

REED AQUATIC PRO

Reed is well known for their kayaking apparel from thermal garments to cags and paddle suits. The Aquatic Pro is their first Buoyancy Aid and has had input from a number of high profile sea kayakers (including Nigel Dennis) during its design and development.

FEATURES

The Reed Aquatic Pro is a front zip style with 8 point adjustment on the shoulders, sides and waist. The upper back and shoulders have neoprene padding under them to add comfort and to obtain a more flexible fit. The main body of the buoyancy aid uses very strong, high denier fabric which, after hard testing, proved to be 'bombproof'. Non-corroding zips are used throughout and I've had no issues with stuck zips or corrosion over an extended period of use.

On the front of the buoyancy aid are two large zipped pockets. The zips on these run from top to bottom which has both advantages and drawbacks. The bigger opening makes it easy to access larger items. For example, you can stow a VHF in the pocket easily with the aerial sticking out of the slightly open zip. However, when fully opened, it is easy for items not tied in to escape, so care should be taken.

The model on test has a length of thin bungee sewn into each pocket. On the end of one is a clip for attaching items and on the end of the other is a whistle. Although they serve their purpose, I can't help but feel that a sewn-in D-ring would be a more secure and useful addition to each pocket. The spec given on the Reed/Chillcheater website seems to suggest that current models do have D-rings, which is a welcome development.

Situated on the front centre is a full-length neoprene pocket designed to carry a flare, one of the more unusual but well-designed features. Behind the two zipped pockets are fleece-lined hand-warmer pockets (although I personally found these a little on the small side, these were popular with smaller-handed paddlers).

The rear of the buoyancy aid has a large zipped pocket along with bungee attachments and a velcro fastening loop. This pocket is ideal for a water pouch and feeding tube, or carrying a set of flares.

IN USE

The Reed Aquatic Pro felt a little 'slabby' on the front when I first picked it up, lacking the carefully designed curves of something like the Palm Kaikoura Tour. However, once on, the fit was very good allowing excellent movement and flexibility. The available adjustment is very good, allowing you to achieve a snug,



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comfortable fit easily. The zip caught me off-guard, as it fastens the opposite way to which we are accustomed in the UK. However, it is very easy to do up with cold wet hands and has yet to jam on me or show any signs of corrosion.

The pockets swallow up any kit I want to carry and I use the rear pocket for my water bag. Even with full front pockets, there is no hindrance to paddling or mobility. I was sceptical about the downward opening pockets and have concerns about the strength of the tie-in system on my model. However, I am totally sold on the ease of access to kit provided by this system.

The Reed Aquatic has received a good battering over the last 12 months and stood up to the test of time extremely well. The fabric is very tough and abrasion resistant. The zips and buckles have remained intact due to their quality and chunky construction.

CONCLUSION

With extended use, I have found the Aquatic Pro to be very comfortable. The feature set is well thought out and avoids any gimmicks or over-design. The build quality is excellent and uses hard-wearing materials. This is clearly designed to be a long-lasting workhorse for serious sea paddlers and it represents excellent value.