

Sand Dude

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PHOTOS BY NIK SCHÖLZEL

The newest Breitling Superocean is built to withstand the rigors of sea, surf and sand. See how it fares in WatchTime's test.



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reitling's first Superocean model, introduced in 1957, was water-resistant to 200 meters. The newest version of the watch, which Breitling unveiled at Baselworld this year, has a water-resistance level of 1,500 meters. Even though it can be worn at depths to which only professional divers can sink — the watch even has a helium-release valve, for use in a diving chamber — we're guessing that most of its owners will think of it as an all-purpose sports watch for everyday wear. It is in that context that we tested the watch.

There is much to praise about the Superocean, starting with its case, 42 mm in diameter, which has several features that are standard for the Breitling brand: a smoothly ratcheting bezel, high-quality polishing, and an elaborate logo embossed on the caseback. The bezel, which rotates in only one direction, is fitted with a distinctive, molded-rubber ring insert in which four numerals and eight indexes, all satin-finished, have been smoothly inlaid. The finishing is impeccable. The rubber tends to attract dust, and the metal markers and polished case sides quickly show scratches, but Breitling could not have prevented these problems.

The watch is easy to operate. The bezel and crown guards pose little hindrance when the wearer unlocks the large, fluted, screw-down crown, and the crown engages nicely in its two positions. The crown stem is very sturdy and does not move at all when the crown is pulled out. The watch's movement, the ETA 2824, has a hack mechanism and a quick-date-set feature. The pronounced fluting on the bezel means the wearer can turn it easily, even when wearing gloves. The bezel ratchets smoothly in half-minute increments.

The dial has pluses and minuses. The three oversized markers at 6, 9 and 12 o'clock, the wide hands and the extremely large, slanted numerals give the watch a dynamic appearance. The large numerals and markers do, however, make the dial look crowded, and the wide bezel, which reduces the dial's size and visual impact, contributes to this effect. The date window, which serves as an hour marker at 3 o'clock, is nicely placed and

*THE WATCH
WAS SO
PRECISE IT
EARNED A "10"
IN THE
RATE RESULTS
SECTION OF
OUR TEST.*

Pros

- + Highly water-resistant case
- + Perfect rate results
- + All-around superb finishing
- + High luminosity

Cons

- Somewhat overloaded dial
- Bezel is difficult to read



its size is compatible with those of the other hour markers. Reading the date can nonetheless be hard because the numerals on the date ring are quite thin. The problem is worst for the numerals 10 through 19 because the 1 is very close to the date window's edge.

The time is generally easy to read, even though the minute hand does not extend to the minute track. Because the

markers and hands are so big, they provide plenty of space for luminous coating and thus shine brightly in the dark. Divers can make sure the watch is still running by looking at the seconds hand, whose luminous tip makes it visible in dark and murky water. The bezel isn't as handy for timing a dive as it could be, though, because it does not have a luminous dot to indicate the start of the dive



Breitling has modified a highly accurate ETA 2824 for use in the Superocean.

SPECS

BREITLING SUPEROCEAN

Manufacturer: Breitling SA, Schlachthausstrasse 2, CH-2540 Grenchen, Switzerland

Reference number: A17364-1022

Functions: Hours, minutes, seconds; date; hack mechanism

Movement: ETA 2824, automatic, COSC-certified chronometer; 28,800 vph, 25 jewels, Glucydur balance, Etachron regulating system and eccentric screw; Incabloc shock absorber, power reserve = 40 hours, diameter = 25.6 mm, height = 4.6 mm

Case: Stainless-steel case, curved crystal with nonreflective treatment on both sides, fully-threaded stainless caseback, screw-down crown, unidirectional divers' bezel, automatic helium-release valve, water-resistant to 1,500 meters

Strap and clasp: Rubber strap with stainless-steel safety folding clasp and quick extension

Rate results:

(deviations in seconds/day):

Dial up:	+1
Dial down:	+2
Crown up:	+2
Crown down:	+3
Crown left:	+2
Crown right:	+1
Greatest rate deviation:	2
Average deviation:	+1.8
Average amplitude:	
Horizontal positions:	291°
Vertical positions:	297°

Dimensions: Diameter = 42 mm, height = 15 mm, weight = 147 g

Variations: With silver, yellow, red or blue minute track (\$2,995); with pronged buckle (\$2,695); with perforated rubber strap/deployant buckle (\$2,995), with stainless-steel bracelet (\$3,085)

Price: \$2,995

THE 4-MM-THICK STRAP IS A
SUITABLE COMPANION FOR THE
HEFTY, 15-MM-THICK CASE.

