

The Design

OMS (Ocean Management Systems) Reefstreams are fairly traditional-looking power fins. They feature a medium-length blade with flex panels, but pick them up and you're immediately struck by how much lighter they are than many others. This is because of the use of thermoplastics rather than rubber to form the blade.

The blade does not have vents, which are designed to let water flow through easily on the weaker recovery kick and, allegedly, made those heavy, inflexible rubber-bladed fins of the 1960s much easier to use.

The Reefstream takes its cue from fin design of the late 1980s, more often favoured by recreational divers. The blade is built to flex and scoop the water, pumping it out behind you for propulsion on the downstroke and letting it flow easily off the blade on the upkick.

So, returning to the Maldives, how would the Reefstreams cope with those currents?

and straps were entirely comfortable and secure under water, even when swimming very hard.

The straps are conventional, with swivel buckles you press to slacken and pull on the strap-end to tighten. A loop in the strap lets you hang your fins from your harness or thumb the strap on or off your foot.

Diving in current and choppy seas makes you want to reboard your boat as quickly as possible – in common, unfortunately, with everyone else. Fins that are hard to remove can leave you swinging on the ladder while a disgruntled crowd builds up behind you.

I found the Reefstreams dead easy to take off one-handed. There's also a squeeze-release built



Buckle and foot-pocket detail.

into the buckle (easily usable with thick gloves), though I never needed to disconnect it to remove a fin. But it does mean that if you carry a spare strap with the male buckle parts, you can be ready to go again in seconds should a strap snap as you don your fin.

Conclusion

OMS offers only two models of fin – the other is a much more expensive vented item – and most manufacturers would regard the Reefstream as middle of the range.

It wouldn't be my first choice if weight and cost were no object but, seen in the context of a medium-priced and lightweight fin, the Reefstream delivers excellent manoeuvrability and comfort, even if it lacks the thrust of costlier, heavier models. ■

SPECS

TESTER ▶ Steve Warren
 PRICE ▶ £75
 SIZES ▶ S, M, XL
 WEIGHT ▶ Just under 2kg per pair in size M
 COLOURS ▶ Pink or gray
 CONTACT ▶ fathomdiving.com/en
 DIVER GUIDE ★★★★★☆☆

In Use

Well-enough is the answer. I don't think they have the thrust of a heavier-bladed fin but, of course, that's the compromise you expect to make if you want to travel light.

You can easily flutter-kick, frog-kick and move backwards, so the Reefstreams are perfectly manoeuvrable, one of my scoring criteria. Comfort is another. The Reefstreams' heel-pocket

MASK SCUBAPRO TRINIDAD 3

THE SCUBAPRO TRINIDAD 3 is a single-lens mask of relatively low volume. It's part of the maker's frameless range, which allows for a reduction in weight.

The silicone skirt features a feather-edge double seal, and there's a nose-pocket for equalisation. The strap is a little unusual in that the swivel and buckle adjustment are part of it, not of the mask body. There's a reason for this – we'll get to that.

In Use

The Trinidad has a moderately wide field of view to the sides, resulting in fair peripheral vision. Downward vision is very good, so it's easy to see BC chest-straps or drysuit direct-feed connectors.

Ideally, you can release these by touch alone, but in reality it's nice to be able to see them, so the Trinidad does well in this respect.

For a single-lens mask, the Trinidad is compact, with the glass set close to the face. One of my camera-housings is set up with a magnifying eyepiece that requires you to get your eye very close to it so that you can see the whole of the focusing screen.

I was impressed by the full-frame view I obtained with this mask. The opaque skirt eliminates reflections and side-lights interfering with your view of your viewfinder as well.

If you're on the other side of the camera, the glass won't throw a greenish tint on your face the way some cheap masks do, making it good for modelling.

The skirt is soft and was very comfortable on the three dives a day I made, which were about an hour each. Due to poor shaving scheduling, the Trinidad had to seal over five weeks' beard growth, but it never once needed clearing.

When I did deliberately flood it, I found it easy to clear hands-free. My ears were sticking a bit and I had to block my nose to equalise, which I don't normally have to do.

Even with gloves on it's easy to pinch your nose

or, as I prefer to do, block your nostrils from underneath.

The strap has buckles you push up on to slacken it – again, easily done with 5mm gloves. To tighten, you just pull the strap-end.

