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KITEBOARDING ATTITUDE

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— photo Mitu by Régis-Mortier

www.kiteboarding-attitude.com

JERICOACOARA

ANOTHER NEW SPOT

Text Roberta Pala / Gabi Steindl - Photo Roberta Pala

I was surfing on the web at the end of November, because my credit card couldn't resist the temptation of a flight to Fortaleza, then to Jericoacoara, Brazil. This place is already famous in the windsurfing community, but recently Prea Beach has been home to more and more kitesurfers. Gabi Steindl from North gave me a warm welcome and lifted my energy. We got along very well despite the language barrier, which we overcame by mixing English, Spanish and Portuguese all at once!

I woke up in paradise, in Pousada Vila Kalango, right on the beach. From my comfy and cozy bungalow, I could see a gigantic sand dune which is part of the National Park. There were horses strolling on the beach and a few fishing boats at rest before they headed out to the ocean. The atmosphere was magic with the sound of the Forró in the background. Music is part of Brazilians' everyday life and so are sighs every stranger in the street was waving at me. Everything is so different. Here, there weren't any stinky modern roads, just sand. My impression on arriving in Jerico is that it would be the ideal place to finish the last days of your life!

Gabi

Gabi was my guide. She rides for North and decided to focus on trips and discovering the world. After over a year of exchanging emails with her, it was very special for me to finally meet this great person. She had been in Jeri for 2 months. Being a very open person, she knows all the locals and all the local spots. She rides downwind from Prea Beach to Jeri Beach (10 km of nice surf), in some wild scenery to meet up with me. That same night, she decided to go back to her place through the village, her board on her head, striking the little girls' curiosity as she walks by.

Little break at Banc de Maria for an afternoon snack, chicken and Caipirinha will do.

The rhythm flowed delicately, despite the wind that rarely blew less than 30 knots.

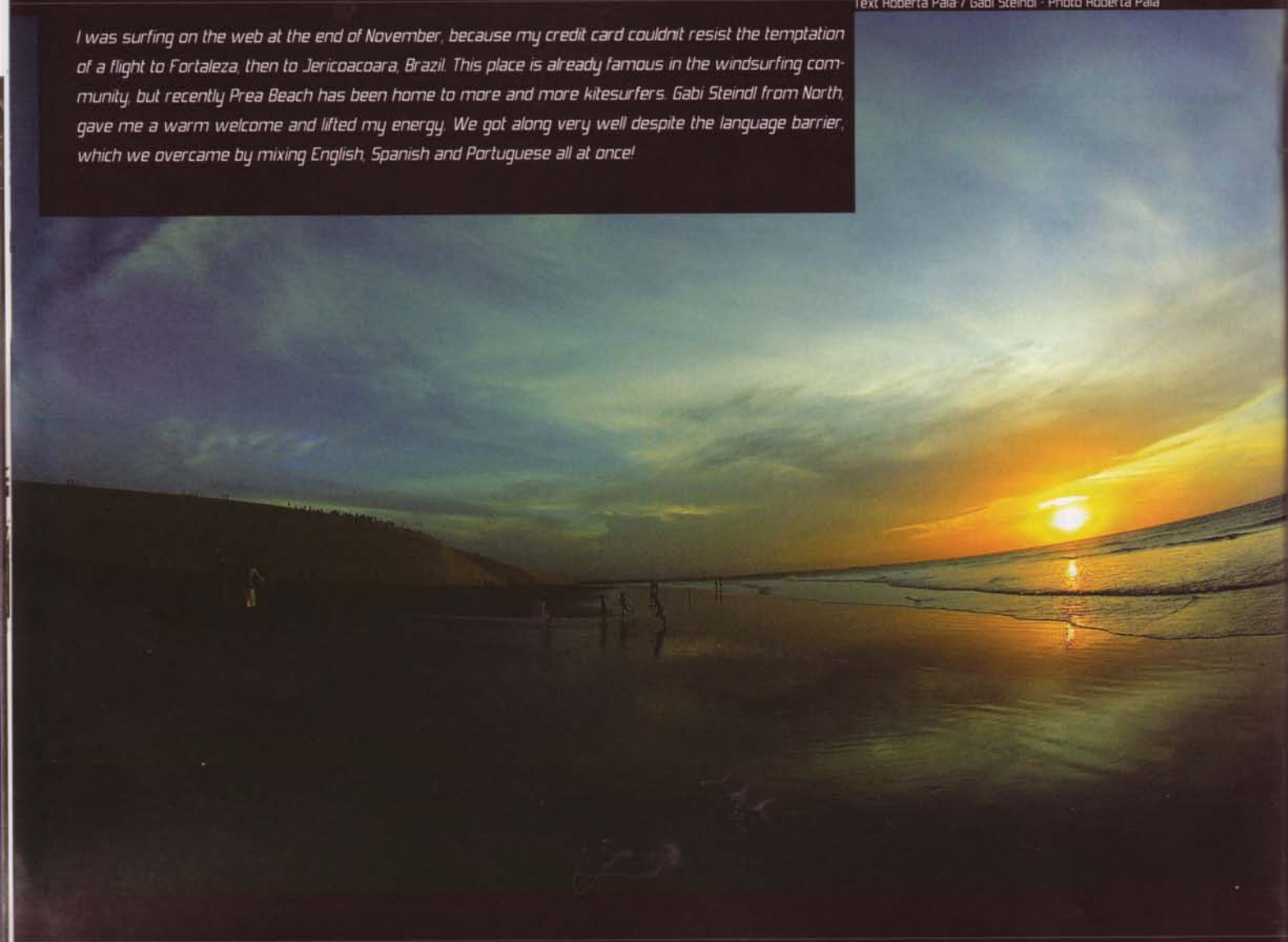
Gabi is a special character. At 6.30 in the morning, she starts with a surf session, then a 30 min. run on the

