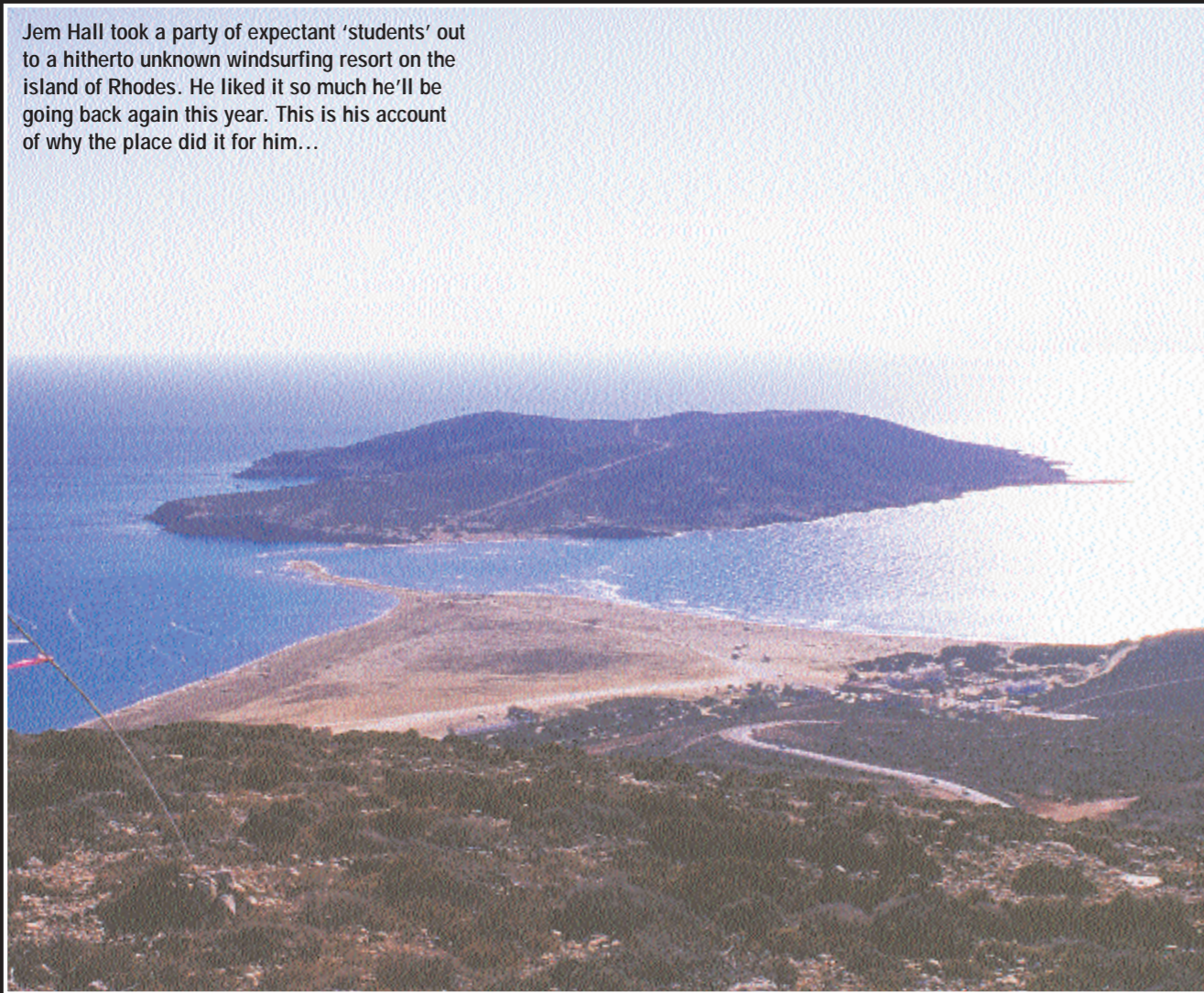


Jem Hall took a party of expectant 'students' out to a hitherto unknown windsurfing resort on the island of Rhodes. He liked it so much he'll be going back again this year. This is his account of why the place did it for him...



