

Icaraizinho Evolution

WORDS BY: ANDY GRATWICK | PHOTOS BY: RICHARD STROM

After five years of annually visiting the NE coastline of Brazil I can absolutely confirm that Icaraizinho exists. Having been working for a month further to the south in Ceara, I recently embarked on my third road trip along this epic piece of windy coastline and I have been shown the critical signpost to this gem of a place locally known as 'little holy water'. I learnt over the course of this week that I really should have looked harder to find it years ago.

It took a bit of joint guesswork navigating with the taxi driver but we finally arrived on the beach at Club Ventos at the southern tip of the huge bay at Icaraizinho. Titou, Phil and the club crew welcomed us to what was inevitably going to be a week of boys sailing.

Icaraizinho is a result of the Club Ventos Beach Search, which took place in 2007 and put it on the map as the new Jericoacoara. The search was undertaken by 13 of the top windsurfers in the world; including Kauli Seadi, Robby Swift and Marcilio Browne, amongst others; accompanied by helicopters, buggies, jet skis and gallons of Caipirinhas. They set off immediately after flying into Fortaleza airport and made it their mission to windsurf the best beaches along the coast leading to Jericoacoara. It was half way into this trip that Icaraizinho; and its potential; were discovered. As a place it ticks all the standard Brazilian boxes. Sunshine, amazing wind stats, long season, a super cool South American vibe and culture....but then so does everywhere on this coastline so why come here?

The SE trades blow through this region relentlessly from June

to January and in my experience simply don't stop. The further north you venture the stronger they get. Icaraizinho is about 3 hours from Fortaleza and fits perfectly into 4.7m territory, and with wind blowing all day and night, this gives some serious sailing hours potential, not to mention keeping the mozzies at bay at night.

Icaraizinho is unlike a lot of these coastal towns of Ceara as it is a coconut plantation rather than a fishing village. This means the centre of town is nestled amongst a dreamy enclave of palm trees, all of which lean to the North west! The cobbled streets direct you around the traditional architecture and rustic pousadas (hotels). The town is very peaceful, with little; if anything happening at night, so pack a good book rather than your dancing shoes; but don't be surprised if you fall asleep on page 2 after a long day of on the water.

The town has very little in the way of spacial limitations and so the buildings are spread widely throughout the coconut trees, creating privacy and tranquillity. By the end of a week or two in Icaraizinho it is truly a challenge to remember what rush hour is, or even an office; but be careful, there are a few European pousada owners who forgot,

and never left the place! Local transport in the town consists of bull carts, used to carry great loads of coconuts or windsurfing kit for a small fee.

THE WATER

There are three main spots to Little Holy Water. First, and furthest upwind you have the reef, this runs out in a curve about 2 tacks upwind from the launch spot and boasts some pretty good wavesailing potential. It's an ideal set up with a small wave cross on section leading to a more challenging and crossshore section further out and round. It's endless fun throughout mid to high tide, with some of the best ramps for boosting and an easy fall out zone if you come off.

This reef serves to protect the second and most popular sailing area, 'The Pond'. It's so much better than the name suggests, it is basically a mini half atoll with glistening clear water unlike anything I have seen anywhere on this coastline. With perfect flat water and constant wind, for air chachos to duck gybes and old school 360's this is a priceless spot....and comes with a wee bit of posing potential for the super comfy sunloungers of Club Ventos beach bar.





Phil Soltyslak, Mid 'hair' funnel

Downwind of the pond the bay extends around to the north for 5 km in a constant curve giving cross, round to onshore fun kickers, waves and endless amounts of space. It's a must to cruise the bay on your own personal downwinder discovery voyage. A pre arranged bull cart can be there on hand for a lift back round, and with the sun on your back and a fresh coconut juice to refresh you, all for less than a Wetherspoon's pint!

Unlike some other spots along this coast, here it is possible to have the water almost to yourself! Icaraizinho is still a virgin bay where you are often sailing alone or with very few clients. There is no need to feel nervous when sailing alone, the nature of the bay means that the wind and current will only take you inland; the beach boys will be looking out for you with their binoculars, and the ClubVentos rescue boat is always on hand should anything go wrong.

