

>>> GOT YOUR RUBBER? SPECIAL REVIEW ON WINTER WETSUITS AND OTHER NEW KITE PRODUCTS

The Kiteboarder

magazine



a journey to the edge.
The Australian Diaries
West Oz

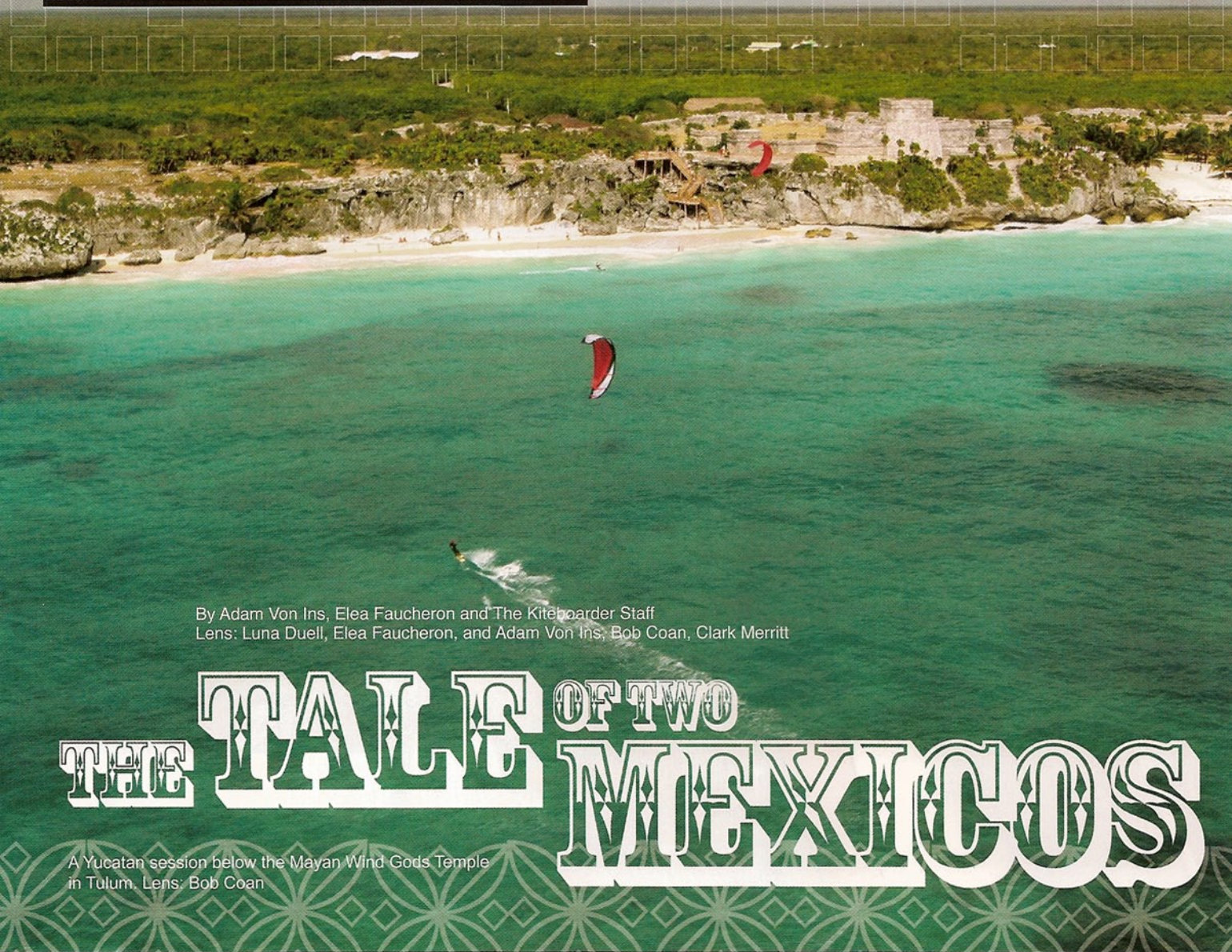
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Behind the scenes in Turkey
The Tale Of Two Mexicos

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By Adam Von Ins, Elea Faucheron and The Kiteboarder Staff
Lens: Luna Duell, Elea Faucheron, and Adam Von Ins; Bob Coan, Clark Merritt

THE TALE OF TWO MEXICOS

A Yucatan session below the Mayan Wind Gods Temple in Tulum. Lens: Bob Coan

The Division

Other than tacos, there's not much similarity between the Baja peninsula - a mountainous desert land jutting south from California, and the Yucatan peninsula -- a tropical tourist attraction at the southern entrance to the Gulf of Mexico. Winds, waters, cultures, and environments are as distant as the 2000 miles separating Mexico's east and west coasts.

