

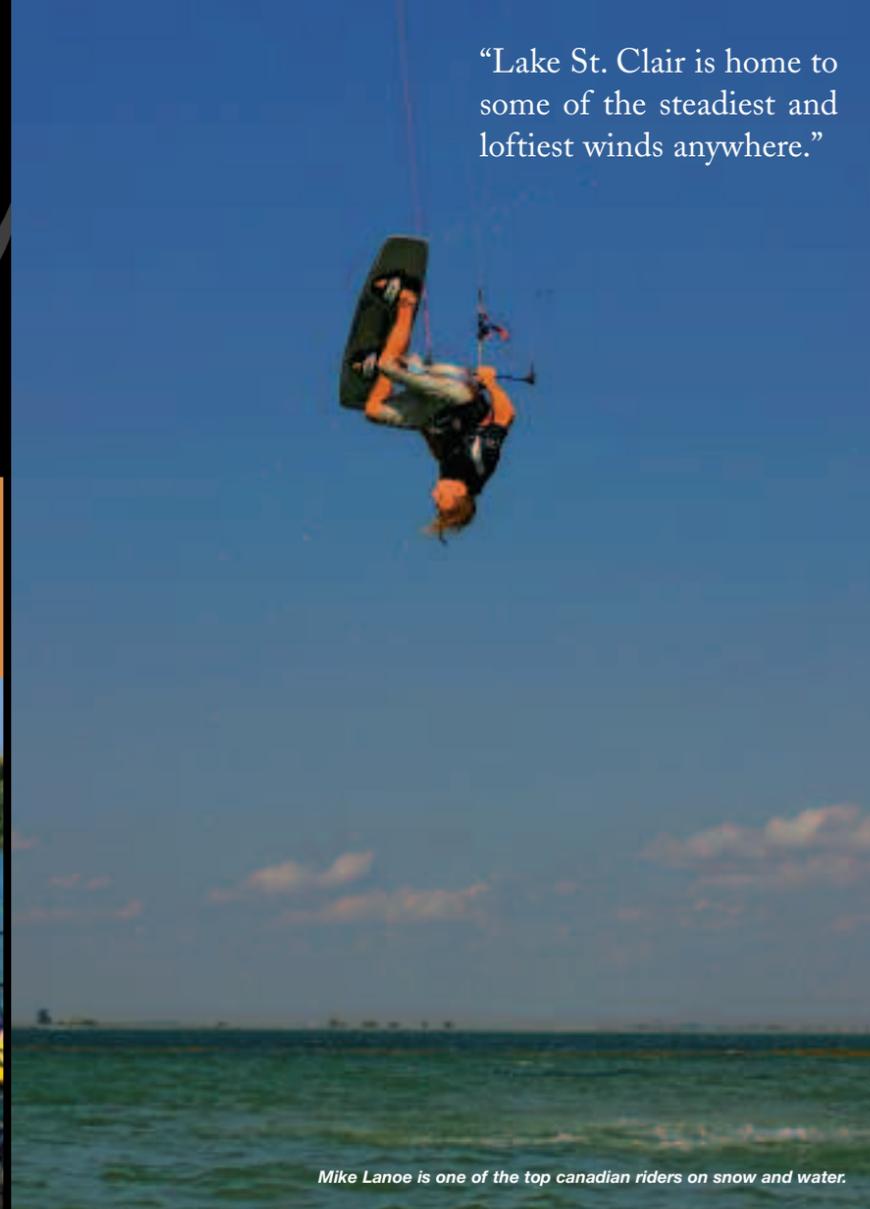
LAKE ST. CLAIR

Exploring the Midwest Slicks

By Joe Bidawid Photos Ryan Riccitelli



The Canadian crew getting their first taste of The Kiteboarder.



“Lake St. Clair is home to some of the steadiest and loftiest winds anywhere.”



Mike Lanoe is one of the top canadian riders on snow and water.

Mika Jantunen shows some unhooked skills.

The girls became the official peanut gallery.

Who would have ever thought that a lake sandwiched between Detroit, Michigan and Windsor, Ontario could possibly be one of the best kiteboarding lakes in North America.

With 26 miles in diameter and an average depth of seven feet, Lake St. Clair is home to some of the steadiest and loftiest winds anywhere. The flat water riding is equally comparable to the Cape Hatteras slicks, which litter the

Midwest shoreline for miles. To make it even more convenient for kiteboarders, you can jump in a car and chase the clocking frontal winds around the lake. The local riders have it dialed and take advantage of the steady lake

thermals during the riding season spanning from March until November. Riders average three to four riding days per week on 12 to 16 meter kites, and sometimes there are waves. That's right—large sized wind generated swell straight out of the Midwest. Don't knock it until you try it.

I had told Ryan Riccitelli and Adam Koch that the wind was insane during the fall. They were into exploring some new spots

in Middle America and jumped on a plane headed straight for the “D” town—Detroit. Ryan and Adam didn't even know what they had in store for them. Tim Blanchard with Surf Culture Canada put together a huge welcome party complete with floating barge, a full BBQ, six coolers stocked full of Canadian beer and the local group of 20 kiteboarders. With everyone piled on the barge, we motored out to one of their secret slicks.

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Metro Beach

Metro Beach is home to some of the steadiest and loftiest winds in North America. The likes of Adam Koch, Ben Meyer, Damien Leroy and Sky Solbach will attest to this. Located just a short drive from the heart of Detroit, Metro Beach works well on South winds and is a favorite among local riders. The famous Metro rocks are a dangerous hazard for all riders but serve as the perfect peanut gallery for onlookers. The bowl offers shallow water for advancing riders. This is not a spot for beginners, due to the onshore winds, difficult launch, and razor sharp rocks.

