

kite sista

The Bare Necessities

DO YOU REALLY NEED ALL THAT GEAR?

helmet and your impact vest at the airport check in is always a situation to be avoided, which is why we are here to help you understand a little bit more about all the gear options available and decide if you can live without it and potentially be a better kiter to boot. Of course as you may already be aware if you are regular readers of our KiteSista section, this may contain sprinklings of our personal thoughts (just a few) but we all know it is helpful to have a second opinion from time-to-time, so consider us the posers of all the questions you were afraid to ask.

HOW DO THEY GET IN THE WATER SO FAST?

Have you ever noticed how quickly that experienced rider gets on the water after arriving at the beach? They are not in a hurry (and will often then spend 5-10 minutes warming up once on the beach), yet they can still be seen tightening their boots and riding off into the horizon whilst you are still walking out your lines or applying sunscreen. The reason: simplicity and minimalism. We are not talking about interior design here, just a simple uncluttering of your kiting life to the absolute essentials.

"I ALWAYS WONDERED WHY PEOPLE GO SO FULLY EQUIPPED WHEN THEY ARE IN THE POST-KITE COURSE STAGE. THERE'S SOMETHING ABOUT THIS "ALL THE GEAR" ATTITUDE THAT I AM JUST NOT A FAN OF." - JULIA CASTRO

KITE? CHECK. BAR? CHECK. PUMP? CHECK. BOARD? CHECK. HARNESS? CHECK. LET'S GO!

We all have a list of what we need to get our session started, however I would be very surprised if any of you reading this has a list that stops there. The very nature of our sport permits us to quickly become

equipment junkies and often the only thing that can put a stop to this hoarding of kite-associated gadgets and accessories is the dreaded airline excess baggage fees. Having to choose between your

WHAT'S IN YOUR KITE BAG?

WIND METERS. These devices come in many flavors from the dedicated anemometer to the iPhone app that uses your microphone noise to guess the wind speed. Let us break it to you gently: everyone is laughing at you. You see, the speed of the wind alone is not the only gauge of which kite to pump. Air temperature and density, whether the wind speed is forecast to increase or fall, storm clouds on the horizon, the movement of sand on the beach, how easily birds are able to fly into the wind (a personal favorite) and the sure fire method that 99% of experienced kites use: WHAT IS EVERYONE ELSE RIDING? Use these factors and make an informed decision, because consulting a wind meter and then the recommended wind range of your kites is not ideal, it is only a guide. Abandoning the wind meter will help you really feel and understand the wind – not just see it as a number.

“PUT YOUR WIND METER AWAY AND LOOK AROUND YOU AT ALL THE CLUES THERE TO HELP YOU CHOOSE YOUR KITE SIZE, IF YOU DIDN'T ALREADY KNOW BEFORE YOU GOT TO THE BEACH WHICH SIZE YOU WERE GOING TO FLY.”

- MAUREEN CASTELLE

LINE WINDERS. Although many have hit the market in the last 10 years, thankfully these haven't gained a whole lot of traction on the beach and we do not often see them. In essence they are a device to aid you in rolling your lines and keeping them untangled so that you can connect your kite and get on the water that little bit sooner. But nothing is certain in the untangling of kite lines, just ask anyone who landed their kite on the beach, placed the bar on the ground, came back five minutes later to relaunch and suddenly the lines were tangled. How? One of the great unsolved mysteries of our time. Add this to the fact that if you go to launch your kite and then realize your lines are crossed, you enter into that annoying moment where the person launching your kite regrets ever saying yes and you have lost a kite buddy on the beach.

“I CAN GET ALL MY NECESSARY THINGS FOR MY SESSION ON TO A MOTORBIKE.”

- THERESE TAABEL

BOARD FLOATERS. What on earth is a board floater or “GoJoe” some of you might be asking. It is an inflatable orange device that looks much like a child's armband and attaches to the handle of the board. Its purpose being to make your board very easy to find if you lose it as the floater catches the wind which gently blows your board downwind.

“IT IS SOMETHING THAT BEGINNERS GET SOLD ON THAT ONLY HOLDS THEM BACK FROM DIALING IN THEIR BODY DRAGGING SKILLS FROM THE GET GO.” - COLLEEN CARROLL

Rider: Maureen Castelle
Photo: KiteSista



BOARD LEASHES. Probably the accessory with the worst reputation out there: the dreaded board leash. Whilst there are many retractable leashes on the market which do not necessarily ping the board back to your head at Mach 10, they fall under the same category as the floaters. It is a lazy or insecure persons alternative to learning to do something properly.