Parted Winds

Baja Peninsula— The Baja Peninsula offers a diverse range of conditions, from waves to flat water to swell with chop. As a rule, the winds on the west coast tend to be best in the summer, while "El Norte" winds that influence the east side are strong and predictable November through April.

Often, 20-35 knots plus breeze can start as early as 8 a.m. and blow well past sunset. Western Baja coastal winds tend to be slightly less, in the 15-25 knot plus range, but that doesn't mean you won't find days where you'll be blown off the

water on your 7m. Water temps fluctuate and can have you in a shorty on hot days, while cooler days may find you reaching for your full wetsuit.

On the west coast, wave riding rules. To the east in La Ventana and La Paz, barrier islands keep the swell low and chop very mild, except on those nuking days when the swell can get head high or more. Los Barillos to the south can serve up an average of three-foot ramps with occasional six-footers to blast off of.

Yucatan Sea Breeze - Around the Yucatan Caribbean, it's also kiteable from November through April. While sea breezes tend to pick up in the afternoon, you can often be treated to comparable morning winds as well. Averaging 15-25kts, the clear turquoise oceans require no thermal protection.

Boat access lagoons hold super flat water and curious wildlife. Sea tortoises, large rays and eels can often be sighted below your fins. Several sunken boats make excellent sliders. Watch your feet -- the bottom of the lagoons can have some hard sharp stuff down there.

Launching

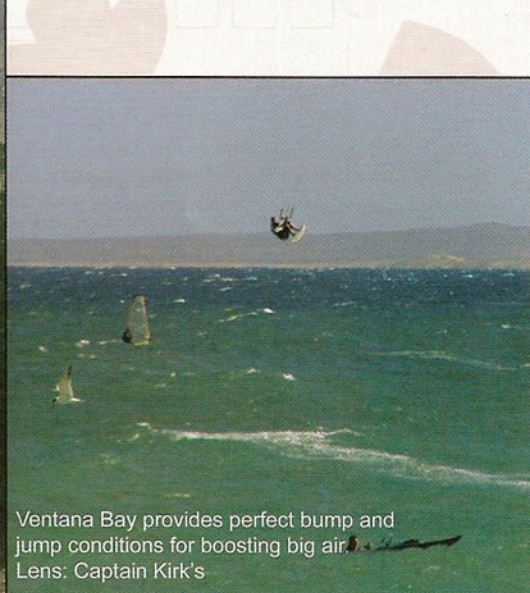
Baja Boosting —Anything north of Abreojos on the west coast generally offers more reliable wind and wave conditions than anything you'll find further south. However, a more developed infrastructure and predictable conditions keeps many localized east in the Ventana area.

Only 15 minutes north of "downtown" La Ventana, you can find the super wide and sandy launch at the Hot Springs. Many kites start here, enjoying boosting sessions with 5-10 mile downwinders. Outside Hot Springs, there are rocks almost everywhere so it's a good idea to scout out and know the launch/land areas. Low tide also raises a few small razor-gnarly reefs close to the surface. They hurt too so booties are recommended.

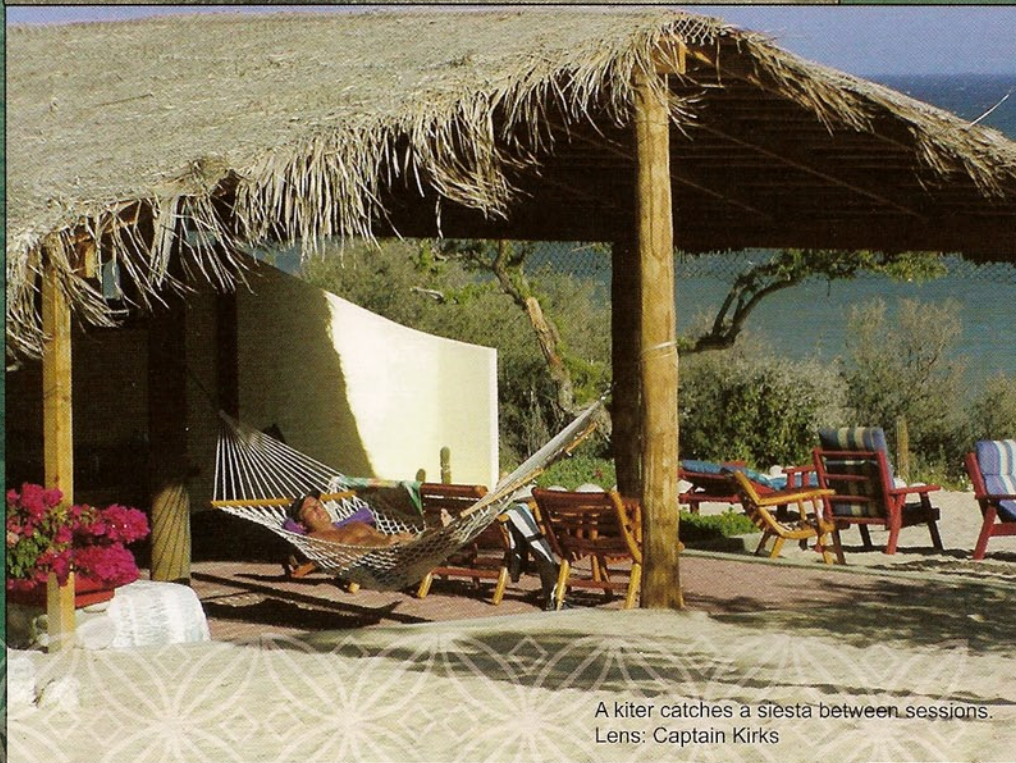
Yucatan Variety - Around eastern Mexico, waves are easily accessible. 20 minutes by car is all that separates lagoon sessions from clean, chest to head high faces when there's swell. Around car access launch areas, kiting can get



