

2010 PISTOL RIVER
WAVE BASH

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STARBOARDS
INNOVATION QUALITY
RIBBON FORNATION



california, trippin', & PISTOL RIVER BASHIN'

Words: **Tanya Saleh**
Pictures: **Chris Hughes**

About 14 hours into our 900-mile drive back to San Diego from Oregon I look into my rear-view mirror and see the setting sun turn valleys shades of pink and orange, with the Pacific glistening in the background. Memories of another unforgettable adventure are left scattered across the forefront of my mind, and my blistered peeling hands are just another sign that it involved a lot of awesome windsurfing.

The infamous California road trip has always been on my list of things to do, but in all honesty it was pretty near the bottom. Why? I'm not sure, but it just didn't sound as appealing as Brazil, Morocco, Chile, Mozambique, and so on. Thankfully, I couldn't have been more wrong. It was an incredible adventure, unbelievably beautiful, and I got to windsurf 13 out of 15 days. Our final destination was actually in Oregon (more on that later), but we spent a leisurely week getting there with no specific plans. We stopped at places we thought looked cool, and had some word of mouth advice from friends for windsurfing spots on the way. So, from the southernmost point of San Diego to the northernmost point of Crescent City, here's what we discovered...



'SOCAL' – SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

Think SoCal, think fake boobs, fake abs, fake everything, beautiful people, dumb people, good surf (really good surf).

WINDSURFING POTENTIAL

San Diego has good flat-water Formula sailing and an active group of racers, but it doesn't get windy enough often enough for anything else. You might get lucky in spring or autumn with some light wind waveriding – look for north-westerlies and a beach called Tourmaline in the afternoon. If the kites are out by 2.00pm you should get sailing. The wind starts to kick in once you drive 90 minutes north of Huntington Beach, where you'll usually find a decent group of sailors around Seal Beach enjoying the bump-&-jump conditions.

Next stop would be Malibu, where there are two popular spots right next to each other: Leo Carrillo and County Limes. Throughout this whole coastline you're looking out for northerlies of varying directions. Leo and County are often cross or cross-on, but if you score a cross-off day with a south swell you'll get superb down-the-line waveriding. If not you'll get some fun jumping, so not bad either way.

Southern California is perfect for non-windsurfing companions. Sunbathing, shopping, sightseeing, all kinds of watersports – there's always something going on. And incredibly, everything really is just like it is on TV (think Laguna Beach, The OC...) so it's certainly great for people-watching.

If you're there from November to May you can even head into the mountains for a couple of days of snow. This is one of those fabled places where you can surf and ski in the same day, and if you're a surfer then be sure to check out some of the world's most famous breaks. From Trestles to Rincon, Southern California is swamped with good waves.

I haven't even mentioned the plethora of tourist attractions to plunder, from Hollywood sightseeing to Rodeo Drive, Venice Beach, Santa Monica, the vast collection of theme parks, zoos, Sea World... the list goes on, and it really is difficult to be bored here. They have it all and everything is super-sized.

SANTA BARBARA & NORTH

There's a lot of good windsurfing potential in and around Ventura and Santa Barbara:

- **C Street, Ventura** – you'll see the kites from the dual carriageway (Highway 101). Picks up a sizeable swell. Good wavesailing.
- **Isla Vista** – north area of Santa Barbara. Easier wavesailing or flat water if not much swell.
- **Jelama** – one hour north of Santa Barbara. Tucked away, with a reasonably heavy and fast wave, this place is infamous in the US windsurfing world and likely to get a lot of good days in spring / autumn.
- **Arroyo Laguna** – one of our luckiest and best sessions of the trip. Great with a south swell and I was fully powered up in 4.5m, down-the-line, head-high conditions. Scenery at this point starts turning a different kind of beautiful, with more rocks along the coastline and wildlife coming out to play.

Santa Barbara itself is a cool place to hang out. It's a very chilled, laid-back surfer town, and being further north of LA and surrounding areas it starts to feel less pretentious.

As we headed north from here the towns became much smaller, and we started to feel like we were venturing a little off the beaten track. It's not a problem as you can always find little hotels, motels or campsites, and it feels very safe. I left kit on the roof and the car fully loaded – but this definitely isn't recommended in the large cities.

Big Sur is a vast area of natural beauty, and I'd definitely recommend staying at least one night to take it all in. However, in these parts of North America there are various land-based creatures of which you should be aware. Black widow and brown recluse spiders are both venomous, but as long as you don't go rifling through wood piles you needn't worry too much. Rattlesnakes are around, but sightings – let alone bitings – are very rare. You're more likely to encounter one if you're camping in the forests. The same goes for grizzly bears, so keep food locked away.





“We had longer ways to go. But no matter, the road is life”

Jack Kerouac



SAN FRANCISCO

The next populated area of windsurfing spots we came to was around 90 minutes south of San Francisco.

First up is Davenport (sign off Highway 1 is for 'Davenport Landings'), which holds a great wave and is best on a south swell. It's a little rocky and there's a large shelf in front of the wave, so it looks a little intimidating, but if conditions are good then you'll see the locals out for sure. This wave can be a bit heavy, so be careful, but it does provide some great waveriding.

