Ionic Islands

Thanks to its international airport, you’ll find the most northerly Ionic isle in most travel agent brochures – yet it seems unspoiled by the excesses of mass tourism. The tourist centres are Kavos down south and Sidari up north, while most of the infrastructure is in Corfu town on the east coast. The island’s support zone is quite small – and in keeping with the prevailing summer north-westerlies, confined to a few spots on the west and north coasts. In contrast, the narrow, rocky strip of sea between Corfu and the Albanian mainland not only lacks wind but also accessible launches.

1. Issos Beach

Just north of Agios Georgios, this beach is a beautiful learning and freeride venue in summer north-westerlies. The breeze builds to 12-15 knots around noon – sometimes stronger, although high winds are rare. Sand dunes keep the water nice and flat, and a local windsurfing centre hires out kit. The wind shadow from those dunes isn’t ideal for kites, especially as the hotel deckchairs lie in wait – but the kite spot of ‘Chalikounas’ is just 4km north. In winter, Issos reveals its dark side as low pressure southerlies blow nice waves into the bay and kiters ride in front of the deserted hotels.

2. Chalikounas

North-west of the freshwater lake Limni Korission is the island’s most popular kite spot – although it’s never that busy. At most 30 kites share the skies above a 20m wide sandy beach. Usually, winds are sandy cove here as the beach is off the beaten track and the last mile down the dirt track is bumpy. Like neighbouring ‘Issos’, the summer wind usually drops manageable here, the most popular kites are 12-13m. There’s a kite hire centre on site, right next door to a beach bar for those glorious sunsets...

3. Archaravi

The longest sandy beach on the island isn’t just popular with sunbathers, it’s also ground zero for Corfu’s few kiters and windsurfers when the wind blows too north-north-westerly for the south-west coast. There are waves too as the Maestro blows onshore in the 8km long bay, creating a beach-break up to 1.5m high. This family-friendly resort is well set up for tourism, yet still doesn’t look ugly and over-developed. Conditions are similar along the coast at Sidari, although with even more sunbathers there’s not usually enough room to launch.

Lefkas

From June to September, Lefkas (or ‘Lefkada’ – even the locals aren’t sure!) is one of Europe’s most reliably windy freeride destinations. With scenery similar to Corfu, it counts as one of the most attractive Greek Islands – lush vegetation and a rich mix of Venetian and other invasive Mediterranean cultures. The west of the island is mountainous and offers little access to the sea, while the east coast is quite the opposite with long beaches and countless secluded bays.

4. Vassiliki

This little fishing village in the south of the island is where most people mean when they talk about Lefkas. Vassiliki is famous for great freeride and reliably high wind in summer. Several factors make Vass a windy place; a north-westerly airstream skirting the Mediterranean high forms the foundation, but this breeze is then thermally and topographically supercharged. The mountains determine the dose – in the mornings an onshore sea breeze steadily builds, until around lunchtime when the katabatic descends to blast across the bay. Force 5 to 6 as a rule, but Force 7 isn’t unusual. ‘Eric’ (as the Brits call the wind) usually calms down as the sun sinks behind the mountain. But even then, ‘he’ often takes a deep breath, so encroaching darkness often marks a session’s end. Later, fresh fish awaits in the harbour restaurants and – naturally – a drink in the legendary ‘Zeus Bar’.

5. Agios Ioannis

The island’s kite spot can be found by bearing right after crossing the swing bridge from the mainland, then keep going until the windmills. The wind here’s generally onshore and slightly fresher than Vassiliki, although a chest-high swell can develop. If the breeze veers northerly and the thermals weaken a bit in Vassiliki, it’s worth a look for windsurfing – and as kiting is prohibited in Vass all year long, Agios Ioannis (or ‘Milos Beach’) is Lefkada’s only option for kitesurfing.

JONO CARMICHAEL
Lefkas, Vasiliki
KEVORK VOSKERITCHIAN
Corfu, Chalikounas
KEVORK VOSKERITCHIAN
Corfu, Chalikounas
JONO CARMICHAEL
Lefkas, Vasiliki
JONO CARMICHAEL
Lefkas, Vasiliki
LEFKAS ISLAND

From June to September, Lefkas (or ‘Lefkada’ – even the locals aren’t sure!) is one of Europe’s most reliably windy freeride destinations. With scenery similar to Corfu, it counts as one of the most attractive Greek Islands – lush vegetation and a rich mix of Venetian and other invasive Mediterranean cultures. The west of the island is mountainous and offers little access to the sea, while the east coast is quite the opposite with long beaches and countless secluded bays.