You pull your right leg in and don't sheet out – do the hokey cokey and that's what the loop's about!



Many of the Greek Islands have a fairly heavy reputation as party scenes, and I'm pretty sure I've heard the name Rhodes included in the same sentence as such chilling phrases as "all night", "non stop" and "trance, techno and kicking beats..." I'd been assured that the spot we were heading for was a great place for windsurfing, but I was still more than slightly worried about what else we'd find there... However, I'm happy to relate that this article is not about a trip to some godforsaken all night clubbing maelstrom, but – fortunately for my own sanity – the story of a real jewel of a sailing location in the Mediterranean. Located on the southern-most tip of the island of Rhodes, Prasonisi was to be the venue for the first of my *Ultimate Performance Boost* overseas clinics, courtesy of Sportif Holidays. Although this awesome arena is unbeknownst to a lot of British sailors, the Europeans are already there in force – and loving it. It's windy, it offers a choice of water states, it is relatively unspoilt and despite being well known to the rest of Europe, still has less of the overcrowding witnessed at some sailing motorways.

So why is it so windy? Rhodes is buffeted by the Meltemi thermal wind which rocks this eastern end of the Med, generated by the summer high pressure systems inhabiting this area. However, while this prevailing wind may only be 8-12 knots it receives a welcome 'Venturi effect' boost by the local terrain, accelerating it to a very useful Force 5 on most days. During our stay there I know for a fact that other famed resorts were not getting much wind. They were blaming it on the usual El Niño – but we were enjoying good action, which mightily impressed both my excellent crew of rippers and myself.

The tiny island just offshore (connected to the mainland by a sandbar) is partially responsible for this local acceleration effect, and also delivers a choice of water state. If you want to rip up and down trying gybes or some freestyle, then you've got fantastic flat water on the downwind side of the sand bar, with a cross-off hairdryer to push you along. On the upwind side there are waves, which get bigger throughout the day and as the wind increases. I would spend each afternoon assisting my very committed crew in their endeavours on the flat water, and then take some time out before sundown to get some wave time in.

GETTING THERE

Rhodes is a four-hour flight from the UK, and if you're travelling as a Sportif customer your transfer is c/o the Christof Kirschner Pro Centre: a quick and easy transition from the airport with a one-hour journey to the south of the island. As you near Prasonisi the road takes you through a big valley which the Greek army uses for their tank training, but what immediately strikes us windsurfers is how all the bushes and trees are bent over from the prevailing wind. So, with your appetite already whetted, you crest the last hill to see that fantastic view of sailors blasting back and forth, and the different water states on offer are immediately apparent, all tucked in neatly between the mainland and the perfectly positioned island. If you hurry you can get out there on the water on that first day, and – when taking the flight times into consideration – an added bonus is the opportunity to get plenty of water time in on your last day as well: an extra day's sailing for you energiser bunnies.

THE CENTRE

Prasonisi itself is a quiet village with a few shops, tavernas and hotels. If you want some hardcore action you're in the wrong place. What you do get is a real cosmopolitan laid-back feel. There are many different nationalities here including Poles, Czechs, Germans, Italians and a sprinkling of Poms. Some are staying in hotels and guesthouses, whilst others choose a sojourn to this great spot in their campervans and lead a wind filled and relaxing existence.

We were staying in Hotel Light House and were well looked after by the Austrian hotelier Martin and his wife. The rooms are comfortable and the deal is half board: a full power breakfast and traditional Greek style food for an evening meal. The atmosphere is very friendly and with no one nation there in abundance everyone makes the effort to communicate in some way.

The Pro Centre from which we were operating is 300m away and is run by Christof and his excellent team, who were both helpful and a real laugh throughout the trip. Filling the racks are F2 and JP boards with Neil Pryde sails to power you along. There's a rescue boat with a safety watch on duty during centre opening hours.

