



PARADISE

FOUND

Dispatches from  
Beran Island

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**I'm quite often asked to describe the new location of my coaching camps, but it's difficult to explain Beran Island to those that have never been. 'Paradise' is a word that is all too often used to describe the perfect kite destination, but it just doesn't do justice to Martin Daly's new kitesurfing outpost in the Marshall Islands. Most kite destinations, despite their turquoise blue water and highly sought after wind conditions, tend to feel like paradise lost. Clogged with tourism infrastructure and crowds, the natural beauty and everything that brings people to these destinations feels exploited. More often than not you've got to race to be the first kite out in an otherwise crowded lineup, or tack back and forth on the sidelines waiting for the wind to push the surfing crowd out. In my travels, I've explored some of the best kite waves this world has to offer, yet none have ever come close to the isolated solace and vastly untouched beauty of the Marshall Islands. Beran Island Resort is the one place that restores that feeling we are all searching for, that of paradise found.**

Perched atop the northern rim of a hidden undersea volcano, Beran is one of the most unique coral-rimmed islands of the Marshall Islands. Arising out of the floor of Oceania, Beran is plotted in the middle of deep water nowhere, halfway between the Philippines and Hawaii. The circular strip of sand hosts an oasis of small islands that dot immaculate coral reefs, sporting colors I've seen nowhere else in my travels. While other destinations in Polynesia and Hawaii offer clear blue water, in the Marshalls, you see vibrant hues of brilliant blue and turquoise, and spectacular

shades of deep and vibrant purple. On the northeast corner of Beran sits a concrete and wood double-story plantation style surf lodge. The corrugated wraparound porch and open-plan rooms highlight wood-beamed ceilings with clean, modern lines designed for communal space. Outfitted with water reclamation systems and wind and solar electrical generation capabilities, the Beran Island Resort is built to be a sustainable home for 16 people at a time. The intentional limits on its capacity and remote location are the cornerstones of the Beran experience. Everything is designed to preserve the surfer's elemental quest so that wherever you go, it will just be you and the people you came with.



LEFT: Spending most of his adult life searching for the ultimate kitesurfing wave, Reo Stevens sits aboard the Indies Trader surveying perfection. TOP RIGHT: Ferried in piece by piece by boat, the newly constructed Beran Island Surf Lodge is an oasis of comfort and sustainability in one of the most remote locations on earth. BOTTOM RIGHT: The turboprop touchdown on a vintage WWII coral runway beats the 24-hour boat journey required of Reo's first visit.





My first time to the Marshall Islands was back in March of 2011. I was aboard the Cabrinha Quest as the team was searching for a location to shoot photos for its new surf kite. Back then it was a 20-24 hour journey by boat, and when we dropped anchor, there was nowhere to stay on the island. This was the trip that I first met my good friend Keahi de Aboitiz and we ended up having the best trip of our lives—it was a huge discovery, both for ourselves and for the sport of kitesurfing, but Martin Daly had long been mapping out the surf breaks of the atolls that surrounded Beran and like a child showing off his new toy, he was excited to share with us what he had found.

Martin, an old Aussie 'surf dog,' is ingrained with the spirit of a restless pirate and eternal surf grom. Credited with the discovery of the Mentawais as a surfing destination in the 1990s with his boat the Indies Trader, he became the iconic surf boat operator running charters along the Sumatran coast to spots including Macaronis, Telescopes and Lances. In the late 90s, he collaborated with surfing giant Quiksilver and created 'The Crossing,' a multi-year boat circumnavigation devoted to seeking out new surf breaks around the world. In all those Quiksilver adventures, Martin never came so close to finding anything on par with Beran Island, a discovery he had long ago stuffed in his back pocket.

