

## EL MÉDANO IN THE SPOTLIGHT

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Boasting consistent year-round sunshine and wind El Médano, Tenerife, is one of the best spots in Europe for windsurfers of all levels. We hear from a selection of world class sailors about exactly what makes El Médano so special.

Matteo Iachino, Ricardo Campello, Jordy Vonk, Sarah-Quita Offringa, Dieter Van der Eyken & Oda Brødholt



**W**ith its wide range of accommodation and year-round winds El Médano in Tenerife is the perfect location for an unforgettable windsurfing holiday for all the family. We hear from a selection of pro sailors about what makes Tenerife such an awesome location for windsurfing and why several sailors make it their base for winter training.

### MATTEO IACHINO

I moved to Tenerife because I have been living there during the winters for quite a few years. I chose Tenerife because it is an amazing place for training. It offers

all kinds of conditions. From flat water to choppy and wavy conditions. We get high winds, light winds, foil conditions, slalom conditions and also some great wave sailing, so you really can do everything here. The airport is super close, the airport in the south of Tenerife is just ten minutes from El Médano and you can fly here from pretty much anywhere in Europe. The flights are also quite cheap, which is an added bonus. I can be in Italy within half a day. It is a great place to train and a great place to enjoy windsurfing in general. There is great food in town with lots of restaurants to choose from. You can also surf on Tenerife pretty much every day of the year! There are also lots of good down-the-line spots on Tenerife during the winter. There is also Mount Teide where you can go hiking or mountain biking, so Tenerife is kind of similar to Maui, but it is in Europe, so to me it is the perfect place for me to live as both a watersports lover and a professional windsurfer.



When I first started training in El Médano fifteen years ago it was super cheap. Now the prices have gone up a bit, but it is still inexpensive compared to other locations in Europe. The flights are still cheap and I bring my van here in the winter when I stay for 4-5 months. It is definitely less expensive than mainland Europe to eat out and to live in general. You can have a really nice lifestyle that is relatively cheap with wind and waves everyday!

I love it the most when it gets really windy and El Médano can get very strong winds with big waves. We sometimes get a week of really strong trades. It gets super windy with rolling swell. It is really fun to train in these conditions. I love fin slalom in these high winds as there are big waves and big ramps, I love it. You can go really fast on the way in and you have to read the chop, which is both really challenging

and incredibly fun. At the same time you can speed sail at one of the beaches just five minutes away and on the same day you can have a nice wave session as well, so when we get strong winds and big waves, that is the most fun for me.



El Médano used to be a basic location, but it has improved a lot. There are really nice restaurants now and you can find any type of international cuisine. We have Italian, Japanese, Chinese and Spanish, so it is a real mix of flavours. There are gyms and physios, so for me, Tenerife offers pretty much everything you could want and need. El Médano is full of tourists and it does get busy, but it is not the style of tourism as in Las Americas, which is full of nightclubs and loud bars. A lot of people only come to El Médano for sports, so it is full of water lovers and similar minded people.

It is a town full of sports people which I also like. The atmosphere is really cool and we have a lot of friends here sharing the same passions.

## **JORDY VONK**

I have already spent eleven winters in El Médano by now, which all started with a group of riders going there to train and reaping the rewards with some amazing results afterwards such as the late and great, Alberto Menegatti, and two-time world champion, Matteo Iachino. Therefore, I decided to head there as well and since the very beginning it was abundantly clear that this was going to be my winter training destination from then on! What I really like about El Médano is that it's a small town, but it has everything you need - especially as a windsurfer. There are plenty of apartments which are all walking distance to the spots, several supermarkets, a gym, plenty of excellent restaurants, shops, some bars and of course a few excellent windsurf centres. During the first years I didn't rent a car as I was trying to save costs, but one of the great things about El Médano is you don't really need

a car as everything is within walking distance. As a family man, El Médano almost became even more ideal as there are a couple of playgrounds, a skatepark and of course the beach and the sea to play in. If the little one is tired you can simply walk home and myself (or my wife) can just continue being on the water if she wants and then simply walk home later. In terms of conditions in the winter, you have to be very unlucky not to score wind, it happens of some times of course, as with all locations, and some winters are better than others, but in general, it's windy all the time, especially if you're foiling as well.

January, February and March are the months I am there for the last eleven years already. I usually kick off the year with a slalom clinic at the TWS centre. It is an experience for people to improve their skills on freerace or slalom gear, which basically includes everything (airport transfer, accommodation, gear and coaching), from the feedback, people are pretty happy to join each year.

After the clinic it's time to focus on myself and push on the TWS Pro Slalom Training. We aim to



have a full on slalom course on the water for four days a week and simply do race simulations to trim and tune gear. There have been winters I calculated the races and I did over 500 races. Can you name another place where you can gain that amount of experience in three months? El Médano is located only 10 minutes from the airport in the south and offers daily flights from all over Europe, so it's an easy place to travel as well. I think it's pretty clear that I like El Médano a lot.



