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# 9 SUMMER WETSUITS TESTED AND REVIEWED



Summer Wetsuit Reviews

We tested everything from 1.5mm tops for 75° F

# ocean temps on down to 3/2mm shortsleeve fullsuits for 62° F seas

**Surfersvillage Global Surf News**, 22 June, 2017 – So summer has just begun and with it, the cold realisation that not all of us live where we can trunk it throughout June, July, August & September. Yes, despite the northern hemisphere enjoying the easy season many of us are still in need of neoprene (or Yulex if you're wearing Patagonia). If you are fortunate enough to just trunk it, check our review of [13 high-performance boardshorts here](#).

For those of us who will surf in water temps this season ranging from 62 degrees fahrenheit on up to 75 degrees, we've reviewed a sampling of suits ranging from a 3 mil shortsleeve full suit, to a 1.5mm (millimeter) long sleeve surf shirt.

The three neoprene surf shirts we tested came from brands Volcom, Patagonia and Body Glove, while the shortsleeve full suits we tested came from brands Rip Curl, Body Glove and 7till8 – a high end custom-fit brand using limestone neoprene.

One thing we noticed this year is that zip front jackets are popular. Most come in thicknesses around 2 mil and tend to offer a bit more warmth than the standard pullover neoprene long sleeve shirt.

What type of wetsuit do I need for summer? Check the below guide. It represents average needs of the average surfer. However, factors like air temperature, whether your waiting a long time between sets and personal cold threshold all come into play when choosing the right summer wetsuit

## **Wetsuit Thickness Guide and Water temperature**

**Shirt:** 70–75° F/21–24° C

**Jacket:** 68–72° F/20–22° C

**Shortsleeve fullsuit:** 62–68° F/17–20° C



## LONGSLEEVE SHIRTS 70–75° F/21–24° C

*A few years ago these zip-front jackets were made popular by the 70s retro set looking to reclaim some style in lineups across the globe but didn't want to wear techy-looking performance wetsuit tops. Modelled after the rash-inducing beavertail jackets of the 70s, the latest generation of front zip jackets are using state-of-the-art neoprene for super flexibility.*



### **Volcom Neo Revo Jacket 1.5MM \$80**

Very flexible, stretchy, stylish 1.5mm jacket from Volcom. The neoprene is

hydrophobic with some wild patterns. The bottom of the shirt has a pull-tab stretch tie to help keep water from flushing up the back during trips over the falls or during paddling. The seams are are what Volcom calls “Stretch-Power” which is a marketing term that simply means they stretchy thread. Good call for the design of this top since many “super-sealed seams” with outer and inner tape can reduce flexibility. Minimal back and chest seams on this design with the entire area from the ribcage to the underarm to the wrist being one piece of flexible neoprene. Volcom also made this in a reversible design, so you can wear the bright, green wild side with stripe patterns or the more subdued grey side. Be warned, by reversing a frequently used surf shirt you put the wax-coated side against your chest.

**Pluses:** Stylish, flexible, reversable

**Minuses:** Not good if you would rather blend in with the crowd



*Patagonia's cinch-pull system...*

### **Patagonia R1 Lite Yulex Long-Sleeve Wetsuit Top 1.5MM \$129**

The story here is Patagonia’s use of neoprene-free Yulex in 85% of this design with synthetic rubber in the remaining 15%. Their Yulex full suits used a higher percentage of natural rubber (with sealed outer seams) and the flexibility of the suits were compromised. The recycled nylon liner on this top is smooth and flexible. Patagonia

chose to go with a 1.5M thickness and stitch it all together with flatlock construction which airs on the side of durability. The suit has a rubberized waist gasket with adjustable waist and cord lock. All-in-all the top worked average with no performance “ah-hah!” moments. The durability of the material is good as it’s a hair heavier than the other suits. What’s groundbreaking about this jacket is Patagonia replacing a petroleum-based material with a plant-based one, and offering near same performance attributes as conventional neoprene. The Yulex manufacturing process also reduces CO2 emissions by up to 80%.

**Pluses:** Super forward-thinking material with good durability and simple styling

**Minuses:** We found Yulex to be (while slightly warmer) less stretchy than traditional neoprenes.



### **Body Glove Pr1me Longsleeve Shirt 1.5MM \$80**

The neoprene on the Body Glove Pr1me longsleeve shirt is what Body Glove brands as EVOflex, a composite blend of materials. The EVOflex has a 100% water hydrophobic print which kept the shirt from soaking up water for most of the test surf. The seams are glued and blindstitched and the interior seams are triple sewn with a two-thread stitch that automatically ties itself off if the stitch is broken. The shirt has a small zipper at the back with a velcro closure tab so it fits closer to the body than shirt

designs without the zipper. Most designs use a pull-cord to close off the waist of the jacket, but that can balloon out on occasion.

