

WIN: FLEXIFOIL'S BOOSTY NEW HYBRID KITE - THE NEUTRON!

kitesurf

The Number 1 Kite Magazine

MARCH/APRIL 2009 · LAND A BLIND JUDGE 3 · THE GREAT OZ JOYRIDE · THE THOUSAND YARD STARE



**SETS
APPEAL**
IT'S THE WAVE ISSUE!

THIS IS ENGLAND...
THE SOUTH WEST GOES OFF THE CHARTS
HOW TO: TAKE PHOTOS OF YOUR MATES; THROW A BLIND JUDGE 3
STICK IT TO THE MAN: WE TEST AND THRASH 8 HIGH PERFORMANCE SURFBOARDS

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+ KITES ON TEST: NORTH VEGAS 09; SLINGSHOT FUEL 09; CABRINHA CONVERTIDS; FLEXIFOIL NEUTRON

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We are to assume the new board was a success...A day of reckoning at Marg's.

WORDS: GABI STEINDL
PHOTOS: IAN TRAFFORD, RUSSELL ORD, KARL LEAVY, GABI STEINDL

THE GREAT AUSTRALIAN JOYRIDE

GABI STEINDL DITCHES her usual winter escape plan to Brazil for an Aussie road trip epic around Western Australia. Scenes of windsurfers vs. kitesurfers may offend some readers...





IT WAS 3AM IN
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AND I WAS
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AN EXTRA FROM
28 WEEKS LATER.
LONG HAUL
TRAVEL IN
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ISNT IT!?



Small wave action at Esperance

It may not be the biggest, but by Jingo look at the colour of that water



My flight itinerary was as follows: fly from Vienna with British Airways to London, connecting with Qantas and on to Perth. What's wrong with this picture? Just shortly before the date of departure my loyal travel agent called to say British Airways had changed their luggage policy and with immediate effect, won't transport anymore surf equipment ever again. I'm sure you remember all of this from early last year...

I felt a little sick when I got that bad news. I'd just received my brand North thruster and it was kinda the main reason for my trip to Oz as I wanted to shred up and down that massive coastline. I'll spare you the details of the phone calls to BA, but eventually I boarded the plane in Vienna together with two monster quiver-bags (each about 40kg). 30 hours later, a huge amount of disgusting plane-food and a dozen of started-but-never-finished-movies later, I set foot on the 5th continent. It was 3am in the morning and I was totally spaced out, feeling like an extra from 28 Weeks Later. Long haul travel in economy is serious torture, isn't it!? Exhausted and with tiny red eyes, I waited at the outsized-luggage counter, to find my bags would never arrive. Qantas had no explanation as to why this was so, but reassured me to deliver the stuff ASAP to the backpackers I'd booked into in Perth.

The wind was blowing as expected, but I couldn't go kitesurfing as there was still no trace of my stuff, and I had to subsist on just the basics. So I was super stoked when the big Qantas truck finally delivered all my toys to the hostel. My joy was fleeting though, because the bags and contents were soaking wet - clothes, electrical items, e v e r y t h i n g - like they'd been taken out of a washing machine that broke down before finishing the cycle. I reckon the BA 'throwers' simply went on strike and left my stuff out in the rain at Heathrow airport for about three days.

Perth has a dry and hot summer but near the coast the afternoons are regularly cooled down by the stiff breezes of the 'Fremantle Doctor'. 'The Freo Doc' kicks in pretty reliably as the day wears on during summer, and it gets the kitesurfers heart rates pumping.

The Freo Doc strongest in December and January due to the warming of the Indian Ocean, and February and March decreases in strength and during winter, (European summer) wind seekers may have to go through rather long, 'dry' patches....

Giving the Esperance downwinda a go.



II THE ESPERANCE EXPERIENCE

ENOUGH FACTS, HIGH TIME FOR SOME ADVENTURES OF MY TRIP:

I must admit, initially I intended staying 3 months, which turned into 5 in the end...therefore it would be totally impossible to deliver Kitesurf mag the 'full version' (unless the editor would have granted me a complete issue !?), (maybe a collector's special? – Ed) Thus I have decided to pick a few selected 'delicacies' from various corners of WA's incredible coastline:

AROUND PERTH:

As first stop on my trip out of the city 'outbackward', I decided on Lancelin. About 120km north of Perth, it's a relatively well-known windsurfing spot, becoming also increasingly popular amongst kitesurfers.

