



Tarifa reinvented

Paddle surfing dethrones windsurfing and kite-surfing as the latest “in” sport

Just a few years ago, the typical photo of Tarifa was any of its magnificent beaches dotted with colourful windsurfing sails. This sport reached Tarifa in the 1970s and turned this town in the province of Cadiz into the Mecca of wind. Young people and the not-so-young flocked here from all over Europe in search of the perfect windsurfing conditions at this spot when the Atlantic meets the Mediterranean.

Tarifa became known for being a cultural, adventurous, sporty and alternative destination, with windsurfing being as iconic of the town as the Guzmán el Bueno Castle or the Baelo Claudia Roman ruins. Kite-surfing arrived years later. The sail was no longer in contact with the water and became a kite that lifted the rider up into the sky. This took over as the new “in” sport and Tarifa became the place par excellence to try out this sport. The silhouette of the brightly-coloured kites filling the skies over Tarifa was the first thing to strike the visitors to any of the town’s many beaches.

Even though these two sports still have a following, a new type of surfing is beginning to make its mark along the Cadiz coast, and particularly in Tarifa, as an alternative: paddle surfing or Stand up Paddle Surfing (SUP).

This sport is based on two pieces of equipment: the board, which is rather longer than a standard surfboard and the paddle.



Unlike when wind- or kite-surfing, surfers do not need to wait for the wind to build up to go paddle surfing and a calm day is even better. The surfers use the paddle to propel the board, as they stand on it and enjoy the views over the water from being upright. If there are waves, the paddle helps them to catch and surf them.

Paddle surfing reached Tarifa around two years ago, although its origins are much older. Some say that it started in Hawaii and others in the pre-Columbus Peru. The Hawaii tradition is "Hoe he'e nalu", which means "stand up, paddle, surf a wave". Paddle surfing reached California in 2000 and then spread across the United States and to Europe.

Tarifa was one of the first places where it became popular on this side of the Atlantic. The magnificent conditions this town in the Campo de Gibraltar with its long beaches and good climate, on top of Tarifa's fame as the Mecca of watersports, meant that paddle surfing soon got a sure foothold here.

Nearly all the local wind- and kite-surfing schools offer courses to discover this new sport.

"Art of Kiting" is one of the many schools that offer paddle surfing courses. The owners says that it is still away behind kite-surfing in terms of the number of fans and interest in it, but more and more people are attracted to the call of the board and the paddle each year. They point out that its future looks great and that it meets the two requirements to become a popular sport: it is not excessively difficult or expensive.

A basic paddle surfing set comprising the board and paddle costs around 700 euros, which is around half the cost of kite-surfing kit and significantly cheaper than the board and sail needed to go windsurfing.

The "Art of Kiting" team also pointed out that it is not excessively complicated and anyone can have go, but should ideally learn the basic skills on a course. The price of a two-hour course at this school is 50 euros and you can also hire the equipment here. This is a good option to try it out before spending money on the kit.



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Daniele Olivieri from KTS Tarifa stressed the "mystic" side of paddle surfing. He believes that it is a sport, but above all, it is a "spiritual experience that brings you into contact with nature and the environment" and he recommends it as relaxation therapy. Olivieri also pointed out that it is suitable for everyone and you do not need the same level of fitness as for kite-surfing, surfing or windsurfing.

www.ktstarifa.com

www.artofsurfing.com

You can find a comprehensive list of kite-surfing, windsurfing and paddle surfing schools in the province of Cadiz under the "Resources" section of our website www.cadizturismo.com