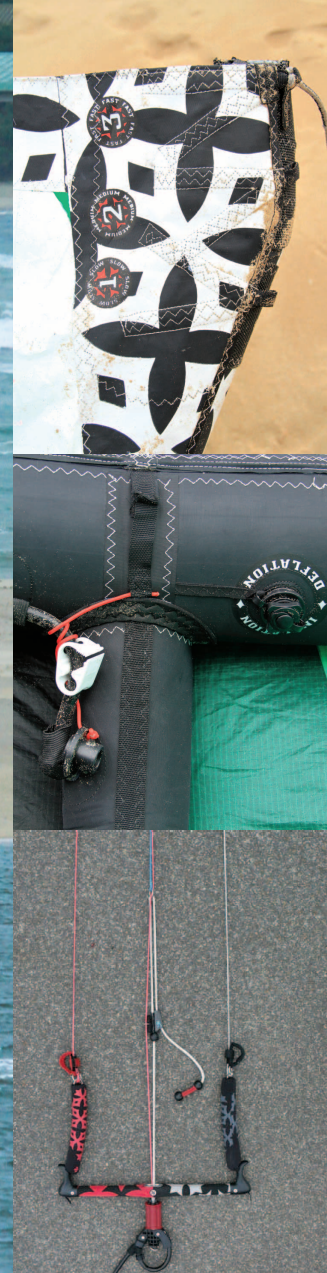




Fluid ATV 8m



CAPTION – Witsand
PHOTO – Fiona Claisse / Progression.me

THE HYPE:

Fluid kiteboarding is an Australian based company specialising in high-performance kiteboarding gear. Utilising designers from Europe and Australia to build performance products, built from the best materials available. The 2011 ATV has been focussed towards waves and freeriding. The rock solid structure, lightweight three-strut platform and fast pivotal turning and effortless relaunch are highlights of the 2011 ATV-wave. The depower and light weight surf tough construction has also made the ATV-wave a great inflatable, all-terrain kite for making grabs, spotting landings and riding waves straight into the pit. A large Delta style leading edge has made way for a refined thinner leading edge, enabling a faster forward flying kite with a quick turning response, plus benefits like auto relaunch and extended wind range. If you are a wave chaser or freerider, the ATV-wave is the only kite for you.

TEST TEAM NOTES:

This was our first experience of a kite from the Fluid brand. First up, the kite comes in an uncommonly large bag. It's so big, you can actually get two kites in it! It's not a Gore-tex technical marvel or anything, but it's very useful and there's no squashing your kite in with a crow bar at the end of a session.

Although Fluid haven't been making equipment for as long as some other brands, their bar system was actually simple, uncluttered and effective. The depower cleat set-up with a single line operating system works really smoothly and has a nice webbing and toggle on the end to grab. When you have the kite very trimmed down, you do end up with a fair bit of rope, but it does tend to wrap itself around the line above the bar, so keeps itself out of the way. There's

therefore a bit of untwisting to be done when you want to repower up sometimes, but nothing drastic or that should put you off. We're actually fans of this type of smooth cleating system and something that is noteworthy is that the reason you have a lot of trimming rope pulled through is because you can actually depower the ATV a lot and still retain good steering qualities, which is ideal for waves. The bar itself is quite chunky and fairly basic, but the grip is good and it's neat and tidy in front of your face. The chicken-loop and safety is a moulded plastic piece and works smoothly enough via a mini-fifth line running through it.

Back to the kite: it's a very striking look with the heavy black and green colouring and quite unlike anything else on the water. The Cabrinha-style one-pump system dumps and pumps nicely and the only criticism we have here is that it was actually quite difficult to get the two end struts pumped up very hard. The centre strut and the leading edge would be rock solid, but somehow the end struts would never quite reach the same pressure. This didn't adversely affect the kite's turning, but perhaps added a couple of seconds to the relaunch time. The three strut shape is a little unusual in that when trying to lay the kite down on its leading edge on the beach it rocks back slightly in such a way that the centre of the leading edge wants to lift up, requiring a little more weighting down with sand than usual.

The ATV definitely has a huge range. The first session we took it out we had a surprisingly comfortable session in waves when other riders were starting to change down from their seven metres. Trimmed down, the ATV retains excellent steering and downwind drift as you make your turns along a wave. You can pivot it round hard, or arc it more slowly around a section. The kite

doesn't pull too much above your head either as you send it up for a bottom turn, but perhaps does pull just a bit too sternly as you initially drop it back down when you come off-the-top, but let's also remember that we were on the biggest kite out there that day. You can feel that grunt when downlooping out of your transitions if you don't whip the kite round very pivotally, which is nice when you're used to it. For boosting it's fantastic with very steady flight above your head. You can go really big in some strong winds as you can hold onto this kite in lots of wind, although it does flap a bit right at the top of its range, but most kites do at their extreme ends.

SUMMARY:

Fluid look like a brand to watch in the future off the back of this ATV. Loads of power and low end grunt as well as loads of depower, rapid handling, good boost and nice, nimble handling around the wave arena. The Fluid doesn't mind getting its hands dirty and can be employed for most of your daily kiting labour tasks.

KW LIKED: Good agility and response in the waves.

KW WOULD CHANGE: Just lacks a little refinement in areas, some might say like your stereotypical Aussie male. Go the Bulldogs!

SIZES: 12, 10, 8 and 6m

www.fluidkiteboarding.com