The buckles are incorporated into the straps and not the mask itself because, with a simple press, the entire strap assembly can be removed



Mask-buckle detail.



from the Trinidad body. While this makes changing over a broken strap a cinch, provided you have a spare to hand, the main reason for this is to allow you to add the optional Scubapro comfort-strap.

I reviewed this when I tested the Scubapro Zoom EVO (May) and found myself unexpectedly impressed.

Conclusion

I liked the Scubapro Trinidad 3 a lot. Perhaps the best compliment is that I was quite unaware of it while I was under water (and not in conscious testing mode).

The only provisos are that if you want eyesight

SPECS

TESTER ▶ Steve Warren
 PRICES ▶ £39 including box. Comfort strap £16.50
 LENS ▶ Mono
 WEIGHT ▶ 306g
 COLOURS ▶ Pink, purple, yellow, blue, black
 CONTACT ▶ scubapro.com
 DIVER GUIDE ★★★★★☆☆

correction, custom lenses will need to be bonded in and, as it's a low-volume mask, you'll need to be sure that it will still fit well if you have a largish nose. Recommended. ■

REGULATOR CASE MARES SHELL

MY BUDDY AJ TOOK HIS airliner seat wearing his classic 40-year-old twin-hose regulator around his neck like some kind of mayoral chain. He didn't trust it in checked baggage.

Transporting regulators can cause some soul-searching. They are rugged but not unbreakable, and we depend on them in an environment in which the only air is that we bring with us. Damage or loss in flight could force you to dive on a rental reg.

And while some dive-centres do provide high-performance regulators, which is what most of us own, not all do. There can also be concerns about maintenance.

My own regulators do tend to travel in the hold, usually laid out between layers of thick wetsuit or folded into a drysuit. My priority is getting all my underwater camera gear into my hand-luggage, not life-support equipment.

If a reg fails, I can swim up. Lose or break a camera and my will to live goes with it.

So how can you best protect your regulator and other accessories such as pressure gauges and computers, especially if you deliberately elect to check them in – or, as happened to me, your airline insists on putting your cabin bag into the hold?

I was still smarting when I arrived in Gibraltar, location for an intensive gear-testing session. At Gatwick, easyJet had done just that, having run out of room in the overhead lockers. But my case was a soft bag, sold to air-travellers because it complies with carry-on rules, including easyJet's.

Inside were primary and back-up cameras and housings, lenses, strobes, video lights, a surface rig and, of course, my laptop. Everything needed by a globetrotting DIVER star reporter.

This cut no ice with easyJet. I was allowed to take on board only those items I could carry in my hands. My land camera around my neck, laptop and one housed camera cradled in my arms, I sat and sulked. As the safety briefing moved along to landings on water, I mused that at least I'd be able to get pictures.

We also live in a world in which terrorist

outrages have required all luggage to be placed in the hold unexpectedly, especially awkward if you're caught overseas when the new rules are imposed and hadn't planned for such an eventuality.

Many photographers opt to travel with foam-lined heavy-duty hard cases, but even one small enough to take as hand-luggage can weigh as much as 5kg before you pack it. They're also bulky, so can't be collapsed once you're tight for space in a liveboard cabin, for instance.

They do offer the best protection for their contents, though I've seen even these cases holed by mishandling at airports.

The Design

Mares offers a neat solution in its clamshell regulator case. Semi-rigid, it opens and closes with a zip. A hand-strap folds flat to save space. Coil the hoses and there's plenty of room for a reg and an octopus, or two complete regulators.

Inside is a pouch-pocket for storing manuals, but I used this to pack several computers.

The case will keep dust and insects out and can be fitted into a soft carry-on case without taking up much more space than the regs do packed loose.

It's light enough not to incur weight penalties at check-in if you do choose to send it through the hold, as I did, because I'd prioritised cameras over regulators and, of courses, needed to test the case realistically for this review.

In Use

I placed the shellcase in an outer pocket of my rucksack for both outward and return journeys. This ensured that it would be taking the brunt of the impact while running the gauntlet of airport



baggage-handling as it was loaded and unloaded twice. The case arrived undamaged both times and, more importantly, so did the regulator and computers inside it.

Conclusion

This is a neat way to transport your regulator and small accessories inside a soft carry-on bag, offering added protection if it is unexpectedly confiscated, as mine was. Recommended. ■

SPECS

TESTER ▶ Steve Warren
 PRICE ▶ £23
 DIMENSIONS ▶ 39 x 29 x 10cm
 WEIGHT ▶ 670g
 CONTACT ▶ mares.com
 DIVER GUIDE ★★★★★☆☆