**Pluses:** Very stretchy and hydrophobic with great zipper-at-the-back-of-waist design.

**Minuses:** Overall the shirt felt generic, nothing to really set it apart from others on the market.



## SURF JACKETS 68–72° F/20–22° C

*A few years ago these zip-front jackets were made popular by the 70s retro set looking to reclaim some style in lineups across the globe but didn't want to wear techy-looking performance wetsuit tops. Modelled after the rash-inducing beavertail jackets of the 70s, the latest generation of front zip jackets are using state-of-the-art neoprene for super flexibility.*



## Volcom Chesticle Jacket 2mm \$100

This stylish, smart design uses the best of both worlds with smoothie chest and back mixed with artfully screened super stretch arms and panels. While many front-zip surf jackets use smooth rubber for a retro look, Volcom went with a 2mm combination of smoothie in the front and back with artfully screened nylon neoprene sleeves. The smooth neoprene is designed to keep the wind off of where most of us get cold – through the chest and back. The arm panels are super stretch nylon outer material and have more flex than the chest and back neoprene. The seams are glued and blind stitched. The 90% neoprene/10% nylon has good flex properties. What we noticed most about this jacket is that it's a smart design of core-warmth neoprene and super flex arm and underarm panels.

**Pluses:** Smart use of both smoothie and super stretch nylon material. Bright pattern

**Minuses:** As with a lot of Volcom jacket patterns and colours they make you stand out in the crowd



### **Patagonia Men's R1 Lite Yulex front zip top 1.5mm \$149.00**

Solid, eco-conscious alternative material wetsuit jacket that scores points for solid construction and enviro ethos. While the stretch factor is average in this suit, it's a smart, simple and straight-ahead design. Patagonia's Yulex hit the market a couple years ago and is now Patagonia's (as well as a few other brands') go-to neoprene for all their suits. The cool thing about Yulex is that it's natural and non-toxic and makes it possible to make a totally green wetsuit. For Patagonia's front zip top they went with a 85% Yulex® natural rubber/15% synthetic rubber. On the outside they use a 88% recycled polyester/12% spandex jersey lining while the interior is 100% recycled. It's good rubber, not as flexible as some other options out there, but a solid, well-put together system. The seams are triple glued and blindstitched and internally spot taped at high-stress points. The front-zip entry has a corrosion-proof Salmi® zipper.

**Pluses:** Alternative-to-neoprene Yulex and recycled nylon top with solid construction and clean, simple styling

**Minuses:** No use of smoothie material and at 1.5MM (most front zip jackets are 2MM) it will not be as warm as other front zip jackets on the market



## Body Glove Smoothskin Jacket 2mm \$100

This is a retro looking super-flex smoothie jacket that performed better than expected. The hydrophobic neoprene has great mobility due to the material and minimal seam design. The jackets from the 1970s (all beavertail designs) were stiff, rash-making torture devices. This remake by Body Glove is super flexible, warm and cool looking. It's made of Body Glove's Smoothskin with 2mm body, arms and collar using Body Glove's Magnaflex for the interior gussets. The whole thing has glued and blind stitched seams. What surprised us about this jacket is its warmth. The shiny, smoothie neoprene acts as a solar panel and heats up on sunny days more than matte-finish smoothie or nylon outer neoprene designs. A nice bonus to this retro performance jacket is the use of an elastic cord located in the lycra interior key pocket.

**Pluses:** Great warmth and flexibility with no flushing and no waistline “roll up” during surfs

**Minuses:** This great neoprene gave a horrible off-gassing odor during its first test surf on a hot day.



## SHORTARM FULLSUITS : 62–68° F/17–20° C

*In this review we tested three short arm fullsuits (an oxymoron, we know, but it's how the companies list them). Prices ranged from \$190 to \$450 and covered all levels of quality. Yes, you mostly get what you pay for, but often times evenly priced suits vary quite a bit in material, seam construction and overall quality.*



## Rip Curl Aggrolite 2/2mm short arm full \$190

Glued and blind stitched, which is standard for a short sleeve 2mm fullsuit. However, the suit uses interior tape along the stress points: under the arms, along the crotch and at the ankles and wrists. Great option as most suits give over time at these high stress points. The neoprene is average in stretch and not a high-end performance material. The entry system is a slanted, fixed-at-one-side zip design with a pull tab to tighten everything up. On this suit the colourful panels may use stitching that is not absolutely necessary for performance, but it looks good. This suit has a low price point, and as such it's a good option for surfers who will only use the suit a handful of times or who are entry-level surfers and don't want to shell out a lot for a high-performance wetsuit.