The case has a helium-release valve at 10 o'clock.



SCORES

BREITLING SUPEROCEAN

Strap and clasp (max. 10 points):

The rubber strap has a simple but solid design. The simple folding clasp with safety deployant buttons and quick extension (no divers' extension) is attractive, sturdy and easy to use. **9**

Operation (5): The screw-down crown is easy to unlock and pull out to the two different positions. The watch has both a quick date set and hack mechanism. The bezel is easy to grip. **4**

Case (10): The highly water-resistant case (1,500 meters) with automatic helium-release valve is nicely finished and the caseback is elaborately engraved. Scratches are quickly noticeable. **8**

Design (15): The sporty design is attractive, even though the extra-large numerals and markers make the dial seem overloaded. Good placement of the date. **12**

Legibility (5): Legibility of the time and date is not ideal. The bezel has no luminous dot or minute markers. The luminosity on the hands and hour markers is impressive. **3**

Wearing comfort (10): The top-heaviness of the case detracts somewhat from the overall comfort. **8**

Movement (20): The ETA movement has a Glucydur balance, a high-quality mainspring and COSC certification. Nicely decorated. **13**

Rate results (10): Perfect rates. **10**

Overall value (15): Customers receive the quality they expect at a good price. **13**

TOTAL: 80 POINTS

(in fact none of the bezel markers is luminous). Nor does the bezel have minute markers within each five-minute increment, so timing a dive to the minute involves some guesswork.

The Superocean is easy to put on and comfortable to wear. It is equipped with a new style of rubber strap called the Diver Pro II, which has a subtle, raised strip along its length. The strap is 4 mm thick, and hence suits the sturdy design of the watch. (The Superocean is also available with the flashier, perforated Ocean Racer



The locking deployant clasp is attractive and sturdy.

rubber strap and with a steel bracelet.) The bars in the deployant clasp are sturdy, the locking mechanism operates smoothly and the two buttons that open the clasp work reliably. The strap has an extension that supplies nine extra millimeters of length. It is released simply by pushing inside the clasp. The extension isn't long enough to enable the watch to fit over a wetsuit, but it is adequate for everyday adjustments.

Minor points must be deducted from the watch's wearing comfort because the top-heaviness of the 15-mm-thick-case causes the watch to slip back and forth.

The watch's rate results, on the other hand, were perfect. Our test watch showed a gain of only 1.8 seconds per day and an extremely low positional deviation of just two seconds. Furthermore, there was a mere six degrees' difference in average amplitude between horizontal and vertical positions. The wearing test confirmed the timing-machine results: the watch consistently gained two seconds per day.

Like all movements used in Breitling watches, this one's movement has COSC chronometer certification. Prior to having the movement tested, Breitling fine tunes the escapement, adds a higher-quality mainspring, centers the hairspring, poises the balance and regulates the movement in five positions. (Breitling has designated the movement Caliber 17.)

The decoration is very attractive. The rotor sparkles with *côtes de Genève* in its center, a gold-enhanced inscription of the Breitling name, and a sunburst finish along its edge. The mainplate and several bridges, including the rotor bridge, have a *perlage* finish. The barrel features a sunburst finish.

The movement's mostly unfinished screws and untreated edges can be overlooked in view of the watch's manageable price of \$2,995. This isn't an incredible bargain for a three-hand watch with an ETA movement, but it is fair, given the high-quality case, movement and strap. Whether you're swimming, snorkeling, surfing, jet-skiing or diving, you can don the Superocean without fear. Leaving this attractive timepiece unguarded on the beach would certainly put it at greater risk than wearing it would. ○