beach and ends the day kitesurfing until the sunset. After that, she goes back home and spends some time on the computer. I even wondered at one point if she was not bionic!

A couple of times, I tested her professionalism. Even when I asked her to meet up with me at some weird time, or at some horrible place where the wind was light, she always turned up with a big smile on her face. And she has the same attitude with lifestyle work in front of the camera. She does her job without whining once. She is fantastic.

Prea

It was at Prea that we got our best days of kiting. Every morning at 9am, we met up with Andrea and Juan, the couple who owns the Aloha kite school and who organize daily transport to kitebeach. Close your eyes and imagine a very long, almost endless beach, side on



wind, no obstacles on the beach or in the water. Gabi walked up the beach for a downwinder, in the waves all the way to the school. With a railey, slimchance and front mobe, Gabi was showing some stylish tricks especially for a woman! It was actually pretty funny to see how the guys watched her, and almost admired her for her style and ability. Many of them don't have her standard of riding!

We rode every day on 7 and 9 meter kites, except for some days. I also go riding for a while, I wanted to try some simple unhooked tricks but I didn't last long before going back to the shore. But Gabi doesn't think the same way as I do, and she pushed me to take a few private lessons with her. She is a great instructor and always has some good tips. My best trick stayed the same: railey to face plant, although I feel I have improved.

In the Brazilian tradition, we go back to our camp site riding the buggy on the beach in our bikinis, watching the sun go down.

The surroundings

Going around Jeri involved many hours of buggying which did create a few problems sometimes. But it's the price you pay to discover new spots and see some unique landscapes. To go to Tatajua, a lagoon, we hired buggies from Antonio. Antonio did not talk. He just drove the buggy. But he was the main man for this kind of mission. We communicated with each other with gestures and smiles. We crossed the iroads on the beach, at low tide. We crossed the river on a very dodgy floating object pushed along with very long wooden sticks. Everything was different! The best place in Tatajuba was located on the coast. Anywhere else, the dunes made the wind very gusty and dangerous. The venturi effect made the wind even stronger than Jeri.

The other lagoons, Lagoas and Azul Paraiso are inland, where the wind was too gusty but the water super flat and the scenery amazing.

But travel gave me more than adrenaline from kiting. One day I went to Jijoca by bus and came back on a pick up. The driver waved at me to let me know that I could jump on his truck where I shared a seat with boxes of fruit, 5 people, 2 hospital beds, 10 boxes of food. We traveled on some dilapidated roads for more than an hour. In the end, the driver let me go only asking me to help him unload the boxes! Being a woman did not seem to make any difference!