FLOATATION JACKETS AND IMPACT VESTS. These are of course obligatory when you take your first lessons, but after that are seen as a sign that you either have zero confidence or don't know how to swim. Whilst we do not recommend kitesurfing for those who can't swim, we would never ask you to remove such an obvious safety device. With the rise in popularity of wave riding and the increased risk of finding yourself in the impact zone without a kite, an impact vest can provide both protection to your body and keep you on the surface in the event of things not going to plan. Don't let anyone pressure you into thinking differently.

HELMETS. We might as well attack this subject at the same time as impact vests. No one should ever be berated for wearing a helmet. It is a personal choice of course and whilst many experienced kitesurfers will tell you a helmet is not necessary for kitesurfing, it is a bit of an essential when hitting sliders and kickers. Why? Because they are solid objects... Don't forget that 20 years ago no one wore a helmet on the ski slopes either. The only thing we will say is that a helmet is there to protect your head, so those Darth Vader style helmets with full face visors are definitely not recommended unless you want to end up with a face full of plastic.

SUNGLASSES. This one can quickly lead to heated discussion as you will see a lot of riders with sunglasses, and whilst we personally are not in favor of them due to the 'plastic in face' potential and the more common 'sadness when they fall off and you lose them', they are a big market. As a beginner there is a perceived need for them, as you look at the sky and your kite a huge amount, but as you progress more, you look up less...

HATS. This one is very simple. If you are either a) protecting your head from the sun or b) keeping it warm in winter, a hat is a very good idea. If however you are wearing a baseball cap for style

However, as children learn to swim and don't keep armbands all their life, you should learn to body drag and not rely on devices such as this. There is a reason you learn to body drag before learning how to get on a board, it is a very important part of kitesurfing and will give you the confidence and ability to get out of dangerous situations should you need to.



Rider: Therese Taabel
Photo: KiteSista

alone and every time it falls off you have to ride or drag around trying to find it, well then you are not doing yourself or anyone else any favors.

GLOVES. This is a strange one. Those who don't wear gloves wonder why on earth you would ever want to, but those who do wear them are certain that without them their hands would simply disintegrate. Some would argue that if you need gloves you are gripping the bar too hard and this is down to bad technique so you should let your harness take the force of the kite and eliminate the gloves from your board bag. But if the air temp is sub 5 degrees and the wind is from the north then don't leave home without them...

SHORTS OVER THE WETSUIT. This has been touched on many a time but no one has come out and really said it, so we will. No. Plain and simple. It looks ridiculous, serves no purpose whatsoever and needs to stop now. People are actively laughing at you.

GPS AND JUMP TRACKERS. When starting, stopping, configuring and uploading your session gets in the way of actually enjoying it, there is something wrong. Don't get us wrong here, it is very cool to know how high you jump, but does the rest of the world need to know after every session? And we certainly don't want to see a google maps overlay showing your GPS track and you going back and forth for two hours at your local spot...

Spare Parts. A spare part can make the difference between an epic session and a wasted trip (think about a spare binding screw for example). However, having EVERY spare part for any eventuality is going to weigh you down and potentially keep you awake at night in a state of nervous tension that you have missed something.

"HAVING A GOOD VARIETY OF SPARE PARTS AS WELL AS TOOLS IS SOMETHING I NEVER TRAVEL WITHOUT!"

- COLLEEN CARROLL

We were very guilty of this in the past, although we traveled with the ability to help any kiter in need, the 12 spare fins (you will only lose one), sockets and screwdrivers for every possible use, spare lines etc. will only end up costing you more in weight allowance. Slim your tool kit down to the essentials and take your chances...

The Poncho. This can be a real lifesaver in wintery car parks, and a very stylish accessory to boot, but choose wisely. We dropped the heavier towel ponchos which weighed quite a bit in favor of a Thuggies (other stylish brands are available but we are rather fond of this one) which doubles up as a jumper which means one less item of clothing to bring.

OFFICIAL KITESURFER KIT

We want to close out by breaking a common misconception: there is no official kit. As long as it is comfortable and you like it, then wear it. Feel free to start your own trend, be it a shirt over your harness, denim shorts, vests or whatever – if it is your style and it doesn't cause undue chaffing or risk of strangulation then rock it with pride! We don't all need to be carbon copies of each other on the water.



"IF YOU ARE STARTING OUT WITH KITING AND WONDERING WHAT EQUIPMENT YOU REALLY NEED, IT'S NOT COMPLICATED, JUST KEEP IT SIMPLE." - MAUREEN CASTELLE

Rider: Colleen Carroll
Photo: Toby Bromwich

LISTEN TO THE BEAR...

Some of the inspiration for this article came from Baloo the Bear. As we sung along to Jungle Book this little passage stuck in our heads and rings true to many aspects of the kitesurfer's existence... Don't spend your time lookin' around For something you want that can't be found When you find out you can live without it And go along not thinkin' about it I'll tell you something true The bare necessities of life will come to you.