

Call of the Wind

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12/09/2022 Kitesurfing is both an extreme sport and a source of energy. Nowhere in Europe can it be experienced as intensively as in Tarifa in Spain. An encounter with the wind and the waves – and two superstars of the international kitesurfing scene.

It's all about the magic of acceleration. Kiteboarder Liam Whaley hurtles toward a wave. On its crest, he hits a speed of approximately 50 kmh, pushes off the water with his lightweight 2.5-kilogram carbon board, steers his kite into the sky, and pulls at the steering bar, which is connected to the kite by high-tech lines. This takeoff momentum catapults him a good 20 meters into the air – the height of a five-story building. At the highest point of his jump, Liam steers the kite into a loop. The kite turns once on its own axis and accelerates the kitesurfer horizontally and in free flight to as much as 100 kmh. He sails a further 120 meters, rotating the kite in the sky above him in such a way that he catches hold of it again in a controlled manner and lands gently on the water's surface.

A group of people walking along Tarifa's city beach look on, mesmerized. They ooh and aah, and

fragments of words can be heard: “increíble … espectacular … loco …” – incredible, spectacular, crazy. Rita Arnaus is standing nearby and smiles when she sees the megaloop: “Liam is in his element.” 25-year-old Liam is a professional kitesurfer and a star in the scene, and he calls Tarifa in Spain his home. His specialty in addition to freestyle is big air. Here, the kiteboarders attempt to jump as high as possible and remain in the air for a long time, performing tricks as they go. Liam's teammate Rita Arnaus excels in freestyle, the discipline in which difficult technical tricks are performed in an artistic gymnastics style. 27-year-old Rita is spending a few days in Tarifa training with Liam.

Located on the Costa de la Luz, Tarifa is to Europe what the Hawaiian island of Maui is to the international scene, namely a legendary location for all board sport enthusiasts. Here at the southernmost point of the European mainland by the Strait of Gibraltar, the winds are stronger and more frequent than elsewhere on the continent. It's a magical place where Europe and Africa, the Atlantic and the Mediterranean converge. Tarifa pulls in enthusiastic kitesurfing vacationers and also serves as a venue for international competitions. In the 1990s, it was a windsurfing hub. It is now the nucleus of kitesurfing, the latest trend in water sports.

It is an extreme sport that fascinates people. It captivates not only spectators and people who happen to be out for a stroll, but also and above all its active participants in such a way that they become absolutely addicted. They glide playfully over the water and their jumps and flights through the air are both nimble and breathtaking. Kitesurfing is spectacular – and sometimes very risky, too. At the same time, you can learn the basics more quickly than any other water-based board sport (namely in just a week). There are then innumerable options open to you because the flexibility on the board is what makes kitesurfing so special.

To put it simply, there are styles to cater to all tastes. There are styles for wave experts and for artistic jumpers, for fans of tricks or for those simply wishing to relax and enjoy the feeling of a fresh wind in their face.

Wind for the mental well-being

Wind, which has a positive effect on physical and mental well-being, as even recent psychological studies confirm. For example, kitesurfing teaches us serenity and acceptance of the fact that there are parameters in our lives that we cannot always perfectly control – the wind and the waves may not always turn out the way we humans want. When Liam returns to the beach after his big air session, he, too, says: “If I've had a bad day, I hit the ocean, which is my safety zone. There's no need for me to talk to anyone and I can express my feelings on the water. This recharges my batteries.”

The levanter easterly wind subsides a little. It's time to relocate from Balneario beach to another spot that's more suited to Rita's discipline, freestyle – Valdevaqueros awaits. Liam loads all the equipment into his Cayenne E-Hybrid Coupé. Rita drives the same model at home in Barcelona.

For her short trip to Tarifa, she jumped into a 718 Boxster 25 Years at Málaga Airport. The wind was

already beginning to pick up during the drive – Rita savored it with the car's top down. She now switches from the convertible to her board. At Valdevaqueros beach, Rita retrieves her equipment from the passenger seat of the Boxster, gets her kite ready, slips into her neoprene wet suit, and slides onto the water. The Spaniard agilely performs multiple turns, passes the bar from one hand to the other behind her back during jumps, rotates in the air on her own axis, upside down, forward, backward – all with the grace of a dancer. Rita can't help but laugh upon hearing the comparison when back on land: "As a teenager, I really did dream of having a career as a dancer. It was through dance that I learned to control my body movements." She is still benefiting from this hugely to this day in her kitesurfing, she says. "Giving up on my dance training was a difficult decision to make. But I combined the two things and now I dance with the wind."

Liam Whaley

Born in Ibiza to a Dutch mother and a British father, Liam began kitesurfing as a child. Following victories in the Spanish and European junior freestyle championships, he won the Freestyle World Tour aged 18. He entered his first Red Bull King of the Air competition in 2018 and finished in second place right off the bat. In 2021, he won the Cold Hawaii Games big air competition in Denmark. The 25-year-old runs his own water sports school, the Liam Whaley Pro Center, on Valdevaqueros beach in Tarifa, with Duotone kite material and an exclusive Porsche Lounge.

Rita Arnaus

27-year-old Rita's parents were themselves Spanish windsurfing champions. Rita was born and raised in Barcelona and only took up kitesurfing at the age of 16. She soon turned professional and entered her first competitions at 19, being crowned Spanish champion multiple times. She came second in the GKA Freestyle World Tour in 2021.

Kitesurf Engagement

As well as tennis and golf, Porsche promotes the further development of kitesurfing. For example, the sports car manufacturer supported the big air competition Red Bull King of the Air for the first time in November 2021 and is cooperating with the world-leading kiteboarding brand Duotone. Porsche has secured the two first-class international kitesurfers Liam Whaley and Rita Arnaus as partners.

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