

NOVEMBER 2014

free.aero



WORLDWIDE PARAGLIDING AND PARAMOTORING MAGAZINE. FOR FREE.



CANADA

EUROPE 7000 KM BEHIND ME
3000 KM OF FOREST IN FRONT OF ME...



Sylvain Dupuis visited Canada this autumn, and discovered a wonderful playground for paramotoring. He shares his trip with us...

by Sylvain Dupuis

Edited by Ruth Jessop

Photos: Kangook Team, Franck Simonnet

JC Perren flying the new Kangook wing, over red maple trees. The autumn colours in Quebec are incredible!

It's always the same travelling with a paramotor: The first big question which faces us every time is; how am I going to squeeze 50 kg of equipment into a suitcase limited to 23 kg? The next challenge is trying to dodge the check-in official at the registration desk who wants to know why you are wearing 3 pairs of trousers, 4 sweatshirts and 2 coats and, more embarrassing still, why have you got an exhaust system in your hand luggage?! Fortunately, after making her laugh a lot, she lets you and all your luggage go through, at the same time turning a blind eye to your snappy dress sense. Easy really; next time I think I'll go for the luxury of bringing some socks... Also on the trip with me are Antoine and my girlfriend. The first problem we face

after flying from Paris to Montreal is that our best friend, Cyril Berruyer, has come to pick us up at the airport, with the smallest car in Canada - with the boot already jam packed full of winter tyres... After a two hour drive with all our luggage piled on top of us (I'll get him back for that one day...), we arrive not a minute too soon at our destination.

Sainte-Thècle with a population of 2500, situated between Montreal and Quebec has been chosen by the organisers of this friendly competition to be the international epicentre for their 'made in Quebec' paramotoring meet! After a quick drink and a shower, we all succumb to jetlag and collapse into bed, leaving our trip to start properly the following morning.



The house of the rising sun! No chance of upsetting the neighbours!

Into the wild.



After 4 or 5 pancakes drowned in maple syrup, we headed off to the RS Ultra Kangook factory to meet up with our Quebec friends and to have our first flight. Antoine and I are super excited because the sky is already buzzing with paramotors flying about and it's only 7 am! Impatient to join in the fun we quickly take off in the backyard of the workshop. Once up at 100 m we are like two kids in a toyshop, unable to choose a toy: which to do first, play leapfrog with the low clouds or ground-skim over a field full of hedges and small trees using them as natural pylons? Or do a bit of water skiing and barefoot splashing over the sparkling little lake, aptly called Lac-en-Coeur? The red and orange maple tree reflections in the water beckon us to come and play.

We begin by practicing our little acro program above the clouds: Sats, spirals, waggas, pretty well synchronized and with smoke systems. Not bad for an early

morning flight! The lighting effect of the two layers of orange (the colour of the maple leaves and our smoke systems) with the dark blue sky and the stunning whiteness of the puffy clouds, makes us feel as if we are in another world!

Next we go down to ground level for a barefoot session, not forgetting that is what our GTRs are designed for. With trimmers released, we play with whatever we can find, and we found lots! Can you imagine a narrow tree lined valley, 100 m long, only just wide enough for your wing, lined with red maple trees? As for the security cone... No, sorry, if you have engine failure here, you'll be in the trees for sure...

This part of the flight only takes about 30 seconds, not a massive risk so we decide to do it. What are the chances of having an engine failure here? The statistics are on our side!

Rusty shades all around except on the GTR Sylvain is flying!



Here the forest starts, stretching out for 3000 km!
Quebec is vast...





The valley beckons, Antoine and I can't resist. Trimmers fully released, treetops 2 m below our feet, our stabilos skim the trees... A slalom course between the tree tops at full speed. It's just crazy but at the same time fabulous with an impressive view over the impenetrable forest! A feeling of total freedom, this is flying at its best. A slight turn to the left at the end and the valley opens out onto a plain with the Tawachiche River beneath our feet, a vast, wild, landscape with a small river winding its way through it; abundant waterfalls add to its beauty.

It reminds me so much of the Sean Penn film "Into The Wild"? We watch it all unfold from the sky. We head back to the landing field. Woops of joy, handshakes, big grins, this is what flying is all about! Our enthusiasm is contagious, a real melting pot of friends exchanging amazing, surreal experiences. Paramotoring is an

extraordinary way to discover the planet we live on: "A completely different perspective" as my girlfriend said to me one day.

