

Think Tank Photo Freeway Longhaul

by Phil Rudin

During my film days Pelican cases were the gold standard for traveling underwater photographers looking for maximum equipment protection. These water tight hard cases offered excellent protection both as checked and carry-on luggage with the only downside being their weight.

Pelican cases always survived abusive baggage handlers, over packed taxis, rough boat transfers, salt air and much more.

During the late 1990s and early 2000s TAS baggage regulations changed dramatically for both weight and size. As a result many photographers turned to the lighter soft sided cases like the Think Tank roller bags to reduce weight and size.

Think Tank Photo was founded in January 2005 by a group of product designers and professional photographers focused on studying how photographers work, and developing inventive new carrying solutions to meet their needs.

Think Tank has become the choice for many working professionals and enthusiasts alike.

I replaced my hard cases with the first in a series of Think Tank AirPort Security (now on V3.0) rolling cases designed to fit in the overhead compartments on most commercial aircraft.

The advantage of these cases for me was the excellent roller wheels, the stability and strength of the collapsable handle, the TSA approved locking zippers and the placement of the handles on the bag for lifting into the overhead compartment.

I started out using padded dividers to protect my valuable photo gear, but ended up padding equipment with bubble wrap because it was lighter. I also ended up moving most of my camera bodies and lenses into a Think Tank Urban Disguise 60V2.0 shoulder bag for several reasons.

First the bag is designed with a heavy duty pocket on the back that allows you to drop the shoulder bag over the handle on the roller bag so that you can roll both bags quite easily with one hand. I have owned both



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bags for over ten years now, they have traveled around the world many times and I have walked countless miles through crowded airports without any damage to my fragile photo equipment.

As traveling underwater photographers we have all used some combination of this type of equipment to move about the world but what happens when we arrive at our final destination and all of that gear is unpacked? Most of use find these bags remain in our room or perhaps in a camera room at the dive destination.

When we dive closer to home from the beach or dive vessel we rarely ever use our travel cases. My solution for transporting camera gear between the resort camera room or from home to the dive boat for years

has been a dilapidated old canvas bag with a single handle. While this has served me well it lacks many of the features found on modern travel and camera bags. My canvas bag has no padding but because of the robust quality of most underwater photography equipment I have never damage a single item of equipment due to lack of padding.

Think Tank Photo Freeway Longhaul 50L and 75L

Think Tank Photo has just launched two new equipment bags called the Freeway Longhaul 50L and 75L (13.3 and 19.81 gallon). Both bags are made from polyurethane backed fabric for superior water-resistance, they are coated with a



durable (DWR) water-repellent coating.

The bags are made from 420D high-density nylon, 600D polyester with a 200D poly lining. The zippered top cover obscures your gear from view and tucks into a pocket on the inside of the bag when not in use.

The bags use Nylon webbing and Nylon seat belt webbing with a high density foam stiffener in the bottom of the bag. The bags are assembled using 3-ply bonded nylon thread for maximum strength and durability.

The Longhaul 50L has one removable divider which velcro's to the sides and bottom of the bag and is then secured with additional velcro flaps. The Longhaul 75L has three removable dividers the third divider can velcro between the first two resulting in four separate storage compartments.

The thin high density foam stiffener in the bottom of the bag is more than adequate protection for a normal car ride or boat ride to your dive location.

The 50L is 43.5 X 32.5 x 35 cm (17.1W x 12.8D X 13.75H inches) the 75L is 63 X 32.5 x 35 cm (24.8W x 12.8D x 13.75H inches) The 50L weights 1.0 kg (2.3 lbs) while the 75L weights 1.74 kg (3.3 lbs)

The 50L has four exterior pockets and the removable divider has one large pocket which can hold my 13 inch MacBook Air. The 75L has eight exterior pockets and two large divider pockets.

Field testing the Longhaul 50L

I first became aware of the Freeway Longhaul bags from a kickstarter promotion that was sent to me. What sold me on this bag was the size and weight of the bag.

I had considered the excellent and well padded Cinebag CB70 Square Grouper in the past but found it to be a bit small and heavy for travel at 1894g (4.18lbs). The 50L weights 1K (2.3lbs) with the shoulder strap and divider removed you can drop another 0.23k (0.5lbs) bringing the weight down to 0.77k (1.8lbs). That amounts to about 1k (2.3lbs) of extra camera gear in your luggage without going over weight.

The 50L also adds an additional 2.79 x 2.03 x 7.0 cm (1.1 x 0.8 x 2.75 inches) or 39.6 square cm (6.14 square inches) of extra space inside the 50L.

With my Nauticam NA-A7IV housing, 230mm Zen Underwater dome port with 55mm extension, two Inon Z-330 strobes and four ten inch arms including two buoyancy arms I can fit the entire rig into the bag and zip the top closed. I can do the same with the Nauticam WACP-1 and extension.

The bag has four very substantial handles, one on each side of the bag. I prefer to carry the bag using these

handles rather than the well padded shoulder strap which can be carried on the shoulder or over your head and on the shoulder. Using the two handles makes handing the bag onto and off the boat much easier than using the shoulder strap.

The four large exterior pockets allow you to carry a medium size dry bag, beverages, a dry box for tools, vacuum pump, extra on camera lights and much more. The zippered pocket on the front of the bag is a great place for keys and other loose items, I suggest a zip lock bag for the zipper pocket to keep items dry.

The 50L is also very useful for none diving activities like boating, camping, kayaking, as a garment bag for travel and more. I believe

ThinkTank has a winner with both bags and I don't appear to be alone as the Kickstarter promotion met its goal in only two hours. The Freeway longhaul 50L retails for \$149.00 US and the 75L retails for \$179.00 US. Both bags are available in green and gray colors at your local Think Tank Photo retailer.

Phil Rudin

www.instagram.com

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