

"Gone with the wind"

written by Michel GÉRARD

From 16 to 50 year olds, water sport lovers or beginners in quest of adventure have a chance now to practice Kite surfing and enjoy the excitement of being pulled across the water in a friendly way or literally flying off into jumps of more than 6 metres high...



Following a short trip in mini-van after our departure from Bangkok and a stop in Pattaya for some coffee, we realize that something is different when we arrive on an isolated beach about ten kilometres from one of the most frequented seaside resorts of Thailand. But where are the Jet-Skis and Banana boats with their flock of tourists burning in the sun?

They are not here anyway, and our group gets ready to spend four unforgettable days in this place. It seems ideal to be able to regenerate ourselves with our families here surrounded by green scenery, and to enjoy, in all safety, the various nautical activities proposed by the club, like windsurfing, sailing in a dinghy or on a catamaran. But our group of sportsmen is not here to daydream under the shade of the coconut trees but to practise one of the latest extreme water sports, Kite surfing.

John is the only one familiar with the sport and he is responsible for leading us in this adventure. We are however in good hands at the only Thai Kite surfing School where the instructors are IKO certified, and entirely dedicated to the promotion of the sport. We first learn that it is also known by other names like Kite boarding, Fly surfing or Kite sailing. Then we receive a manual of initiation to the sport and check the equipment that we will have the pleasure of using soon.

After lunch, it is time for our first theoretical lesson. Before rushing into the water and the wind it is important to know some basics that will ensure we enjoy the sport safely. We learn to choose the equipment according to the place, the direction and the effects of the wind, and become aware of the possible dangers. Kite surfing, which in appearance is so difficult can be mastered easily thanks to a personalized and progressive course that we follow. It is not necessary to have practised on the board or other water sports before but it is essential to be a swimmer in good physical condition. For the more experienced kite surfers, other courses adapted to their level are also available.

While on the previous day our group learned the basics of the sport and the safety rules with an initiation to the equipment and the control of the sail, today's activities seem to involve some action. We practise the take-off and landing on the sand as well as riding on the water. In the evening our group appreciates a seafood dinner with the team of instructors while sharing a new passion...

On the third day, we already feel at ease with the kite and are ready to jump into the water. In fact, the programme of the day keeps us essentially in the water. We practise the take-off from the edge of the beach and the re-take-off a little further in the middle of the sea. It is also an opportunity to enjoy the wind and fly on for about a hundred metres without any danger. When the wind falls, we practise how to fold the sail on the water and go back to the edge.

The time passes rapidly among enthusiastic people and we are now on the last day of training. We are going to learn the way to ride the kite with the wind as well as against it. This day brings the culmination of our efforts and our jumps in the wind come nearly naturally. After our exploits and four days of practice, we all smile and are thrilled when we receive our IKO kite surfer's license.

We will cherish forever the great memory of our sporty stay and we could never thank John enough for having taken us there. We confidently tell ourselves that for sure, we will come back.

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*Michel Gerard is a Travel author based in Asia. Visit the Reperages Thailand Travel website for information and ideas of original excursions. Download your *free* ebook: "Stories of Authentic Eco-adventure Destinations for Travellers in Thailand" => <http://www.travel.reperages-thailand.com>*