It's already 11 am, we're all starving; time to go to a restaurant for breakfast Quebec style. The best way to get there is by air! Antoine is grounded because he has broken the cord on his Flash Starter. On the other hand Cyril is happy to go for it, on the new Kangook wing, a very promising intermediate wing. We fly fast across the wide open countryside and arrive before the cars. With a bit of guess work we find the landing field... Not easy! We're supposed to land between a petrol station on the left, the restaurant on the right, and some high tension lines. The approach is between some trees, so with the wind on our backs, that means it is all in the lee, needless to say, there was no other option.

Thermal flying, 1400 metres above the ground. Here you can appreciate the size of this country! On the left, the giant forest. In the middle, Lac-Aux-Sables. To the right, on a clear day, you can see Quebec City.



Photos: Franck Simonnet Pilot: Luc Trépanier, wing: Powerplay Scorpio, paramotor : Kangook Thor 100





Quebec is also wonderful from the ground. There are photo opportunities everywhere! This train has a maximum speed of 30 mph, but who cares? You're here spending time with family and friends and not in a rush.

Coming in to land, we focus our minds and wings on the delicious smell of hot pancakes, this helps us to both land no problem! We chucked our paramotors into the back of the pickup and went into the restaurant wearing our helmets and with our GoPros still switched on. 'Hello, a table for twenty,' we asked! Twenty of us tucked into breakfast Canadian style – a veritable feast of pancakes, sizzling bacon, eggs and sausages. Everyone talking about flying, laughing, recounting thermals they've enjoyed. This is the finest brunch ever. Life is good!

This is the best part of paramotoring, the friendship, the laughter and the

meals together. A day that you can write "success" beside when you finally tumble into bed!

David Rouault and Cyril Sancey, the parents of the RS Ultra promised that they would book us a week of perfect weather. We were right in the middle of that week of beautiful weather, with a great forecast for the next day too. I flew here 2 years ago, so I decided to take Antoine to my "secret spot", a wonderful place with undulating relief, little valleys, a deserted barn in the middle of it, a railway line without power lines, bushes and fields! Paradise for paramotor pilots who love having obstacles to fly around.

Quebec is a perfect place to fly a seaplane like this old Beaver.



Pk-Systems plugged in on our GTRs, off we go. Before we knew it we had 500 m of altitude! We did Sats and Tumbling to wake us up, then we were down. The barn was a perfect spot to work with the speedbar and to do sharp-turns over and around it. It's all about speed, precision and turns, what a great game! We play with our smoke systems, making beautiful patterns. We ground skim the train track at full speed pretending to be train drivers, and play with bushes all around. With a small nod to each other, we climb back up again.

The Quebec landscape is full of natural gems: not far from here, there is a small river, as wide as a dirt track and with only a little water in it, more of a ditch than a river really. Best of all, it is just like a race track, with lots of S turns! Time for a race! With our feet touching the water in the river, we get down to some serious playing, alternating between sharp turns and flying at full speed, with our stabilos shaving the leaves, we jump over a beaver's dam! It feels as if we have found true freedom, a freedom that you can't find in many other countries because they are too densely populated or don't have wilderness countryside. It feels as if even

the birds are laughing at us swooping and diving. After 30 minutes of playing, we return to base to tell our friends. The day ends around a campfire with beers. What a great place Quebec is. A paramotor trip is, of course, all about flying, but it is much more than that. It's a great way to find out about other cultures and different lifestyles. You meet people whose paths you wouldn't normally cross. A paramotor trip is to all intense and purposes a voyage of discover.

The highlight of the next day is a visit to a maple syrup factory, owned by Luc Trepanier's father. Luc is an excellent paramotor pilot, who has travelled all over the world. His father's enthusiasm is infectious; it is a real privilege to visit them, so much so that we promise to come back at the time when they would be purging the sap from the maple trees in April. The water from the trunk of the maple tree goes through a process of evaporation. Only the nectar from the maple tree remains, a sugary syrup. Increasing the temperature gets rid of even more water, leaving only a sort of warm caramel which is then dropped into the fresh snow giving delicious warm caramel sweets...