Just 10 minutes north of here is Waddell Creek, a big, friendly sandy beach good for jumping and riding. The downside is that it's littered with kites, so you need to stay a little upwind of them to remain 'safe'. Waddell features heavily in The Windsurfing Movie II, and while watching the film I couldn't help but wonder how they managed to get any shots without kitesurfers in the background.

THE BAY AREA

San Francisco is littered with windsurfers, and it's quite refreshing to have some around after travelling eight hours of mainly empty coastline. All the sailable spots here are flat water or bump-&-jump, and on a windy day you'll never be alone.

Crissy Field is the picturesque place to sail under the iconic Golden Gate Bridge – and I must admit that no matter how little I like flat water sailing, this was one of the highlights for me. This triumph of civil engineering is an absolutely stunning backdrop, and you feel humbled to be under its huge structure. There are a lot of other water users in the Bay, from tourist boats cruising around Alcatraz to colossal cargo ships, so pay attention. Other spots can be found all over from 3rd Avenue all the way to Berkeley, so windsurfing here is accessible and fun.

With your tourist hat on you'll be occupied for days. San Francisco has a more European vibe in comparison to the SoCal cities, and you can spend days exploring Fisherman's Wharf, Ghirardelli Square, China Town, Haight Ashbury... the list goes on.



NORTHERN CALIFORNIA

Little did we know that as we left San Francisco we were (comparatively) leaving civilisation. As you head north the towns become much, *much* smaller, more rural, and interesting.

Don't take Highway 1 out of San Francisco unless you want to average 15mph for the next four hours. As beautiful as it was even I got a little tired of the repetitive corners and lack of speed. Take 101 and you're off into the final frontier. The water temperature north of here is noticeably colder; sailing in a winter (5/3mm) suit in summer is a necessity, but we didn't surf in fear of getting seriously cold in the absence of hoods, boots and gloves.

As you get into the last few hundred miles of California the redwoods meet the ocean; these huge trees are fascinating and their bark is actually like sponge. This is also elk country, and I'm not talking about one of Whitey's Home Ground ELKs here, so be sure to tune into 'AM1610 Elk Information'. This voice recording dates from the 1920s and is by far the most amusing thing I've heard on radio for some time. Bottom line though is DO NOT APPROACH AN ELK, and always stay in your vehicle.

You can literally stop to sail anywhere along this coast, but it's desolate so if you're the only sailor in your group then you might find it a little intimidating.

The only place we found other windsurfers was an hour south of Crescent City at Big Lagoon. I knew nothing about this spot – we'd been driving for four hours and all of a sudden saw some sailors in the distance, so we pulled off the 101 onto a bumpy track. We found a group of middle-aged

locals sat amongst huge redwoods, drinking beer and laughing at their friends wiping out 10m away while going for duck gybes and other old-school moves. These guys were really friendly, and provided all sorts of entertainment along with advice for travelling north (mainly revolving around restaurants and bars). It was full-on 3.6m weather with super-flat water – perfect for blasting and freestyle. But it was the atmosphere that made this place special, and this was thanks to the locals, who handed over beers as we sat watching the sunset surrounded by 400 year-old giant redwoods, talking about windsurfing, the world, and everything in between.

An hour later we were at Crescent City, the last big town before leaving California and entering Oregon. It was pretty satisfying arriving at the Oregon sign and realising how much fun we'd had getting there.

It's mind blowing how long this state actually is (far longer than England and Scotland put together). We did over 900 miles of driving along a coastline totally exposed to swells travelling from 7,000 miles away – most of it with no-one else around. It's a playground for water lovers and people who want an adventure. Most of the people we met along the way had never left their state, let alone their country, and were almost oblivious to the rest of the world. It seems like a nice way to live life, but I think I'll take the exploration into the unknown any day. I still feel like there's so much left to see of this humbling, ragged coastline, and I look forward to going back some day.

“It was an incredible adventure, unbelievably beautiful, and I got to windsurf 13 out of 15 days”



DAY 1

The men were on 3.7-4.2s from minute one through to the finals, and we were graced with punchy head-high plus sets coming in. The single elimination was completed across all fleets just before it got dark.

It's tough to nail down just a few names because the overall skill level was so high. Whit Poor with his super-high jumps, Tyson Poor with his style on the wave, and Nathan Mershon barely missing a beat – all were close contenders for a top 3 spot. But so were the guys with years of experience like Jesse Brown, Sean Aiken. They're still truly on top of their game. Kai Katchadourian was busting out his huge back loops like only he knows how, Goya's style was inspiring as ever, and Kevin Pritchard just has this flare to everything he does and is consistent at the same time. And it was the years of experience that shone through, leaving Pritchard, Goya and Katchadourian to claim the spoils after the first day's single.