The night life

I am not a big party lady as I'd rather ride as much as possible, until dark, go back home exhausted and fall asleep and start over on the next day. But it's easy to follow the Brazilians! It's all about the music, especially at night. Jeri has only had electricity for 5 years but they quickly made up for the late start, and there are now many places where you can dance until sunrise. In the main street, among the wheelbarrows of Capi, it's a fusion of different sounds and it's even worse during the New Year's parties! From the 28th of December until the 2nd of January, Jeri gets really busy with up to 10,000 people. For Brazilians, Jeri is an exotic

destination, very popular for honeymoons and New Year with lots of fireworks and parties in the dunes until morning.

A famous legend tells that on the last night of the year, after partying on the dunes, everyone has to go on the beach to jump over 7 small waves and make a wish. So, off we went with Gabi to jump in the water counting one, two, three! Hoping our wishes would come true.

General info

Flights and transfers

The Portuguese airline TAP is definitely the best balance of cost, frequency, and the ability to change dates. TAP departs from quite a few European cities with one stop over in Lisbon and arriving in Fortaleza. www.flytap.com

Unfortunately, there aren't many charters yet to this destination.

Jericoacoara is located 300 km from Fortaleza. You travel between 5 and 6 hours on the bus and another hour in a pick up (4 x 4 necessary) to reach paradise. Pousada Vila Kalango can organize the transfer for 30 euros (60 dollars) so don't waste your time and just go for that option!

Accommodation

Jeri has around 130 pousadas. Vila Kalungo, on the right hand side of the sand dunes is one of the best with a palm grove, a restaurant with a view on the dune, a bar, a swimming pool, massages available, bungalows and apartments. It's considered one of the best in Brazil. You can pay with credit card, and even babysitters are available!

Info: www.vilakalango.com.br//reserves@vilakalango.com.br // contact international kitebrasil@libero.it
In the village, on Rua De Ferro St, pousada Jeripraia de Fatima, offers some nice rooms with gardens, fridge, A.C. and a peaceful, simple environment. Freitasflavio2006@ig.com // flaviofreitas@hotmail.com
On Prea Beach, right on the beach, the Peixe Rancho is the closest to the kiting beach and the kite school (with discounts on gear) and offers: a bar on the beach, a swimming pool, a restaurant, and transfers to Jeri. The bungalows are on the beach, with of course an amazing sea view! Same kind of accommodation as Vila Kalango. www.ranchodopeixe.com.br // reserves@ranchodopeixe.com.br

Restaurants

There are quite a few, for all kinds of budgets. Cantina Jeri, on Rua de Ferro Street, offers some great breakfasts and big portions of meat and fish. Sabor de Terra, on the same street, is a typical Brazilian restaurant of good quality and great price. Pousada Jerimar, on Rua Sao Francisco Street, has many different kinds of food and the cuisine is excellent. www.pousadajerimar.com
Kiteschools

There is one in Jeri that offers daily transfers to Prea, Aloha Kite owned by Andrea and Juan, very professional guys and always available when you need them. Write to andreajeri@gmail.com // + 558599826415
On Prea Beach, next to Rancho do Peixe. Daily transfers available from Jeri. info@ranchodokite.com.br

Internet The best is Pousada Tirol, all the others have problems due to high traffic. It costs around 6 Reals per hour.

Tips The currency is the Real, and it has been very unstable. It's better to change your money once you are in Brazil, or withdraw from the ATM at the airport. In Jeri, there are no banks. The closest one is in Jijoca, one hour away on a pick up. Credit cards are accepted in supermarkets, big restaurants, but not in the tutes and pousadas.

Bring all your personal pharmaceutical needs. There are two chemists, but the closest hospital is in Jijoca. It's very hot. Don't bring any warm clothes for the night. No need for wetsuits either and don't bring shoes as there is sand everywhere, even in the village. To use your phone, you will need a Brazilian SIM card, or a phone card for public phones.

Links :

www.jericoacoara.com www.ceara.com.br/pousada-semjericoacoara.htm www.clubedoventos.com

INFO ABOUT THE SPOT

Jericoacoara and its surroundings has everything a kiter could want : most of all, lots and lots of wind, flat waters, waves, lagoons ... the stuff of dreams.