The season is from June until January normally using sails between 4.2m and 5.5m. The wind here stays longer than most other wind spots on the coast and you will often find yourself sailing into the sunset!

“ At low tide you ’ll be faced with one of the flattest spots in existence, perfect for freestylers, beginners and carve gybe enthusiasts! The reef shelters the top section of the bay from the swell moving down the coastline ”



Tatu, Less height but more hair!



Andy, less hair and less height

The large tidal movement brings with it a broad range of sailing conditions: At low tide you ’ll be faced with one of the flattest spots in existence, perfect for freestylers, beginners and carve gybe enthusiasts! The reef shelters the top section of the bay from the swell moving down the coastline. You can sail a little downwind at all tide times to find some nice stunt ramps close to the beach, perfect for power-freestyle. As the tide comes in, the reef submerges and you can sail over it as it generates ideal kickers for jumping both high and far. For intermediates who want to venture into the ocean swell without facing the reef, there is a wide gap to sail through out into the open water where sailors blast for miles back and forth enjoying the smooth wind and the sun on their backs!

Things to watch out for: beware of the reef, it is perfectly sailable once you know how it works, but if in doubt ask at ClubVentos where they have a map of the reef and photos! No predators in the water, sand at the bottom, no socks, no jaggy sea creatures either!

EATING, DRINKING, SLEEPING

Having said Icaraizinh is a coconut town, the fish is still pretty good, as is the meat. The restaurant choice is all you could want, from authentic fish, rice and beans on a budget to divine steaks and seafood served under the moon on a candlelit beach. Be sure to visit Hisbisco for the pizzas and Café Zapata for the lobster as they are really worth it. Wandering the rest of town will offer up numerous ‘Brazilian’ options as well as European cuisine to satisfy the most discerning palette or simply try chilling in the hammock and trusting the chefs at Club Ventos who seem to have the place wired for hungry post sail appetites and sun worshippers.

The town has developed to provide accommodation for every budget from the basic through to the boutique: everybody is catered for by the subtle pousadas! The ClubVentos accommodation is just a couple of minutes away from the centre of town while at the luxury end of the market the recently opened ‘Villa Mango’ is a retreat of six condo’s tastefully built into the dunes and equipped with mini bars, verandas and illuminated multispeed hot tubs with sea views!

NO WATER, NO PROBLEM

Having seen pretty much all the spots to see on this mecca coastline for the windsurfing tourist, the perpetual issue when accompanied by a non windsurfing partner always used to be the ‘sitting on a wind blown beach in the middle of nowhere’ scenario.

Obviously putting the missus on crutches for the week with a ruptured ACL was an extreme experiment to test the versatility of Icaraizinho for non windsurfers but it proved successful.

There is a real wealth of culture and activities locally to keep everyone happy - Capoeira, is an Afro Brazilian martial art disguised historically in slavery camps as a dance. Some of the leaders of the Brazilian and World Capoeira scene are local to this region and regularly put on shows demonstrating why its possible for freestyle stars such as Chico Bento to hit the PWA podium after barely four years from stepping on a windsurf board. Cocktails on the dunes sounds a bit cliché to me, but having pushed the beach buggy and crutch crew up to the top, it was pretty good to sit and watch the sun go down over the huge estuary at the northern end of the bay while slurping oysters and debating how you get two beach buggies onto a raft with a surface area of 1.5 which was our challenge for the following day.

The SUP river tour, is one thing absolutely everyone can do from a pro freestyler to me, you, our grandparents and children.(5 upwards perhaps)

And once you get around over the (fictional) crocodile fear, this trip down the river lets you see an environment only the lucky get to lay eyes on. Get fit, tanned, and treat the complexion with some nutritional rich mud all at once, it's an ideal family trip, fun day out and no wind alternative...even when there's wind, as there always is, its sheltered from it by the soaring banks and forests. There's a beach buggy safari day between Icaraizinho and Jerri where you can stop along the coast for SUP sessions on perfect glassy waves and visit turtle sanctuaries before arriving in the ski style Resort of the beach in all its vibrant beauty...and a world class wave spot right out front of Club Ventos 1 to boot.