In the juniors the standard was high, and it was a close call between Zane Schweitzer, Bernd Roediger, Morgan Noireaux and Connor Baxter. I found it pretty crazy that all these guys are Maui residents – but it was obvious as soon as you saw them on the water. Zane's jumping helped give him the edge, going a little higher and being a bit more consistent, with Bernd in 2nd and Morgan in 3rd.

In the women's Ingrid Larouche from the Gorge took 1st with some awesome jumping and never dropping a thing, with myself in 2nd and Christine Vogt (also from the Gorge) in 3rd.

DAY 2

With the swell initially around head-high the heats started off with only waverides to count, but bang on cue after a couple of hours we were back to full power 4.2 weather, so jumps were added to the agenda.

Sam Neal managed to slice his hand open on his fin (really gross), which meant he had to come in and have it wrapped up. I must admit it didn't look good, but in true Sam style it wasn't going to stop him from sailing his next heat. Timo also had a bit of a nightmare and broke his second mast in two days, leaving him with ... no masts! Typically this happened in the middle of a heat, so it was a major setback for him.

The amateur and masters' standard was super-high – a lot of Gorge and Pistol River locals showed up, along with a few outsiders such as Atilla from the Bay Area and Dan Sullivan from Canada. I was also surprised at the fleet sizes, which meant these guys had a blast and the atmosphere was great. In the women's the gaps started to narrow, but overall the results remained the same.

The junior battle was *on*, and Bernd took the win over Zane, which meant they had

to sail another final to determine a winner. By this time it was about 7.00pm and the wind was well on its way out, and as Zane is about twice the size of Bernd I was surprised that the heat wasn't postponed to the next day. But Zane's happy-go-lucky attitude meant he kept his mouth shut, smiled and went out. I don't think he planned for more than about 30 seconds, but somehow he managed to bust out a backie, tabletop, and rip up some waves to take the overall junior title.

In the men's double Kai and Goya were next up to sail head-to-head for the chance to take on KP in the final, but alas by that time the dying wind meant it had to be called off for another day.

It was at this point that the legend himself, Mr Naish, decided to rock up in the biggest motorhome you've ever seen. He was too late to compete but he hung out on the beach and then went freesailing downwind of the competition area. It's rather amusing to note that for the couple of hours he was out sailing there are no photos of the competition, since all the photographers' lenses were trained on his wake.

DAY 3

Left to run were the men's semis and finals. Having been here for seven days it was typical that this was the first day without any significant wind. The skippers' meeting went from 10am to 12pm, 2pm, 3pm and 4pm, then somehow out of somewhere enough of a puff emerged for it to be on. The light wind could have been said to favour Goya's slender frame, but Kai would have to try to make up for it. It was all about the waves: float out and ride in. We got a true demonstration of how it should be done as Goya made it look easy and stylish to advance and meet KP in the final. But there was a twist, for if Goya triumphed there would be another head-to-head with winner of the single, KP.

Goya was on fire with his smooth flowing style, and just managed to take Kevin down. The judges decided to hold off running the 'super-final' until the following day in hope of some more wind.



THE SUPER-FINAL

I think the organisers breathed a huge sigh of relief when they woke up to hear the incessant wind we'd come to know and love. A star-studded beach of spectators gathered to watch a star-studded final. Kevin's one-footed one-handed back loops came out to play, and there was a vast array of perfectly landed push loops and backies. A double attempt was thrown in for good measure, and there was some epic riding on both sides.

Kevin won. It was one hell of a show, but what amazed me is that alongside competing, Kevin had spent the rest of his time filming and editing videos of the event. Yet he would still go on the water, totally focused, and take down 30 other guys for 1st place.

CLOSING CEREMONY

The reward ceremony was held in the village hall, and it was rather well organised, with a full-on sit-down meal and a few kegs, plus free raffles for the competitors with some pretty awesome prizes. An inspirational speech was made by Robby about just how much of an accomplishment this event was for Sam, and what it means to the windsurfing world. Here we were with some of the world's best sailors, having had a very successful event for which there was no major incentive (prize money). You wouldn't get Beckham, Nadal, Tiger, or any other athlete turn up to an event just for fun. This is pretty damn cool because it simply highlights why windsurfing is so special – we all do it for the love of the sport, not because of the reward.

One final important point to mention: as much fun as the event was, it has to be said that the partying and drinking factor at UK events wins hands down. Someone needs to teach those Americans a thing or two! ☺

“Forget the competition – this week of action will go down in windsurfing history”



OVERALL RESULTS

pro men

- 1st - Kevin Pritchard
- 2nd - Francisco Goya
- 3rd - Kai Katchadourian
- 4th - Whit Poor
- 15th - Timo Mullen
- 17th - Sam Neal

women

- 1st - Ingrid Larouche
- 2nd - Tanya Saleh
- 3rd - Christine Vogt

junior

- 1st - Zane Schweitzer
- 2nd - Bernd Roediger
- 3rd - Morgan Noireaux

amateur

- 1st - Lars Bergstrom
- 2nd - Allemand Emanuele
- 3rd - Ruben Lemmens

masters

- 1st - Attila Tivadar
- 2nd - Macrae Wylde
- 3rd - Royn Bartholdi