



Gear

SCUBALAB REVIEW

Cold Comfort

Three dive parkas that keep you warm and ready to dive. **BY JOHN FRANCIS AND BILL KENDIG**


WIND AND spray over the deck of a dive boat, acting on your wet hair, wet skin and wet exposure suit, make the most efficient cooling machine this side of Frigidaire. That's why it's so nice to slip into a dive parka during a surface interval. For temperate and cold waters they're a must, but even in warmer climes, a cloak that shields you from the wind and insulates even over damp skin or your wetsuit makes between-dive time much more comfortable. It also helps you conserve energy so you're ready to dive again and again.

A good dive parka combines the best of a windbreaker, a raincoat and a snowsuit. It should be knee-length at least, to protect your tush from a wet bench. It should have a hood with a drawstring, pockets well-placed for your hands, and elastic or Velcro cuffs to snug against your wrists. If the front closes with a zipper, it should run high under your chin, and it should be double-ended so you can unzip from the bottom and be able to reach your pants pockets, sit comfortably, change or use the head without having to completely unwrap from your parka's warm embrace.

Most important, the inside should be warm even when damp. Fleece is the best

lining because it doesn't absorb much water, dries quickly and keeps you warm even when damp. These three parkas met these criteria and are worthy of a Testers' Choice rating.

There are two schools of thought on the best way to wear a dive parka between dives. Some folks take off their exposure suit, while others wear it over their suit. If you undress first, you'll want a thicker lining for added comfort and warmth. If you routinely wear a parka over your suit, you mostly want quick wind protection, and a thinner lining is easier to slip over your bulky wetsuit.

Dive-44 Diver Coat The outer shell is a polyester/cotton blend with the soft feel of a topcoat, yet it was as waterproof in our test as the nylon shells. The polyester fleece lining was the thickest of the three parkas tested, as indicated by the coat's overall weight—three pounds. It is more bulky than the other coats, but compresses fairly well for packing. The Diver Coat has elastic cuffs, and the pockets are fully lined, a nice touch for really cold conditions. Other thoughtful details include an inside breast pocket and toggles on the hood drawstring. The Diver Coat comes in five sizes, ranging from small to extra-extra-large and is available in black. Price: **\$160**. Contact: **Dive-44 Inc., (949) 496-9409, www.dive44.com.** 

DIVE-44
Diver Coat