Lanceline is a tiny rural Aussie village, not really beautiful, with only a few small shops, a bottleshop, and two caravan parks. All around though are white sand dunes and turquoise water and I set up base on the campsite right next to the Ocean. On my first morning out of the city I encounter the

true locals: I'm strolling from my tent to the washing rooms when a fat skink (iguana) right outside the door is blocking me from entering, all 'you shall not pass!' and bristling. Grrrr, I'm trying to scare the reptile away with some small pebbles, but the skink isn't having any of it. After about ten minutes a second skink joins up, and to me, they looked like a couple and most probably the female was persuading the male to stop punking random tourists, and so they buggered off, allowing me to press on.

The Freo Doc sets in, and I'm heading out for my first kite session. Whilst I'm having great fun with my new waveboard on the outside reef, a grey haired, rather heavy windsurf-geezer with a moustache sails passed, shouting something at me that I could not understand properly, only, "... stay away from the windsurfers...". I assumed he was a kind fella and simply reminding me to be careful. I give him the 'thumb up' and continue enjoying myself in the waves. He passes by again, "...stay away otherwise you might get hurt....". "Ok thanks, I'll be careful!" I reply. Shortly after, I wanted to adjust something on my harness and sit down in the water.



Peeking around the edge of the block at Marg's

Suddenly I turn around and see the old windsurf-geezer coming out of the sun straight at me on my six o'clock, full speed. I only just make it in time up onto my board and kite off into the opposite direction. If I hadn't have been that quick, he would have straight run me over. "What's wrong with you?", I'm yelling at him. His reply: "FU** OFF!"

I decided to save my nerves and cruise off to another wave episode downwind before returning to the beach. Packing up my stuff on the way back to the car, I meet the grey haired geezer again: "What were you doing out there?", he's asking me. "Waveriding, like you", I reply. "This is a windsurfers spot like I told you, you better stay away otherwise you'll get hurt".



Punch it! I see luggage down there!



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**I WINCE, MY
PULSE RATE
ROCKETS
UP TO
ALMOST
200. A
FLASH OF
INCREDIBLE
TERROR
RUSHES
THROUGH
MY WHOLE
BODY.**

Sunset at Lucky Bay



IT'S A SMALL TOWN WITH ABOUT 14,000 INHABITANTS, CHILLED OUT VIBES, AND JUST EVERYONE HERE IS FRIENDLY AND HAPPY.

I could only feel a bit sorry for this dude, and just told him it was a bit pathetic that he had to threaten a girl in such a way. (You should have set the skinks on him – Ed).

This was the first time that I had to deal with such a bad attitude on the water. It saddens me a lot and I simply cannot find an explanation as to how one can behave in such a primitive and aggressive way, in the middle of paradise, spending all those hours on the water, even more so when it's a mature bloke towards a young female? I'm soon distracted again though because back at the campsite my morning encounter with the skink couple is topped with a five foot python, yet again in front of the washrooms. Woah, now even my super laid back Australian neighbors get nervous and inform the campsite owner. With the help of a rake he catches the snake, puts it onto the back of his truck and off he drives...

After a couple of days in Lancelin I learn that the grey haired geez is Swiss and the owner of a windsurfing school. He obviously has some issues with the recent kitesurfing-boom in the area, but in any case, if you ever come around this corner, don't feel intimidated, go check out Lancelin, 'cause it boasts some really fine kite-playgrounds - from flatty-flat to waves!

IN THE FAR NORTH:

You have to have a try at snorkeling before the Freo Doc wakes up. I'm under water, and the colors of the underwater world shine even more today and I meet a giant school of 'Yellowtail Tunas'. I dive right into them, they swarm circles around me. For quite a while I play around with them, but where there are many 'medium' fish, there are usually 'bigger' ones in search of this underwater repast. It's not long until I spot the first reef sharks, smaller 'Blacktips', perhaps about 1 meter in length. Cool, I love to observe sharks in their natural surroundings, they are such noble creatures and move so smoothly. I've seen sharks when diving, but snorkeling I have never met anything bigger than the usually slender and very inoffensive reef sharks. I continue to explore and I swim off the reef and find myself in the dark blue with perfect visibility, a good 40 meters, it's absolutely unbelievable. Then, BANG. A giant nose appears in front of me and it's heading up 3 meters of shark that I don't recognize. I wince, my pulse rate rockets up to almost 200 a flash of incredible terror rushes through my whole body. Not good, because the Mantra when facing up to a shark is to stay cool; but as you can imagine, that's quite hard to do on the night.