THE ACTION

Walk along to the beach, jump on your kit and away you go. The wind is side-off starboard tack giving you flat water and a few nice ramps further out. Out of full-on peak season the water is relatively uncrowded and everyone is very friendly. Being a friendly and competitive bunch, my crew of rippers could often be seen locked into some blasting duels; chasing each other round gybes and then trying some moves on the way in. On the inside the water is very flat which gives a lovely 'gybatorium': ideal for perfecting new moves or ripping through gybes. With the action so close it's great for spectators and was ideal for people to see some awesome front door exits as sailors tried to get to grips with the duck gybe.

As you sail further out it gets a bit bumpier and it was great to see the team clocking their first airtime, and watch the more determined freestylers working on their vulcans or throwing some forwards.

The wave action is two tacks upwind and a walk across the sandbar. Here you will find onshore wavesailing giving peaky ramps for jumping and gybing off, and the opportunity to do a bit of waveriding.

The wind is very co-operative: starting at about 10am and normally blowing right through to sundown. The breeze can often drop a tad during lunch: a good reminder to refill the tanks. Or, should you want to carry on, just go up a sail size.

NIGHTLIFE

This all happens around the tavernas, with the sailors getting round a table, grabbing some much-needed après-surf refreshments and watching the sun go down. The view is glorious, and the air filled with the sounds of people animatedly recounting tales from their day's action. The refreshments carry on through dinner and until you wish to hit the sack. Prasonisi is not going off with nightlife but does give you the opportunity for great chat and a chance to unwind after sailing. Do not take the challenge of staying up drinking with Martin the hotelier, as – like my good friend Malcolm – you will end up much the worse for wear and almost certainly miss the next morning's sailing!

We had an excellent night out at the beautiful town of Lindos: about an hour's taxi ride away. This old town with its maze of bright alleyways and charming rooftop restaurants is a real change in feel to windy Prasonisi. After an awesome meal of *mezzes* including Greek salad, *kalamari*, *saganaki*, vine leaves and *tatziki* followed by a delicious main course, we were ready for some action. The crew checked out plenty of bars, had a fair few refreshments and attempted something resembling grooving in the nightclubs.

ALTERNATIVES

Rhodes is a beautiful island so you may consider a trip around it with a hire car. The island in Prasonisi has a challenging hill with a great view from the top and the opportunity for some stunning photos. I believe diving is also on offer at other resorts. Should you wish to book or arrange any excursions or trips then Liz at the Christof Kirschner Pro Centre is very efficient and helpful. If the wind is not blowing then I would recommend following the slow pace of life there, and just relaxing and recuperating after all your aquatic stunts.

AND SO...

All too swiftly it was the last day, and we got a last couple of hours' sailing, followed by some frantic packing. Goodbyes and thanks were said and wetsuits were dried out of the car windows on the way to the airport. I was sad to say goodbye to the place but I already knew I would definitely be coming back. On return to the UK I immediately set up three more clinics to Prasonisi in June and September and I am relishing the opportunity to return...



Got some toys for you!

PERFECTION IN PRASONISI

PERFECTION IN PRASONISI



WHAT TO TAKE

Shortie and summer steamer in June – later in the year you can often sail in just rashie and boardies. Take your harness and some lines.

WIND

We had mainly 5.4-6.7m winds, and that was not considered a windy spell. The wind can really put the hammer down here so getting out on wave kit and small sails is a real possibility.

THANKS

A big-up thank-you to Christof, Martin, Andy and the crew for looking after me. Also very grateful to Claire, Mary, Derryn, Jenny, Mairead, Mark, Les, Mike, Malcolm, Jon, Mel and Frosty for not being too hard on me and giving it all they had.

DETAILS

More on the venue and CK Pro Centre at www.prasonisi.com. For all your travel requirements contact Sportif on 01273 844919 • www.sportif-uk.com • sportif@compuserve.com

Jem Hall is resident coach at West Wittering, where he performs his 1 to 1 coaching in association with 2XS. He will also be running coaching courses overseas including Ireland, Egypt and Greece. So if you want assistance in any aspect of technique then check Sportif Holidays for availability on his clinics – 01273 844919. Contact Jem about clinics or coaching on 07762 664077 • hugeforwards@jemhall.co.uk • www.jemhall.com

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