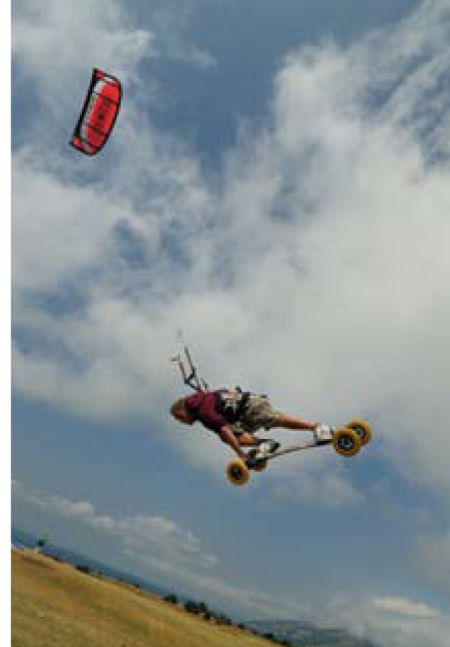


Italian Mountains....





Monte Petrano Wind Experience

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Here in the UK we have a thriving Landboarding scene; sometimes we take this for granted. So when an opportunity arrives to experience new cultures and land based kiting in its infancy, this should be grabbed with both hands. It really can open your eyes to new possibilities.

Kitesurfing is huge in Italy just like it is in most other European countries with lots of coast line. A lot of the kiting scene is inland on the large lakes which get thermal winds. Lake Como is a popular spot, I had the pleasure of visiting there last year and the wind just turns on at midday and off again at 5pm every day. Land based kiting however is tiny. Really tiny. In the UK, France, Belgium and Holland, we get big tidal beaches allowing us to landboard at low tide on beautiful flat beaches. Italy does not get this at all. They do have a lot of mountains though.

Monte Petrano is 1101m high and near the town of Cagli. Each year on top of the mountain they host a kite event. Last year I was going to go out but just failed to fit it into my calendar. This year I had to go! The event is organised by the Italian MBS agent and a couple of the bigger retailers. Lewis Wilby is always up for a trip, so I booked the flights and airport parking and off we went.

SOME LIKE IT HOT!

The second we stepped off the plane in Ancona the heat hit us. We were wearing jeans and carrying jackets due to an overweight baggage situation, which is typical with budget airlines. Dom was right in his article about travel - you really don't need half as many clothes as you think. We were picked up by our Italian agent, who had driven down from Milan after a pool party the night before where skaters, mountain boarders and bikers had been doing jumps into a pool. The car was roasting, leather seats in that heat was mad. We pulled in to the first motorway services to stock up on drinks and food for the hour and a half drive to the mountain. We were just dripping in sweat so quickly found some boardies and got changed. The air con was not cutting it either so we just opened the windows.

ITALIAN ROADS LIVED UP TO THEIR REPUTATION.

The mountain itself was mad. We had never kited anywhere like it. The

closest thing in the UK would be Cleeve Hill on steroids, but without the sheep droppings. They were still cutting the grass when we got there. It was really slippery with all the loose grass cuttings and the wind was not blowing that high either, so we chose to hide in the shade for a bit. The farmers eventually managed to bale all the grass and a huge flying area had appeared. There were slopes, drops, bales and a kicker to play with. It was still really hot on top of the hill and some good thermals formed, which came in handy for that extra hang time. The drops and slopes also created some updraft.

Half the Italian land kiting population was there over the weekend. There was a really strong family vibe, which came from most riders being older than the typical UK rider. The scene has not been around long enough to filter down to younger riders and is still really expensive. A lot of the riders are snow kites too in the winter months.

Italian Mountain

Saturday morning was really hot and unfortunately windless. We headed down the mountain to a big stream / small river where there was rock pools and swam for a while. This was the coolest we had felt since stepping off the plane. Whilst swimming we noticed the trees above us starting to move. The wind was building.

PLAY TIME

The wind picked up nicely in the afternoon, allowing us to really go for it. Lewis was showing everyone just how good he was by pulling off all kinds of moves from kiteloops and handlepasses, to rotations and board offs. Everyone loved watching, as they had never seen anything like it in person, only on videos online. My favourite part of the flying area was a 2m drop which had a nice updraft. My Speed 3's are great at picking up thermals and updrafts. That evening there was a huge dinner, where all the kites took over the local bar on top of the mountain. They brought out plate after plate of bread, salad, ham, cheese, chips and loads of meat. It was no place for a vegetarian.

On Sunday, the wind was descent again, so we rode all day. By this point we were starting to feel the toll of riding. The grass was so dry that whenever you fell, it just burnt. Lewis was covered in burns, as were my elbows and hands. There were lots of kites up. It was not big by old Wallop standards, but there were a good 30+ kites up at times. It was fun to see the random collection of kites there - loads of weird foils we had not seen many of before from some of the bigger kitesurf companies. One highlight was a guy, who had made himself his own Flexi flags and hoodies.



Getting that grab, with just a mountain for company!



As the afternoon wore on, people started to say their goodbyes and leave.

BACK TO BASICS

As our flights were not until Tuesday, it turned out that we would have the whole site to ourselves on the Monday. Unfortunately when we woke up it was covered in thick fog. This did gradually clear but the wind was pretty light and we really did not want wet kites for the flight the next day, which would just add to our weight situation. We ended up borrowing whatever kites were about, mostly old depowers and small kites on handles. Setting up a MBS Core 90 with small bindings and riding barefoot without a harness all day is really fun. Riding without a harness (especially in hot countries) and being barefoot made you feel really in touch with the ground and at one with the board. It was not long till Lewis was doing flat 3s off the kicker, unhooked and barefoot.

Italian airports were a whole lot less fussy about weight than Stansted, which was helpful. As far as events go - the Petrano Wind Experience was a nice change. It was refreshing to see new people so enthusiastic about the sport and enjoying it so much. The spot itself was great. The wind was clean and reliable. I hope to return next year and see how the event grows.

Tom Beaton works for MBS and Flysurfer. Lewis Wilby is sponsored by MBS and Flexifoil. Thanks to Guido at 4wr-mountainboards.com, Karin at dirtcorner.com and Tommy at www.newaction.it for looking after us and organising the event.