the wetsuits were too big. But the wetsuits fitted perfectly and were very comfortable, the super stretch neoprene lived up to the hype allowing us to bend and stretch with complete freedom, something we were never able to do in our old wetsuits. In fact because of the super stretch neoprene the wetsuits fitted much better than our old custom made wetsuits ever did. We were sold, and also got a matching set of Probe super-stretch hoods.

Our first chance to use the Probe Wetsuits in the water was on a dive trip down the

New South Wales coast, which was to provide water temperatures ranging from

18°C to 21°C degrees. From the very first dive we loved these suits, they were warm – obviously the most important feature of any wetsuit – very comfortable and easy to get on and off.

The seals, which includes an inner lining at the back (called a hydro-barrier zip gasket) to prevent water leaking through the zip to reach the body, worked amazingly well, allowing only a tiny amount of water into the suit. On some dives we have had so little water entering the wetsuits that you would swear that your cosies were still dry. The only problem with the seals working that well is over heating, and at times we have had to open the neck to allow a little water in to cool us down.

We have had the chance to use the Probe Wetsuits in a variety of conditions around Australia over the last year. The coldest water we have used them in has so far been 16°C degrees off Whyalla in South Australia while photographing the giant cuttlefish breeding. But even after an hour and a half long dives in 17°C degree water off Melbourne we were toasty and could have stayed down longer if the air hadn't run out.

After a year of use we are extremely happy with our Probe Wetsuits and can easily say they are the best wetsuits we have ever owned. Our only complaint would be the colour, but this is a complaint against all wetsuits and dive gear currently on the market, black is so boring, can someone please reintroduce colour back into diving!

For more information visit – www.probedive.com

