

Niugini Blue®

Papua New Guinea's Premier Water Sports Magazine

The Big Ones are Lurking

Two 60kg Yellowfin
tuna caught in two
fishing trips.

Making a Mok

Homemade solid wood surf boards

The Hidden Kite Paradise

Pro kitesurfer Gabi Steindl hit the jackpot
in Papua New Guinea.

PLUS: • The Magic of the Louisiades • Wrecks & Wild Reefs
• Tropicana Billfish Tournament • Fish & Ships in Bootless Bay
• PNG Sailors at the SP Games • The Galley with Chef Gadget
• Club Talk • Tech Tips - Trolling with Peter Pakula

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The hidden KITE PARADISE

Gabi Steindl



Ever since I stopped competing in the World Cup, I have been focusing on freeride missions that aim at helping the sport by constantly finding and exploring new, still rather unknown kitesurf destinations, far from the crowds.

My trips over the past years have taken me to the most remote corners of our fascinating planet and I have had the privilege to kitesurf on hidden lakes in Russia, ride perfect waves in the deepest outback of Australia, explore unknown coastlines in Belize, Venezuela, Brazil, Mexico, New Zealand, and Cape Verde, play in the waters of Caribbean islands

that are still completely unheard-of, and many more special places. I have to admit it gets harder and harder to discover perfect kiting grounds... But recently I hit the jackpot!

I packed up my 60kg North-quiver and jumped on a plane to an absolutely unique place; one that travel agencies seldom offer as a destination: Papua New Guinea.

It's the world's third-biggest island state after Indonesia and Madagascar and, located in the south-western Pacific Ocean, consistent trade winds blow reliably during the European summer months.

“...I have to admit it gets harder and harder to discover perfect kiting grounds... But recently I hit the jackpot!”



Left: Gabi inhaling “Wave Energy” out on the reef, Trobriand Islands. Bottom left: Gabi boosting high on happiness over the Blue Lagoon, Trobriand Islands. Above: Gabi cruising with the fishermen, near Kiriwina Harbour, Trobriand Islands.

PNG has recently established itself as an ‘insider-tip’ in the surfing community with countless breaks for all levels with reliable swells—and all this without the crowds in the line-up. Yeah, it sounded perfect for wave-obsessed Gabi and I got in touch with the Surfing Association of PNG and local kitesurfing legend Jason Pini.

The result was a three-week, once-in-a-lifetime adventure that will stay in my heart forever. It consisted of three stages: The Trobriand Islands, Port Moresby, and Hula Village.

Trobriand Islands, a.k.a Islands of Love, Milne Bay Province

Also known as the Islands of Love, the Trobriands host the annual Yam Festival, one of the most important cultural festivals of the area. Tribes from the surrounding islands come together on the main island, Kiriwina, paint their bodies and decorate themselves with shells, flowers, bones, and feathers to celebrate in a traditional *singsing*. For many days, they sing, dance, and celebrate the harvest of the Yam, a type of sweet potato and one of the most important sources of food for the local inhabitants.

I spent one week on the Trobriands. I happily relinquished the luxury of the only hotel on the island to stay in a teeny-weeny village in the middle of a wonderfully tropical jungle. My host-family had built a mini-sleeping hut on stilts especially for me, as well as my own toilet (a hole in the ground underneath a little shack made out of banana leaves). With no electricity or running water, to shower I went to the nearby waterhole with the village women or the kids pulled up some buckets of water from the village pond and I could rinse myself off behind yet another especially set up ‘shower-curtain’ (wall of banana leaves).

My host family was an incredible extended family of about 22, who cared in the most loving way for me. Before flying over to the Trobriands, Jason had suggested I buy some Euro-similar food in one of the big supermarkets to bring with me, but I was curious about the local kitchen and skipped the shopping-run. I always ate together with my hosts and I loved it. Meals were simple yet tasty and usually consisted of a variety of cooked sweet potatoes, a lot of fish, and other locally grown greens.

On arrival, I immediately distributed

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Story & Photos: Gabi Steindl





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the presents that I had brought with me. In addition to pencils, notepads, clothes, etc, I also brought chocolate and they were stoked! The most exciting thing though, was when I opened up my big quiverbag for the first time. I took out my kites and boards and everyone wanted to help me assemble my gear and screw in fins and straps. It was all so incredibly exciting for them – and for me as well.

An absolute highlight on the Trobriands was the *singsing*. The locals painted my face and I was welcomed to directly engage in the festivities when I got lifted onto a massive handmade wooden scaffolding and carried through the crowd at the celebration area by traditionally dressed men.

One day, I went to the island's school. The principal knew about my visit and dedicated two teaching hours to me and the kids in order to fly with them on my Lizzard-North trainer kites on the big meadow (the school's sports field) in front of the simple school building. Everybody wanted to try it and I will never in my life forget the rays of joy and excitement in the kids' eyes.

The 'big' kite got inflated at the pier of the main harbour of Kiriwina first. Within minutes, I was surrounded by hundreds of people. When I hit the water, pulling off some big airs, they went absolutely crazy. They cheered, jumped and shrieked, rejoiced and shouted, "Again, again, jump again for us girl!" The next day the whole



island spoke of the "flying girl that will go down in the history books of the Trobriands".

On another day, Jason, together with the driver that he had organised, a whole bunch of my host-family, and I explored the other side of Kiriwina Island by four wheel-drive and found a virtually kite-perfect lagoon on an endlessly white sand beach. It was fringed by the highest palm trees that I've ever seen and the water was turquoise-blue and crystal clear.

Clockwise from top: Wakesurfing in Port Moresby Harbour; Flatwater heaven, Fisherman's Island/Dougo Island; Gabi boosting a "Railey" in the sunset, Taurama Beach, Port Moresby.