EVOLUTION

Since Icaraizinho was first discovered on the Beach Search, the gradual increase in wind-tourism has slowly brought some constructive change to the village; new quality restaurants and hotels have been established whilst remaining uniform to the existing buildings. The culture and community still thrive and the additional money from tourism is used to develop community services such as Capoeira lessons for the local children.

The bulls still amble through the cobble roads pulling their carts laden with coconuts to market; the fishermen still rise before the sun to catch their haul; the village children still play in the waves on logs of wood and broken windsurf boards trying to impersonate their water based idols.



Three caipirinha's please



Forecast board with club ventos in the background



Capoeira party time

BRAZIL



Phil, halfway round

The way of life has changed very little and the quirks and unique personality of the village continue to thrive.

The windsurfing facilities have also improved with ClubVentos developing their centre at the most prized launch spot on the beach; new pro model equipment is available for you to take advantage of the conditions on offer in this perfect bay. With the 6km expanse of usable water and beach space there is plenty of room to spare down wind for the kites who have also heard the word about the conditions available. The size of the bay also enables Stand Up Paddle boarders to venture several kilometres in safety, soaking up the views around the bay and catching the occasional gentle wave. The nature of the watersports tourist is what has

helped preserve the rustic charm of Icaraizinho. The respect for the culture and the environment present in the foreign water users ensures the growth will remain gradual, and the development beneficial. If you have never been to Brazil, then go. Simply just do. It is warm, windy, relaxed and full on, cheap and classy all in one, and while you are there you should take the opportunity to see where it all started, Jericoacoara. This is the metaphorical home of South American windsurfing. It's the only place in Brazil where you can watch the sun go down over the coast...and the only place I have been where the hours of 1am-3am simply disappear in smiles in the street beside mini bars selling chocolate rocket fuel and stories by the dozen with sand between your toes.



Race time

COMBINE THE TWO VERY BEST SPOTS OF BRAZIL

Jericoacoara

ONE BRAZIL

TWO IN ONE

It makes sense when travelling such distances to try to experience as much as possible, and this is now possible thanks to the infrastructure ClubVentos has developed in and between Icaraizinho and Jericoacoara.

It's a perfect way to combine two complementary locations, ensuring an exciting mix of conditions and atmospheres! You are even able to replicate the famous 'Beach Search' by means of an off road buggy adventure, winding through the beaches, rivers and fishing villages to reach your second destination. This can be booked through your tour operator when organising your ClubVentos holiday.

We arrived in Jeri just in time for one of the famous ClubVentos 'Sun Parties' which takes place every second Friday straight after your day on the water. After a few drinks, we made our way to Na Casa Della for some great food; after a brief (?) time at the drinks carts, we were pleased to see our bed at the luxury hotel of Jeriba! What an end to the vacation!



Just one cornetto



Its MY icaraizinho

Getting There

The closest airport is Fortaleza a little over two hours from Icaraizinho. When you set foot outside the cool air of Fortaleza airport, the first thing you will notice is the temperature; hovering around the 30 degree mark; being so close to the equator the temperature rarely fluctuates. From there you will be led to your transfer 4x4 to complete the last leg of your journey. TAP Air Portugal has regular flights from Europe

to Fortaleza International Airport via Lisbon. Iberia has announced a new flight route from Europe to Fortaleza for 2011. Europeans are given a 90 day tourist visa upon entry into the country. US and Canadian residents need to apply for a visa.

Booking:

Sportif: 01273 844919
info@sportif.travel

Weather:

Air temperature: 28-35°C. Water temperature: 27°C

Language:

Portuguese. Most people involved in tourism can understand English.

Money:

Brazilian Reals is the currency. There is no ATM in Icaraizinho, Fortaleza is the closest.

Things you'll need:

Bring your harness but leave your wetsuit at home. Board-shorts and no more than a lycra all the year. Don't forget waterproof SPF sunscreen.

CHOSEN BY THE BEST RIDERS OF THE WORLD

Icaraizinho

TWICE THE FUN!