WIND

With constant year round winds, you can kitesurf any season, but the best time is from July to January, when the southeast tradewinds blow consistently almost 100% of the time. In other words, kiting ALL day, EVERY day, WHENEVER you feel like it ... sound unreal? Indeed, but it is the beautiful truth! The wind comes up around 9:00 am and doesn't die off until nightfall, peaking between 1:00 pm to 3:00 pm. The best months are August to November, when the wind averages about 20-25 knots with gusts up to 30+ knots. February to May is the rainy season, with showers (sometimes light and sometimes quite ferocious) almost every day. However, it doesn't usually take long for the rain to pass and the sky to clear again - one to three hours at the max. During these months, bigger sized kites (14m2 +-) are recommended, so you get a session pretty much every day.

Air-temperature is around 30 degrees celsius, water 28 (all year round!!!), so you can leave your wetsuit at home - with peace of mind.

The coast of the Ceara region is well known for its strong reliable winds. Jericoacoara and its close surroundings, however, are exceptional. This is due to its

geographical location. While most of the Ceara coastline runs SE to NW, the Jeri coast runs E — W. This is parallel to the equator and the trade winds coming from the African continent, which smack Jeri with full force since there are no natural obstacles.

Given this very special geographical setting Jeri, with the ocean to the East and West, is also (I believe) the only place along the Ceara coastline, where you can enjoy it all the sunrise and set as well as the moonrise and set!! It is magical, especially when seen from the top of the incredibly beautiful sand dune near the village.

THE SPOTS

Jericoacoara

Kitesurfing in the main bay, just in front of the village is prohibited. It is reserved for windsurfers only, and we are not missing much because the wind is often pretty gusty so relauching is extremely difficult. Jeri Kitebeach is a bit further downwind, just past the sunset dune and an easy walk (about 10 minutes). The beach here is wide, without any obstacles and would be perfect for launching if the wind wasn't so gusty. Yeah, unfortunately because it blows directly off-shore, launching and kitesurfing close to the dune and the village can turn into quite a rough rodeo. The water is perfectly flat though, which helps fight the gusts.

Further down the beach, the wind is smoother and most of the kite-teaching is done there.

Jeri is designed for downwinders, and just past the dune is the perfect starting point. How far you wanna go downwind is completely up to you. There are no dangerous rocks, coral or obstacles of any kind so you can go for hours if you want. You can even cross over to Piaui, the federal state joining onto Ceara to the north, which has some more secrets for kites — more about that in a bit.

Malhada

Malhada beach on the east side of Jericoacoara bay, is the local wave spot. Mainly frequented by surfers, this beach with its big, sharp rocks, lies in the wind-shadow of Jeri's mountain, which makes launching very tricky. Getting into the water at high tide (when most of the rocks are submerged) can be a difficult and pretty edgy mission. It is really a place for very experienced riders only, and keep in mind that if you drop your kite in the waves, relauching might be tough, and if you take too long your gear will end up in sharp surroundings... If you do feel like giving it a go at Malhada though, remember to respect the surfers, as fellow water users. Considering the lack of waves here, the number of local surfers is impressive (for most of the locals, surfing is the only affordable watersport as one crappy board is all you need - as opposed to kiting and windsurfing) and for them, Malhada is the only option.

Prea

Down the coast from Jericoacoara, about 15 minutes away, along a 22 km stretch of white, sandy beach, the neighbouring town of Prea has recently become the kite-surfers preference. It has side-onshore winds and lots of space, which is a bit safer than the off-shore conditions in Jeri. The beach is deserted and free of obstacles. Getting there can sometimes be a bit of a pain to organize. You can get a buggy driver to take you over there and back. But this is a bit pricey on your own and only really an option in a group, i.e. shared between 3-5 people. Two kiteschools are based on Prea - Aloha Kiteschool and Rancho do Peixe. They have cars going, but they give preference to their students if they are full. Both schools do all their lessons there and have rather luxurious pousadas in the backyard. The sea at Prea can get rough at high tide (choppy with big shorebreak), low tide is a much smoother ride.

For advanced riders (and please, always in a group!) the downwind from Prea to Jericoacoara marks a highlight of the riding here, and will certainly be a memorable experience.