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Above: Gabi in a "Grab" over sweet waves rolling onto turquoise reef, Hula Village. Right: Gabi with all the curious, lovely "kite-inflating-helpers" at a beach, Port Moresby.

Thierry, one of the sons of my host family, an incredibly witty kid who was talking only "kite" from the first minute I arrived in the village, got a big buzz out of coming for a spin on my back across the lagoon.

On a boat-trip to a few other islands in the archipelago of the Trobes, I became aware of the full potential of the islands, though, I would need much more time than only one week in order to explore and kite them all.

It was incredibly difficult for me to say 'Good Bye' to my host-family and all the villagers. The people here had overwhelmed me with their kindness, hospitality, and way of living. If any of the readers of Niugini Blue goes to Kiriwina, please bring them a copy of the magazine!!!

Alas, I had to continue to the next stage of my trip. As sad as I was, I was stoked to find out at the tiny airport of Kiriwina that there were no luggage scales. This meant, for the first time in my nine-year professional kitesurfing career, I could check in my 'monster-quiver' without any problems or excessive charges.

Port Moresby, capital of PNG
Port Moresby marks, without a

doubt, a crass counterpoint to the rest of the country. Modern and rather faceless in some parts; the business centre is hectic and loud. But there are really nice corners to be found here as well. This time I was hosted by Jason and his lovely family.

In Port Moresby, I was once more overwhelmed by the kindness and hospitality of people. I found top kite spots on small, offshore islands as well as on several beaches right in the middle or not far from town. Taurama and Ela

“...This perfect day came to a perfect end with a wild wakesurf-session”

Beach are only two of the many options to kite here.

The absolute highlight during the week that I spent here was a boat-trip to Fisherman's Island (or "Daugo Island") a small island off the south coast and once a WWII airfield. This spot is an absolutely awesome endless sandbank

2km in length. It's a breathtaking, crystal-clear-water, super white-sand, perfectly shallow, flatwater playground in the middle of the ocean. This perfect day came to a perfect end with a wild wakesurf-session behind the yacht that we'd spent the day on in Port Moresby harbour.

Hula Village, a small fishing village, Central Province

In Hula, I felt honoured to be hosted by the family of the president of the Olympic Committee and the Sports Federation of PNG. My accommodation here was slightly more advanced than in the Trobes, though still very simple.

Once again, there wasn't any running water or electricity, however, here I had a room in a local village house. Sleeping on a big mattress (that Jason was kind enough to bring for me) underneath a mosquito net, I felt super cosy and safe, surrounded by friendly, really



welcoming, curious, and caring people.

It only took a few days until pretty much everyone in Hula village knew my name and everyone wanted to "see Gabi flying!"

One day, the whole elementary school got a day off in order to spend it with me on the beach. I will never forget the moment I spotted all the kids in the distance in their cute school uniforms running towards me. I was on the beach super early with all my equipment and everyone wanted to be the first one to arrive in order to help Gabi with all her



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Above: Gabi and Thierry, super stoked, "Blue Lagoon", Trobriand Islands.

toys.

They were running so fast; they simply could not wait. Everyone was there: the principle, the entire teaching staff, all the kids with their families, and many more enthusiastic viewers.

First, I explained the very basics as to how the "wing" (as the locals called my kite) works on the beach. I showed them how to handle the pump and got the kids to inflate the kite, to lay out the lines, and how to attach them and tie knots. The absolute highlight without a doubt was when I allowed the most courageous of pupils to jump on my back and to come for a ride with me.

The fun came to a bit of a sudden end when I stepped on a sea urchin just after another eager 'wanna-come-on-your-back' student jumped on. I had hundreds of tiny spikes in my left foot which was very painful. It felt so extremely good to make those kids happy, so I continued until the pain got too severe.

Luckily my host-family knew the best natural remedy for it: The skin of a coconut was laid on open fire and then pressed relatively hot onto the bottom of my foot. Ouch, yeah, that was painful. Mind you, it was bearable—plus incidents like these are "part of the game", aren't they? As by a miracle, the spikes dissolved in my foot and already on the next day I could run about

normally again.

The night before my final departure, the villagers of Hula village surprised me with a very special "Good Bye Dance" and we were singing and dancing together till very late at night. To say "Good Bye" to these incredible people the next day caused fat elephant tears to roll down my face.

A could write a book about all the sick kitesurf locations that I found in the three weeks that I spent in PNG; about my experiences, acquaintances, new friendships, adventures and once-in-a-lifetime-moments – a whole volume of

“...I allowed the most courageous pupils to jump on my back for a ride....”

books. I have already explored a vast number of places on my own. PNG is unmatched and truly special in so many ways. For the individualists among you, who like to tack against the kite-mass-stream, this is the place to go to for your next holiday, the last frontier and a truly hidden kite-paradise.

My trip will remain in my heart forever. A 'once-in-a-lifetime'-trip

WHEN TO GO

Conditions

The southeast trade winds blow the most consistently from May through to November. The wind starts early in the day as a lighter breeze and picks up around lunch.

From Jul - Sep the wind is usually the strongest and also the best time for waves and regular swell on the coast of PNG.

Average wind speed

18 - 30 knots.

Average kitesize

7m2-12m2.

Air Temperature

approx. 25-30°C

Water Temperature

approx. 22°C+

Points of contact

PNG Surf & Kitesurf Association

www.surfingpapuanewguinea.org.pg

PNG Tourism Board

www.pngtourism.org.pg

In the Loop Kiteboarding

www.intheloopkiteboarding.com

No Limit Adventure

www.nolimitadventures.eu

which felt a bit like a visit to another planet and which clearly proved the strong unifying force of our great sport. ■

Gabi Steindl

www.kitegabi.com



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