IF I HADN'T HAVE BEEN THAT QUICK, HE WOULD HAVE STRAIGHT RUN ME OVER. "WHAT'S WRONG WITH YOU?" I'M YELLING AT HIM. HIS REPLY: "FU** OFF!"

Nevertheless I guess I must have gotten it across quite passably as after a quick circle my attraction factor seems to have dropped and the large brown sea dweller vanishes into the deep blue. Later I discovered the shark was a 'Bronze Whaler'. Bronzies are certainly up there in the danger stakes beside the White, Bull and Tigers, even though they are not as full-on 'evil' as the Tigers. They're commonly known as the 'dogs among the sharks' since they just taste out of curiosity and playfulness...

THE SOUTHWEST: KITE PLAYGROUNDS AT THEIR FINEST

Besides getting the winter training in, I had my heart set on a 'roadie' with top Kiwi photographer Ian Trafford, who up 'til now, I'd only know through email. I get to the airport just in time and recognize Ian in the crowd of people outside arrivals hall immediately due to his grey dreads. The ice breaking chitchat in the car is flowing easily and with really good vibes. I feel super relieved as road trips with people on entirely different wavelengths, when combined with a quest for wind and waves, make for an unstable mix. Ian turns out to be your archetypal laid-back Kiwi though, and isn't fazed by my last minute change of plan: a quick look at the forecast was showing east winds – no good for Margs. Plan B is unveiled: we are going to Esperance.

Hunkering on the Southern coast of W.A., Esperance is known for its super-white, squeaky sand beaches and turquoise waters, and, sick waveriding.

The only slightly disturbing fact about Esperance is that after 'Cactus' (an infamous surf spot in South Australia), the stretch here is known as 'Whities capital of Australia'. 'Whitey' as in 'White Pointer', better known as 'Great White', or 'Jaws' to you and I. The locals are rather relaxed about it though, 'well yeah, there's quite a few out there, however, the water is so crystal clear, you can see 'em coming a few kilometers away from the beach' explained a geez to me later in town.

With Esperance Ian and me certainly hit the photo-shoot jackpot. It's a small town with about 14,000 inhabitants, chilled out vibes, and just everyone here is friendly and happy. The employees in supermarkets, shops, the people on the street; they all simply radiate a 'wow, I am so lucky that I live here'

aura. Ian and I stop at the tourist office in order to find a hostel. A bunch of incredibly helpful ladies immediately took care of us and book us into 'Esperance Guesthouse', a really nice place, near the sea with lovely owners. I ask: 'How about the Great Whites, where shouldn't we go surfing?' They answer: 'in the ocean my dear.' Such interesting options!

The spots around Esperance are insanely good for long downwinders and a bunch of local kilters took Ian and me in their 4x4 up the coast for an endless ride downwind back to town. Then, the highlight of our trip came as always, out of the blue - Ian and I had almost missed it. Having travelled by then for almost three months alone and two weeks with Ian along the mind-blowing coast of W.A., I was sure I'd seen it all. How wrong was I! To conclude our 'joyride roadie down under', we followed the advice of our new local mates and checked out the adjacent 'Cape Le Grande National Park' in search of 'Lucky Bay'.

We were cruising along in a six-cylinder station wagon when we suddenly spot the whitest beach with the most pristine water. "That must be it - wooww, how lucky we are"! Yeah indeed, Lucky Bay was the epitome of THE perfect beach. The fact that a Great White shark attacked a surfer two years hence couldn't keep me out of the water, and we set up camp for three days. When a kangaroo decided to chill out right in front of Ian's lens, I knew I had hit the triple-jackpot in Lucky Bay with W.A. as a destination, Ian as the photographer and Lucky Bay as picture-perfect beach.

Yours, Gabi www.kitegabi.com

Credits to: www.iantraffordphotos.com (trip, freestyle, waves photographed from land), www.russellord.com (waterfootage waves)



Bustin' out at Augusta