Lagoa Azul & Lagoa Paraiso

These two absolutely stunning lagoons with crystal clear waters are best reached by buggy or 4x4 and definitely worth a visit. The water could not be any bluer, but the wind is extremely gusty (the lagoons lie inland a reasonable way from Prea), and you are better off to chose a day when you feel like resting instead of kitesurfing here. You are allowed to kite here and you might want to give it a go. For those who need some action between relaxing, eating and tanning, there are kayaks for rent and it's always a good idea to bring some snorkeling gear.

Guriafa

Approximately 10 kms to the west of Jericoacoara lies Guriafa. Guriafa is a river marking the westernmost boundry of the EPA (Environment Protection Area), and has smooth calm waters with phenomenal conditions. Here, you need to experience the awesome barrel of the paroroca (a wave entering the river and combining with the river outflow, small but great fun!) at top speed. It is about a 30 minute downwind sail from Jeri with great scenery along the way. To get back, you will have to rent a buggy with a driver, which you need to arrange in Jeri before you go, as there are no buggies in Guriafa. For newcomers to downwinders or the more conservative kiter, it's a good idea to rent a buggy for the day and get the driver to follow you down the beach. Most buggy drivers are skilled in launching and landing kites so you will be perfectly safe if something goes wrong along the way (your strap opens, exhaustion, kite too small/big, etc.). For those who prefer to go there by buggy and spend the day sailing in the river or open sea, this spot is perfect for landing and launching, thus very safe for beginners. However, bring food and drinks as there is nothing available. Also shade is scarce and a sun-umbrella or at least some hats for the break inbetween sessions, is definitely highly recommended.

Tatajuba

Tatajuba is a small fishing village, still very unaffected by tourism, about 35km from Jericoacoara. Lately it has become a popular day-out-of-Jeri kitespot. Tatajuba offers open sea, as well as lagoon kiting. As with Guriafa, you get there either by kiting downwind or buggy. FYI, in a recent race, the winner did it in about 35 minutes, but the average kiter would do it in about 1 - 1 1/2 hours. The Lagoa do Tatajuba is a scenic place and definitely worth the visit. The grilled fish alone — one of the restaurants right on the water, makes it worthwhile (with some unique water-hammocks on stilts). The kitesurfing can be a bit rough though due to extremely gusty winds - the lagoon lies a few good hundred meters inland behind big sanddunes.

The open sea offers smooth kiting in strong but consistent wind with sweet wavy ramps (depending on the tide, big enough to waveride) and flats in between. At high tide, another lagoon forms right by the sea in front of the village, with access to the ocean and partly surrounded by sandbanks. It is great fun kiting on this but be careful, the water is mostly very shallow! Don't be surprised if you find yourself kiting there totally on your own (except for the people with you, of course). The beach is not that wide but it is not used by anyone else, and is perfect for launching and landing. As well as a typical Brazilian restaurant, there is also a very unique pousada just up the little hill, the Santa Maria, also known as the Windkitehouse, www.windkitehouse.com, which offers F&B as well as rooms with an absolutely unique flavour.

Barra Grande

This is another untouched piece of kite paradise. Situated about four hours drive by car on the the Parnaiba Delta A.P.A. (Ambiental Protection Area) in the state Piaui (next state bordering up north onto Ceara), Barra Grande lies in between two famous National Parks, Jericoacoara on one side and Lençóis Maranhenses on the other. Parnaiba Delta has beaches, dunes, rivers, lakes, mangroves and islands, which offers a variety of kitesurfing conditions. The wind blows almost all year long with a good 18 - 30 knots and February to April being the rainy season. There is a kite-pousada (guesthouse) in the village, right at one of the main spots, Pontal, a flat water bay with side-shore winds. The pousada, Barra Grande Kitecamp, www.barragrandekitecamp.com, certainly is THE best accommodatin option here. It is definitely a bit above the average kites-budget but worth the money, with delicious food and lovely company! Other spots in the vicinity are Mangue Seco, La Boca, and Jungle Lake, all of which are absolutely amazing places. 30km downwind of Barra Grande, there are even more spots to be discovered. Coqueiro Beach, Maramar, Cabeleira, Arrombado, and Itaqui.

