

WAINMAN / RABBIT / 3.0 9 & 6.5M



TEST TEAM NOTES: Wainmans are Wainmans – they stand on their own. They blazed a trail in the performance

three strut category with explosive performance and punchy handling in their early years. It always takes us ten minutes to get dialled into them as they have always managed to provide something different to the rest of the pack. Their shape has remained fairly consistent, being very short in cord and deep in the canopy and with very rounded shoulders. Like a little ball of energy in the sky, they look tight and their character graphics for each size are always fantastic.

The Rabbits have always had plenty of set-up options. There are three front bridle connections on the leading edge that if changed need to then be matched with the equivalent setting on the front bridle line itself. There are then four pressure settings on the back bridle attachment at the kite and three power settings on the rear line pigtail. We experimented with a few options for the general conditions we were out in and found the most all round to be the factory setting in the middle between 'upwind' and 'downwind' on the front options and opted for the second slowest (second highest bar pressure) on the rear and in the middle on the back line. Got all that? Basically, we returned it to where we'd found it in the stock setting! But you do have plenty of options, for example if you want to set the kite up for a deeper window pull if you're ripping a downwinder.

The above description actually makes the bridle sound much more complicated than it is. Once you understand the settings it's a very minimal and simple bridle. If someone took it off the kite and asked you to put it back on, it wouldn't be a problem. So once you're used to it it's nice to have the options of tweaking your kite set up if you're into that.

This year there's a one pump system but Wainman are still using the traditional rubber nipple inflation valves. Although slower to inflate, we know they last and Wainman's are always robustly built. The 2015 models are no different.

We really like Wainman's small bar, it's so neat and comfortable and plenty big enough for these sizes. The Rabbit has lots of power considering its size and that it uses short 17m lines with 7m extensions. We were able to have fun on the 6.5 in 9 metre weather. Really reactive, it's a bit like a sports car in that it's very good around the corners, but perhaps doesn't have electric windows. It feels quite raw and you definitely have to have your fast freeride game on, especially in this smaller size. The nine has a similar feel, but is steadier and both kites benefit from being ridden at the lower ends of their spectrum as they have good low end.

They tend to top out at about 80% power and with too much power there's a bit of a grumble at the bar and it seems to drop a gear in its steering. But get them in their happy place and the Wainmans are still very unique and fun to chase around the ocean.

Jumping on the short lines also takes a bit of working out to find the exact point and required manoeuvre to get good boost. Head into wind a bit more on your take-off and if you're the kind of rider

that likes to go off a wave and really send the kite back, you can take a look at it way out to the side and then bring it back again for landing. You'll get a kick out of it.

As the Rabbits like tearing round corners it's no surprise that for kite loops they are fun; you can reach the apex of your jump, pull on the bar and then there's actually just a fractional lag time, but it's noticeable, and means that you actually pull the bar quite hard and are then nicely committed in terms of your input so that the Rabbit really accelerates through the loop quickly. Although quick, it's not overly pivotal, so there's a nice spike of power. The 6.5 especially is a lot of fun for throwing around like that.

The manoeuvrability and low end power are the Rabbit's standouts. It's a fast kite suited to a short line pull and if you're not scared of throwing a kite around aggressively you'll get on with this. For underpowered wave riding on a small kite that's great. Just be aware that as it powers up, especially if you're strapless you'd probably want something that's a bit more gentlemanly or to drop down a size. We are led to believe that the bigger sizes are more smooth in their delivery.

SUMMARY: The Wainmans require you to get dialled into their timing if you want to turn up your performance. They are unique in their approach, so in these sizes this isn't an early intermediate kite as other kites offer a more straightforward and steady progression. We'd hate to see every kite on the market deliver the same performance though. How boring would that be? And we love the fact that Wainman have always approached things differently. As an intermediate buyer, it's just something to be aware of. In its low to mid-range the 9 and the 6.5 were both in their element and are truly at their happiest when whipping you round corners, whether you're shredding hooked-in or unhooked. Short bar, short lines and a pokey, turny kite – everything feels tight and compact, like you're taking up less space in the ocean, and if you love banging out hard, fast downwinders, this could be the kite for you, though we recommend trying it first to see if you fit in with the Rabbit Gang.

KW LIKED: Fast, throw-around kite that provides high speed turns in lower winds

KW WOULD CHANGE: The technique adjustment required by intermediates for this freeride test.

SIZES: 14.5, 12, 10.5, 9, 7.5, 6.5 and 5m

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RABBIT BALANCE POINTS: Build quality: 7.5 / Full package: 7.5 / Low end: 7.5 / Top end: 7 / Steering speed: 7 (for initiation / 8.5 once moving) / Turning circle: 4 (tight but beefy) / Power through turn: 6.5 / Bar pressure: 6 / Water relaunch: 8 / Drift: 8 / Boost: 6 / Hang-time: 6 / Unhooked: 7 / Cross-over: 7 (Unique freeride / freestyle / wave) / Ease-of-use: 6.5