### **RICARDO CAMPELLO**

I love to stay in El Médano during my time in the Canary Islands. The conditions are not as extreme as Pozo of course, but it is a perfect spot for windsurfing and family cruising. When the conditions fill in Cabezo can be really firing. I have had some incredible sessions in Cabezo and also in front of Playa

Sur Hotel with strong winds and nice waves on high tide. The two bays are great for intermediates right through to pro level as you have a wide range of conditions, so everyone can find something suitable for them. If you are learning to gybe or plane you stay at the downwind bay and if you want more intermediate level, you can go upwind to the Harbour Wall and for more advanced to pro level you can head to Cabezo for waves!

### **FAMILY TIME**

El Médano is the perfect destination to bring the wife and kids while you are windsurfing as you have multiple options for restaurants, a nice ice cream or simply just cruise along the beach for an afternoon stroll. If you stay at the downwind bay at the Playa Sur Hotel you are more protected from the wind, which is ideal for non-windsurfing partners and family or friends. The hotel is perfectly located, the staff are really friendly, but the best bit is the fact you can jump from your room straight to the beach and

Tenerife Windsurf Solution (TWS) is just up the boardwalk and has a variety of brands and equipment in all sizes.

My wife really loves to go to El Médano as she feels she we can do other activities other than just windsurfing.

Earlier this summer I invited Martin Garrix to come windsurfing with me and he loved the spot. He really improved his sailing and said El Médano was perfect for him! You can just windsurf, have a nice drink right at the beach and go straight back on the water!

### **SARAH-QUITA OFFRINGA**

Tenerife gives me "Windsurf Mecca" vibes. I've been there a couple of times before, but usually right before the PWA World Cup and then I will only sail at Cabezo, which is at the far end of town. But for the starboard photoshoot we stayed at Hotel Playa Sur, which is at the other far end of the bay and it was a totally different experience being there! I was pleasantly surprised to see so many water fanatics! Windsurfing, kiting, winging, SUP, foiling etc. Everything was going on there. I forgot how busy it gets on the

water. Windsurfing is really thriving in El Médano. The fact that it attracts top wave riders, as well as some of the world's best slalom racers, who train there through the winter speaks volumes.

### **HOTEL PLAYA SUR**

It was a luxury to be right by the water and the view from the hotel over the bay was beautiful - especially in the morning. The hotel is located right next to "Flashpoint" which is a cozy café where everyone hangs out. It's my go to for the double espresso shot where everyone hangs out. It's my go to for the double espresso shot before my session.

### **VARIETY**

I love that you can practice any discipline in El Médano. From having challenging waves at El Cabezo, more entry level waves at the Harbour Wall and then freestyle and slalom/freeride blasting in the bay. And apparently there's some great spots for surfing as well.

It's one of those places where everyone knows everyone, and they live and breathe windsurfing. The square is buzzing in the evening and going out for dinner after a solid day on the water is always a treat.

I usually head to Tenerife during the summertime, when it's very busy, but It's also a great place to skip the winter for a couple of weeks!

Finally, if you need a break from being on the water, Tenerife offers breathtaking views and surroundings if you go for a drive up north or down south. Some weeks!

Finally, if you need a break from being on the water, Tenerife offers breathtaking views and surroundings if you go for a drive up north or down south. Some picturesque towns on cliffs near the water or super green, lush countryside, which is a stark contrast to the south. It's an island that has it all.



## **DIETER VAN DER EYKEN**

I think the combination of the quality of life and quality of sailing is very unique in El Médano. The town itself is great and it offers plenty of food options, shops, supermarkets and generally plenty of social activities - especially during the summer, which makes it one of the favourite places on the island for both local people and tourists.

For windsurfing you have two main beaches to launch from while actually having three different spots to sail. This allows nearly everyone to find suitable different spots to sail. This allows nearly everyone to find suitable conditions for their level of sailing.

For myself, El Cabezo is the main spot to sail and since sailing here for the first time on tour back in 2015, it immediately became my favourite tour stop on the calendar, which made it a very easy choice to make it my new home in 2018.

## **EL CABEZO**

The World Cup location is a rocky reef break in front of the bunker on the north side of town. It catches the most swell in general



The World Cup location is a rocky reef break in front of the bunker on the north side of town. It catches the most swell in general and gives great conditions for both riding & jumping.

The wind in front of the bunker itself is usually a touch lighter, but in exchange the wave runs in a clean 'A frame' allowing up to three front side turns if timed well and some great sections for aerial manoeuvres.

At weekends and during the summer the spot can get very busy, so you do need to take care when sailing as the standard on the water is high and with both jumping and wave rides taking place on the same wave collisions can sometimes happen.

Fun extra: No kites are tolerated in El Cabezo by the locals, so it's purely a windsurf only spot.

## **TIDE**

El Cabezo is best sailed three hours each side of high tide with the biggest and cleanest waves just before and after high tide. On

low tide the spot still can be sailed, but kicking out of the wave a touch earlier is advisable if you like to keep your fins.