Brian Caserio signs his name on a classic San Carlos section in Baja. Lens: Clark Merritt/Solosports.net



Ventana Bay provides perfect bump and jump conditions for boosting big air. Lens: Captain Kirk's



A kiter catches a siesta between sessions. Lens: Captain Kirks

TIPS

- Cash rules in Baja. Use a credit card and you'll be charged an extra 7%. ATMs run out quickly, but you can withdraw twice the machines limit. In the Yucatan, keep cash light. Bring the plastic as it's easier to keep your money saved and safe.
- Watch you kite pump. They are rare, valuable items.
- Return beer bottles to the market for a discount on your next case. No beer is sold after 2 pm on Sunday so stock up.
- If you need spare parts, you can swap or buy from other Baja kites. Around the Yucatan, there are small shops to help you out
- Yucatan locals are hagglers. If you let them, they will screw you, even at the gas station.
- Watch for Baja's roaming livestock. Cows, goats and burrows will eat your kites (and cars).

crowded. Some areas have posted rules. Even though all beaches are Mexican Federal property, staying out of these "private" areas avoids problems.

Starting from Cozumel's northeast point, you can enjoy a 13-mile downy on warm, delicious flat water with reef breaks about 200 yards out. If you attempt crossing the Cozumel Channel to Playa del Carmen, be aware of really strong currents about 150 yards out from Cozumel's west coast. They can be great friends...or really big foes. You can see them, so staying out of the deep blue water will keep you safe.

After Dark

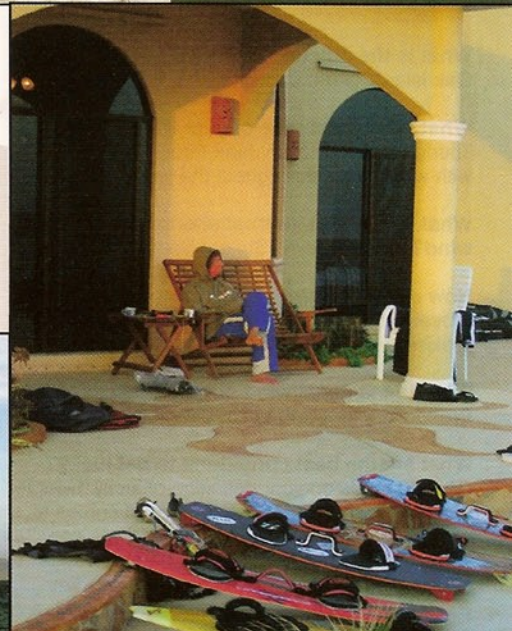
Baja Chill - The desert offers super chill moods with little to spend your money on, although getting to and around the peninsula can be costly. With the Baja sunset, many crash soon after dusk after a long day of riding or gather with old and new friends for dinner, drinks and conversation.

Yucatan Party - In contrast, Yucatan darkness brings life. This "cruise ship central" has downtown streets lined with tequila-bearing, whistle-blowing shot police and Carnival music booming into the early morning hours or all night.

Adam Von Ins is the owner of Air Company in Charleston, South Carolina. He is developing a Baja and Yucatan riding guide, available at www.catchsomeair.us.



There's plenty of space for all in Ventana Bay. Lens: Luna Puell



Adam Von Ins shows off his full quiver of toys. Lens: Flaa Faucheron