A river slalom for Antoine and Sylvain on their Kangook GTRs!



It's now 2 pm. Play time over, it's time to get back to work. The sky beckons! We can see a lot of Cumulus clouds, a dreamy day for free flying pilots! Taking with us our faithful GTRs, we decide to do a thermic flight. Antoine has already decided to go, so I follow him. Franck Simonnet, a very skilful paramotor photographer was also with us! We didn't have any particular flight in mind, but amateur paraglider pilots that we are, we knew the basics of aerology, that the thermals would be in the wind in front of the clouds. We had to use a little bit of engine power at the beginning, but once we got up to 500 m, the thermals were strong enough to climb without it. Our Kangook Vikkings were light and it was a real pleasure to try out a different type of flying.

No engine noise...just a pleasant mixture of the wind whistling through my lines, and Norah Jones' wonderful voice, my loyal co-pilot whom I love to listen to when I am in a world of my own. I lost the thermal two or three times but found it again. The GTR coped really well. Despite being completely insensitive to the turbulence, we could still guess where the thermals were. I didn't stop climbing until I got to 1000 m. Antoine wasn't far away. After four months in the French Alps he had much more of a feeling for it than me and got on better.

After fifteen minutes, we arrived at cloud base, at 1300 m, without using the motor. The view was unbelievable. The clouds then started to suck, obscuring the horizon, giving the ground a strange, surreal look, lit up in contrast to the uniform grey of the sky.

To the south, 50 km away, we could see the Saint Lawrence River, to the north, we could see 3000 km of forest! It made me appreciate just how small humans really are... This forest stretching up to the Hudson Bay is about four times the size of France. The clouds cast giant shadows over this majestic forest of greens and oranges. The shadows seemed to want to play between the dozens of lakes. Once again I contemplate the freedom stretching out before me, adding a whole new, never ending dimension to paramotoring.

Photos: Franck Simonnet Pilot: Luc Trépanier, wing: Powerplay Scorpio, paramotor : Kangook Thor 100



This landscape is so Quebec. During this flight, we discovered a new type of paramotoring and moreover, abundant new possibilities. We need to improve our thermal flying skills, but what a great way to learn more and more!

Next, we decide to go to Lac-Aux-Sables, a small city not far away. The goal was to chill on the small airfield. There were no planes about so we landed on the edge of the airfield. There was an old 1946 Cessna 140 proudly standing guard, nose in the air. Its 19 year old owner explained that he had swapped the engine for a 140 HP, because in winter he likes to put skis on it and visit a friend, landing in his corn field which is relatively short, thus easier with 140 HP. What a different world! In France, you can't remove your cover to change a spark plug, it's forbidden.

Just imagine, swapping an engine for a more powerful one... We talked about anything and everything to do with flying before inviting him to come paramotoring with us. Aeronautics is such an important part of the American way of life, much more so than in Europe. Here, you can find a Pitts for 30,000€, whereas the same one would cost about 60,000€ in France.

Lots of people have planes, and many of them own properties on the edge of lakes, with their yellow Beaver 'parked' floating on the lake, waiting to take friends on a fishing party to another lake in the middle of this vast forest!

Quebec is an area of Canadian where you feel very much at home in some respects but, at the same time, it is also very different. We expected a good paramotoring event, but in some ways it was more of a family reunion.

An incredible trip, wonderful landscapes, true wilderness, mysterious topography, wide open space, and above all freedom. With the round trip costing 600€, it was well worth it! A second Kangook Week is already planned for 2015; we'll definitely be there!

After fond farewells to all our friends, a last look at the majestic Saint Laurence River, we disappeared up into the clouds, destination the Paris gloom, taking with us precious memories of our friends and our Quebecois family all of whom we had to sadly leave behind.

See you again soon, Quebec! ■



Autumn in Canada is spectacular; the cold mornings lend themselves to fog surfing over a multitude of reds and oranges.

free.aero

WORLDWIDE PARAGLIDING AND PARAMOTORING MAGAZINE. FOR FREE.



ALL ABOUT FLYING.
ANY TIME.
ANY PLACE.
ALL FOR FREE.

THE WORLDWIDE **ALL** DIGITAL
PARAGLIDING AND PARAMOTORING MAGAZINE.