**Pluses:** Low price point, colorful, solid build.

**Minuses:** Very basic quality neoprene with average stretch.



## Body Glove Prime 2/2mm short arm full \$190

To reduce the overall seam area on this wetsuit Body Glove got creative with their zipper design and placement. They reconfigured the upper half of the suit and used

fewer seams through crucial paddling areas. The neoprene on the Body Glove Prime short sleeve full suit is what Body Glove brands as EVOflex, a composite blend of materials. The EVOflex is also covered with a 100% water hydrophobic print. We found the hydrophobic exterior print did allow less water to be absorbed by the exterior fabric than traditional neoprene. The seams are glued and blindstitched with Body Glove going as far to say the interior seams are triple sewn with two-thread stitch that automatically ties itself off if the stitch is broken. To keep water from rushing in at the neck, arms and ankles, the suit has blunt cut edges with a smoothie panel of neoprene to keep the openings secure. The suit performed well and we had no flushing during test surfs.

**Pluses:** Solid construction at a good price with very stretchy neoprene and smooth inner seams (no thread).

**Minuses:** Bulky fixed-at-one-end zipper system that feels like it has more material than is necessary.



**7 Till 8 Custom 3/2mm short arm full \$450**

The 7 Till 8 3mm custom fit short sleeve full suit is the gold standard for arms-free

full suits. Out of all the short arm full suits we tested for this article, this one featured premium neoprene and a premium custom fit. Of course it came at a premium price.

7 Till 8 is a forward thinking company that custom sizes all of their suits. It works like this: The website has simple video clips customers can follow to take measurements. Once completed, buyers just plug in the set of numbers and credit card info and a new custom suit is shipped out. We found the custom fit on the suit we ordered to be spot on. The initial difference one feels is that there are no places that feel too tight or pinch in places.

The company also uses Yamamoto limestone neoprene, although customers have the option to opt out of Yamamoto limestone neoprene which knocks roughly \$100 off the price. Limestone neoprene is gaining popularity among eco-conscious consumers who want to choose a petroleum-free neoprene. Please note: We use the term neoprene when talking about wetsuit rubber, but neoprene is a trademarked name for polychloroprene – so it's like saying "Kleenex" instead of "Facial Tissue."

Limestone neoprene uses a process to derive sheets of neoprene from limestone. It's a lengthy, labor and heat intensive process but produces a cleaner alternative to neoprene made from oil. The limestone-to-neoprene process is pretty amazing, as limestone rocks are processed into chunks of gummy material that is then refined further into neoprene sheets. During the process nitrogen gas is blown into the rubber to augment flexibility and reduce weight.

**Pluses:** Custom fit feels much better than off-the-rack sizes and is a great option for us "odd sized" surfers. Yamamoto neoprene is soft, stretchy, hydrophobic and basically the Rolex of neoprenes.

**Minuses:** The cost of the suit. But for surfers who have the cash to spend, it's a good choice

#### **TAGS:**

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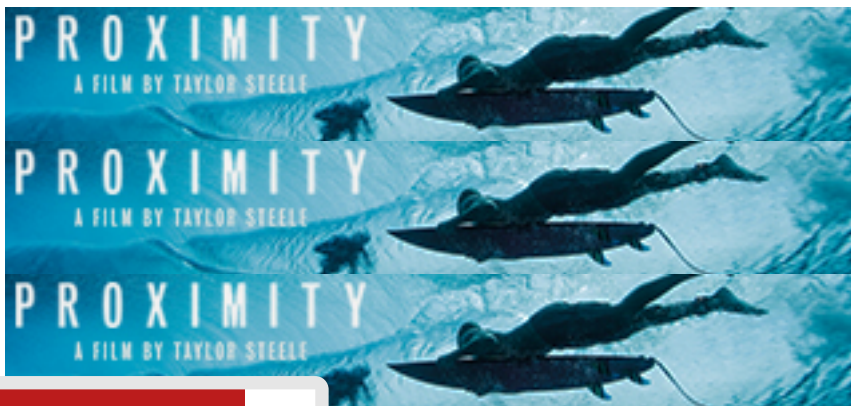


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