



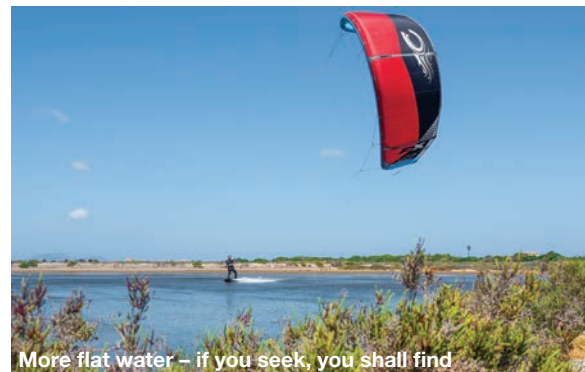
JB getting in some good progression sessions

FRESH TRACKS

#02 SICILY

THE LITTLE ITALIAN ISLAND OFF THE SOUTHWEST CORNER OF ITALY OFFERS MUCH TO THE FREERIDE KITESURFER LOOKING FOR A MIX OF EASY, SAFE LAGOON CRUISING CONDITIONS, INCREDIBLE FLAT WATER FOR TRICKS AND BEAUTIFUL SICILIAN NATURE. CABRINHA TEAM RIDER JAMES BOULDING HAS SPENT A MONTH OVER THERE SAMPLING THE LAID BACK WAY OF LIFE AND PUT THIS MINI GUIDE TOGETHER FOR US

WORDS > JAMES BOULDING / PHOTOS: LACI KOBULSKY / PRO KITE ALBY RONDINHA



More flat water – if you seek, you shall find



There's no need to ride like a pack of sardines in these parts



Little Italy

As I get older different things become more important to me on each kite trip. When I first got into kiting nothing mattered other than how many days I would be able to kite and how flat the water would be. I made annual migrations to Brazil to fully concentrate on becoming a better kiteboarder. That's not to say that my riding motivations have lessened, it's just that I now put a greater importance on having home comforts and also spending more time enjoying the other aspects of travelling and enjoying what a country has to offer.

Over the last few years I've been drawn back to the Italian island of Sardinia with its first class food, warm summer winds and easy going lifestyle. This year my friend and fellow Cabrinha team mate, Alby Rondina, opened up a new kite

school in Sicily, so I've been experiencing another famous Italian island.

When it comes to food, most people would probably accept that Italy is up there as one of the finest places for gastronomy. Among Italians themselves, Sicily is one of the top rated places, so I had high expectations. Needless to say I wasn't disappointed and am writing this a little heavier after a month of indulgences at the dining table.

Enough about food, on to the most important part, the kiting. As an island there are many spots to kite but the main spot is called Lo Stagnone, situated between the towns of Trapani and Marsala, each steeped in history and the perfect place to eat and drink you up a belt size (sorry, I slipped back to food!).

One of the best things about this area is how easy it is to reach. Trapani airport is literally five minutes from the kite spot and with many cheap airlines like Ryanair flying in from most European cities, travel times from Europe are incredibly quick. The main airport on the island is in the bigger city of Palermo, just an hour away, so there's no complaining about travel times.

The spot is protected to preserve nature for obvious reasons; it's stunningly beautiful, quintessentially Italian with grape vines lining the coast and launch areas and islands dotted further out into the water. Chest deep in all areas, this an excellent place to learn to kitesurf. This is obvious when you arrive as the schools are hot on the case when there's the wind. I've always tried to stay clear of spots brimming with kite schools, but there's lots of potential to leave it all behind as soon as you launch due to the vast amounts of space and open conditions.

Similar to sheep, kites do tend to stick together and presume that if a place has lots of kiteboarders on the water, that is 'the spot'. I don't want to give all my secrets away, but the best bit with Lo Stagnone is how easy it is to get away from the crowds and to explore.

Small boat ferries take you to a roman island nearby, which gives you an idea of the sort of heritage and history associated to the location. The area is famous in a large part for producing salt due to the incredibly salty water and, over the years, many small sea walls and areas have been set up for salt production. These days there is hardly any salt production, but luckily for kiteboarders the walls have remained and make for some exceptionally flat water sections where the wind blows cleanly over the top producing perfect freestyle arenas on the lee side.

I had presumed that the winds in this area would be very light, but I was very surprised how strong the wind gets. As the summer temperatures heat up during the peak season the winds tend to not be so strong, but either side of this time you can experience some great winds that are perfect for boosting and trying to



Alby carving up his home spot



Easy to go up a belt size in these parts



Get fresh



Buttery conditions on the leese of the old salt walls

take top spot on the Woo leaderboards. There were more than a few times that I found my legs above my head scratching out that extra ten centimetre reading stacked on an eight metre kite, utilizing the strong conditions.

Blowing from a variety of directions, the changing conditions keeps things interesting. Often rotating from the northerly thermal to a southerly wind, you'll usually experience a few days of one direction followed by a few days of the other. Before peak season these winds can feel chilly, so I'd recommend having a good wetsuit for these months before the temperatures soar into the months of June, July and August. Westerly onshore winds can make things a little congested as everyone is trying to get away from the beach, but one tack out and you can find yourself alone, except for the flamingos that can sometimes be seen enjoying the flat shallow waters, too. The wildlife in this area is particularly extraordinary.

I was thoroughly impressed with Sicily, the food is simply divine and the kiting was so much better than I expected. Combine this with a destination that is incredibly easy to get to from mainland Europe and you're looking at a place that's ideal for short haul kite trips – especially in the upcoming autumn season elsewhere if you're looking to extend 'summer'.

LO STAGNONE - THE LOWDOWN

AIRPORT: Trapani Birgi is just five minutes from the kite spot. The main airport, Palermo international, is 100 kilometres away.

PORT: There are ferries from Genova to Palermo every day, which take 19 hours. Cabins are available onboard and the ferries present a good option from mainland Europe if you want to drive. Daily ferries also arrive from Livorno, Civitavecchia and Napoli.

SCHOOLS: ProKite Alby Rondina offer kite lessons, kite storage, SUPs, hotel accommodation and bikes. The latest range of Cabrinha kite gear is also available to test and rent. www.prokitealbyrondina.com

FOOD: Fantastic pizzerias are in abundance. There's a fish market every morning in Marsala, selling excellent fresh fish and local produce.

I guarantee you won't find better tomatoes anywhere in the world and generally the local vegetables are astonishingly good.

WINE: Cantina Birgi, the local winery, offers a variety of local wines. Pump service is available where you just bring a plastic container and they fill it up just like at the fuel station. Our daily tipple was the local Syrah, costing €1.20 per litre. Syrahs are very popular, but I highly recommend the Nero D'avola wines made from local grapes only grown in Sicily, slightly sweeter than the Syrah.

NIGHTLIFE: Trapani has a vibrant nightlife at weekends with many locals eating and drinking out. Don't go out too early as the Italians like to eat late and then start the party later! Marsala also gets very busy at the weekends and offers some great places to eat and drink until the early hours. *KW*