

All-round performer

While it may be marketed as a lightweight travel regulator, Scubapro's compact MK11 first stage and C370 second stage combination has a lot more to it than something you simply pack away in the kit bag before jetting off on your latest overseas trip.

It certainly fits the bill for frequent flyers but it also bears the all-important EN250A stamp that certifies it to a depth of 30 metres in temperatures down to 10°C. What this means to the uninitiated is that it's just as suitable for UK cold water conditions as it is for warm water diving.

The MK11 first stage is constructed from chrome-plated, marine-grade brass and is available with either a DIN or A-clamp fitting. Its balanced-diaphragm design has sealed internal parts, which in addition to protecting its inner mechanism from water and pollutants, also enhances cold-water performance.

The DIN version that I tried sat nicely at right angles to my cylinder valve and its small form meant there was no risk of

it bumping the back of my head. Hose routing proved simple and effective with a total of four low-pressure outlets, two of which are high-flow versions. A pair of nicely angled, high-pressure ports were particularly good for wireless transmitters.

A super-flow traditional-style rubber hose connects the first stage to the compact, balanced C370 second stage. The fibreglass-reinforced nylon second-stage case helps keep the weight down to 171 grams and this is apparent as soon as you pick it up. The triangular rubber purge button, surrounded by a stainless steel frame, was easy to use, with or without gloves.

Located on the left side of the second stage is a Venturi-Initiated Vacuum Assist (VIVA) lever. This easy-to-use mechanism is designed to counteract free-flow at the surface. Before entering the water I kept it in the pre-dive position and then flipped it to dive mode before my descent. Sitting alongside the venturi lever is a user-adjustable inhalation effort knob. This little gizmo allows gas flow to be tuned up or down to find your breathing sweet spot and is useful when swimming in strong currents or at depth. After

dialling it down to its greatest breathing resistance I gradually increased the airflow to its maximum to check it out before settling somewhere around the middle. Once at that happy medium I could appreciate the regulator's easy breathing effort without any further adjustment.

The exhaust tee also did a great job of keeping my exhaled bubbles away from view, always a major plus-point for anyone diving with a camera. While I initially found the compact rubber mouthpiece a little on the small side, I stopped noticing it after a couple of dives. If you do remove it for any reason then Scubapro's cleverly designed, reusable tie-clip means one less piece of plastic to find its way into the ocean.

Neil Hope

Scubapro MK11 / C370

Company: Scubapro

Price: £229

Web: www.scubapro.com

SCUBA says

The MK11 / C370 has obvious appeal for travellers in warm and cold water alike, but it's also eminently suitable for general diving and great for a smaller someone who may find a larger second stage uncomfortable.