On lower tides you are better off either sailing the Harbour Wall or the waves just upwind from El Cabezo itself called the Medio, which is very popular for both jumping and easy riding without the fear of ending up on the rocks. Entry level Cabezo: Intermediate (on smaller days) advanced on the A decent level is required here as next to the more powerful waves the rocks are close by and some experience on where these are is helpful at times. A good tip is to come and check out the rocks at low tide so you get less surprised at high tide and you have a general idea where the rocks are. You can also check out the Cabezo spot guide on YouTube to get a few better ideas.

## HARBOUR WALL

This spot can only be sailed to (there is no launching beach for the Harbour Wall), so you either sail downwind for five minutes from El Cabeto, or do what most people do and sail upwind for around ten minutes from the bay. Then in the event that the wind drops a bit it's always easy to sail back to the bay.

The Harbour Wall offers more side shore conditions compared to El Cabeto and is better for riding rather than for jumping. On good days the waves peel and allow up to four turns, while the best bit in general is that it's quite safe since it's difficult to end up on the rocks. This makes it a very forgiving location with a clear channel downwind meaning you can get back out without having to navigate your way through the waves. On top of that, it has the cleanest wind of the three spots making it well worth the effort to get there.

In case there is a big south swell, there are days where you can get pushed on the rocks more easily. On those days it's always advised to take a bit more care and avoid sailing too much on the inside. The Harbour Wall is probably the most popular of the three breaks on low tide, and unlike El Cabeto, it is also popular with the kites.

## OPTIMAL TIDE

Two to three hours each side of low tide is best, but it can also still be sailed on a bit higher tide, however you have to be aware that the backwash from the harbour wall can get big and make the wave very bouncy. Also it's easier to end up on the rocks at higher tides as the waves break closer to the shore.

## LEVEL

All levels from first time wave sailors right through to the most advanced.





## MAIN BEACH

A sandy beach with some hidden rocks here and there depending on how wavy it has been in the last few weeks. It is known by the locals as the Bahia and offers conditions for all levels. This is the starting point for most windsurfers and also the place where all the windsurf centres are based in El Médano. The beach is divided into four areas:

1. All the way to the north (left when looking out to sea) is the bathing area which goes all the way until the main beach of town.
2. Then there is a surfing area where surfing lessons are available..
3. Then there's the main windsurfing area.
4. And finally further downwind there is the kite area.



## CONDITIONS

In general, on a northeasterly trade wind (Alessio) the winds are a touch more gusty/patchy than at the Harbour Wall or El Cabezo. Especially the first 50m from the beach due to it being slightly sheltered by the town of El Médano. However, on low tide the effect is less and when the waves drop in size, it's suitable for all levels from beginner lessons to advanced.

On higher tides there are more waves meaning it gets a touch harder to get out. However, it's still only on the really big days that some people may struggle to get out and the waves still remain much smaller than El Cabezo. In general, the Main Beach will have waves up to about 1.5-2m, while at the same time, El Cabezo is probably twice the size.



On those days it's probably worth waiting for the lower tide and while you wait you could walk up to El Cabezo to watch the advanced sailors push their luck in front of the El Cabezo bunker. When the wind turns to the southwest, the whole scene changes with mostly flat water blasting conditions, which are ideal for freestyle or slalom. Occasionally there are even some great front side wave riding days in hip to shoulder high waves. These conditions are more common during winter/autumn, while they almost never happen during summer. In this southwesterly direction, the wind tends to accelerate next to the Montana Roja, meaning a forecast of 11-15 knots with sunshine can easily turn into 20-25 knots fairly quickly.



## **TIDES**

Any tide, low tide gives a very easy entry with almost no waves. On the higher tide, a shorebreak can develop, so a slightly higher intermediate level is required as a minimum.

## **THE FORECAST**

Usually WindGuru is quite accurate. In general, the wind will either be from the northeast or the southwest. In the case of northeasterly winds, from my experience the first day of the forecast is usually less than predicted, while the last day is often more windy than predicted. For southwesterly winds, it is a touch harder to predict, but in general if it's sunny (and no rain is predicted) you can add 5-10 knots to the forecast.

## ODA BRØDHOLT

I love to visit Tenerife because within a short distance, sometimes at the same beach, you can slalom, foil, freestyle and wave sail! It is also just a few minutes drive from the airport, so you don't even need to rent a car. Every day feels like a new adventure with its variety of conditions. I love to freestyle at El Cabezó on a small day, as the ramps allow for some extra airtime - even on lighter wind days. Also close to the Harbour Wall you can go switch stance down the small waves and smash out tricks with a bit of extra speed. You feel as though you are in the middle of a great windsurfing community being in Tenerife!

Life in El Médano is relaxed and it is all about being on the water as much as possible, plus it is a great place for non-windsurf partners to hang out also. With direct flights from London and all over Europe, it is a destination that is easy to reach and you also a lot of great restaurant options too. What's not to like?!?!?