Facts:

Official Name: Metro Beach Metropolitan Park
Nickname: Metro
Driving Directions: Take Metropolitan Pkwy road until it ends. Follow signs for Jet Ski Ramp.
Best Season: Spring and Fall
Best Direction: South
Average Kite Size: 12-16
Conditions: On-shore steady winds with flat water on the inside and wind chop farther upwind. The bowl to the West of the launch is void of rocks and offers shallow water to practice tricks.
Launch: Riders launch on a grassy field next to the parking lot and navigate the narrow opening between the rocks to the water.
Level of riding: Intermediate – advanced
Local Shops: Detroit Kiteboarding, www.detroitkiteboarding.com, (248) 245-5016
Local Schools: Detroit Kiteboarding, Great Lakes Kiteboarding, www.greatlakeskiteboarding.com (586) 822-6511

Mitchell's Bay

Other than the required assisted launch, this is the perfect place for riders of all abilities—especially beginners. The bay is waist deep for miles and the best wind directions for riding are West and Northwest. Beginners are safe on the inside while experts chase the butter smooth water behind the many swan slicks upwind of the launch. The drive, 90 minutes from Detroit and 45 minutes from Windsor, is well worth it, as this is arguably the best spot on the lake. Mitchell's draws riders from as far North as Toronto and as far South as Cleveland.

Facts:

Official Name: Mitchell's Bay Public Beach.
Nickname: M-Bay
Driving Directions: Take Highway 401 East, take Queens Line exit (highway 2) and follow signs for Mitchell's Bay
Best Season: April through October
Best Direction: West, Northwest
Average Kite Size: 12-16
Conditions: Side-on winds. Flat water and butter flat water near slicks upwind.
Launch: Assisted launch required on small sandy area near boat ramp.
Level of riding: Beginner – advanced
Local Shops: Surf Culture Canada, www.surfculturecanada.com, (519) 919-7907
Local Schools: Surf Culture Canada

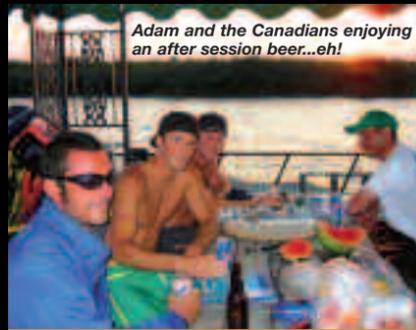


Adam Koch traveled all the way from Los Angeles to session with the locals.

Everyone sessioned the slick until the sun was about to set. The music, BBQ and hospitality were the perfect prelude to the week that was about to unfold. Every morning, I would wake up Adam and Ryan at the crack of dawn and we would embark upon another exploration mission to a new spot. By the end of the trip, I was never able to show the boys any wave action. I guess some of the best kept secrets of the Great Lakes will still remain secrets. In the end, Adam and Ryan vowed they would be back next year to catch a Midwest wave session.



Sara Paciocco charging with the boys!



Adam and the Canadians enjoying an after session beer...eh!

Belle River

Belle River's sandy beach extends for miles and offers shallow water for about 200 yards creating a favorable learning environment. Easy self-launching and the ability to safely ride downwind are unique to this beach. It is the favorite spot for riding North and Northeast winds where on a strong wind day riders are able to find sizable wind generated waves. "The Belle" is also convenient for the working class as the best winds usually come during the late afternoon until sunset. Every spring, regional riders flock here for the annual Kitestock Festival. Belle River is also the home to Canadian Kiteboarding legend Tim Blanchard.

Facts:

Official name: Belle River West Beach
Nickname: The Belle
Driving Directions: Take EC-Row east into the town of Belle River, make left turn before little bridge.
Best Season: April through October
Best Direction: North, Northeast
Average Kite Size: 9-12
Conditions: Strong side/side-on thermal winds with chop.
Launch: Beginner-friendly sandy area for launching and landing.
Level of riding: Beginner – advanced
Local Shops: Detroit Kiteboarding, www.detroitkiteboarding.com, (248) 245-5016
 Surf Culture Canada, www.surfculturecanada.com, (519) 919-7907

Harsens Island

The most popular spot in the newly discovered Muskamoot Bay Corridor, Harsens Island offers local riders a great option when Metro winds turn Southwest to West. The water is waist deep as far as the eye can see, however, the assist required launch and the power lines near shore create hazards for beginners. Harsens is 60 minutes from Detroit and Windsor and riders must take the short (2 minute) car ferry to get to the island. During summer weekends, the entire shoreline at Harsens is littered with leisure boats and riding is not recommended.

Facts:

Official Name: Harsens Island
Nickname: Harsens
Driving Directions: Make left turn as you exit ferry and follow road until it ends at launch site.
Best Season: March through November
Best Direction: Southwest
Average Kite Size: 12-16
Conditions: Flat and shallow (waist deep) water
Launch: Riders launch on grassy field next to parking lot. Beware of power lines.
Level of riding: Intermediate – advanced
Local Shops: Detroit Kiteboarding, www.detroitkiteboarding.com, (248) 245-5016
Local Schools: Detroit Kiteboarding
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The EH Kiteboarding Company was formed out of Eric Hertsens pure passion for the sport. It was born in Cabarete, Dominican Republic, during the early days of kiteboarding. Today EH Kiteboarding is comprised of an international team based in Cabarete. EH Kiteboarding provides outstanding products related to the sport of kiteboarding and provides research and development services to various original equipment manufacturers.

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