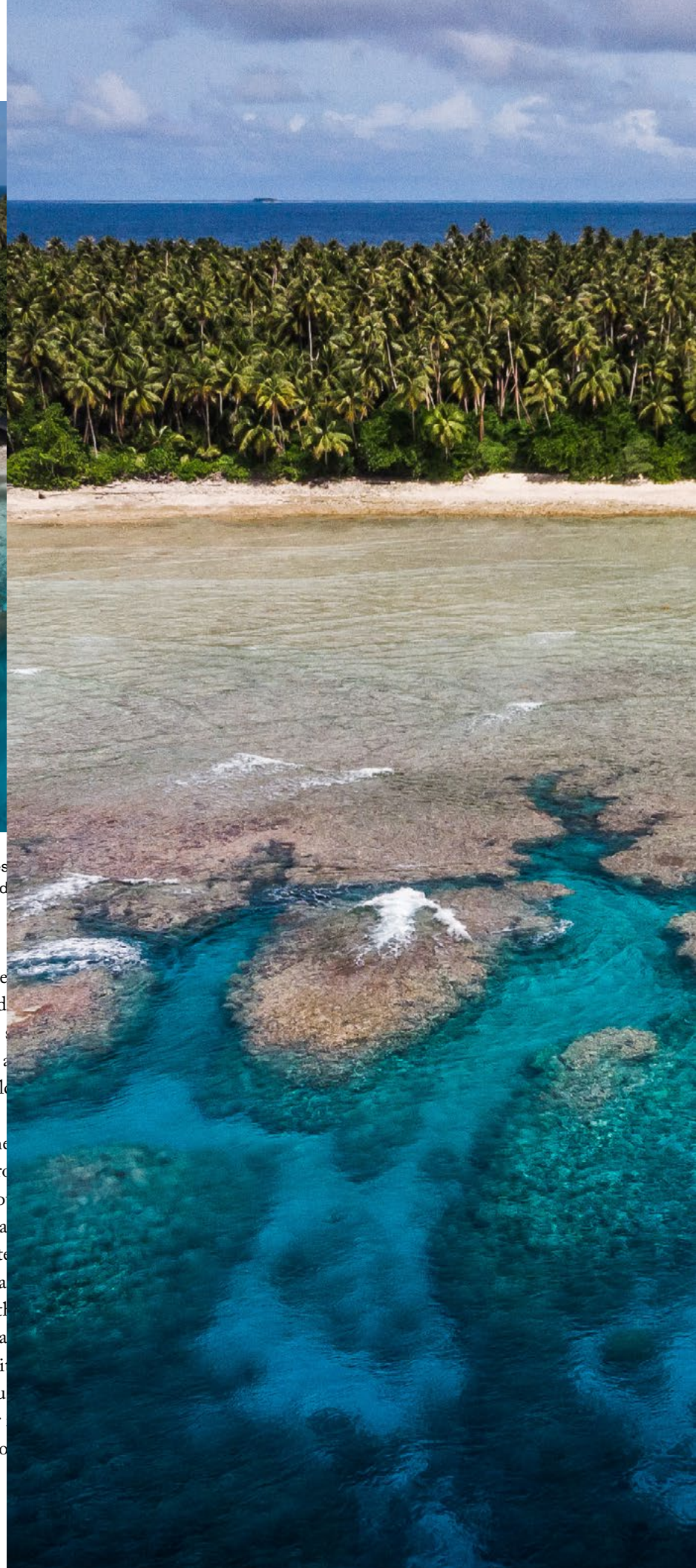
When the Odyssey went back to the Marshall Islands in 2014, I was on the boat with the Patagonia Crew and we scored once again. Martin had stationed a reliable diving vessel called Windward on the island and was about to begin the process of building a surf lodge along with the all-important infrastructure required to do so. It was during these trips that I got to know Martin, and I made every effort to keep in touch, knowing that, as this was one of my favorite places, I wanted to keep it on my radar. When the lodge first opened for surf trips, we talked about running dedicated kite weeks. While Martin had the place wired for surf, it was clear that kitesurfing off the narrow beaches and launching off boats was going to require a kite guide—someone familiar with running kite camps and the logistics required to give the ordinary kiter a fun and safe experience—and that was quickly becoming my skillset.

My plan was to ensure that Beran Island kite weeks would be completely geared towards kitesurfers. Anyone who's traveled to Namotu or Tavarua will tell you that famed reefs like Cloudbreak can stay crowded with surfers even on perfectly windy days. There might be ideal kitesurfing conditions, but because the setup is still quite surfable, the wind never chases all of the surfers out of the water. There are so many guests and boats waiting to line up for just a couple of the waves that they flew halfway around the world for, it makes kitesurfing difficult, sometimes almost



Reo's favorite wave on the atoll is a variable animal with strikingly different attitudes across the tidal range. Higher tides deliver a long sloping shoulder for playful off the lips while a low tide shortens the ride and induces a steroid-powered top to bottom ride complete with hydraulic cover-ups.





LEFT: Patagonia's Jason McCaffrey shares Reo's obsession with kitesurfing. Reo's father, Martin Daly built a pier in protected waters on the lee side of his island.

impossible. Yet, when you fly to Beran for a kitesurfing week, any or all of the island's reef breaks may still be surfable under the right wind, but it will only be kitesurfers in the water because we are so remote. This might not be the case forever, but for now, it's an experience that is unmatched in very few parts of the world.

From the final approach onto the WWII vintage crushed coral landing strip to the newly upgraded Dash 8 turboprop whizzing over immaculate coral finger reefs, everything about the Beran experience is notable. The islands in the Marshalls are unique because unlike other tropical islands, these are located in a geographical zone where the cyclones and hurricanes are just getting started. The Marshall Islands never get hit by the explosive brunt of tropical storms, so the vegetation is intact right up to the high tide mark and the forests are thick with hardwood trees, not just the coconut varieties. It is because of this incredibly diverse plant life that every tone of color the Marshalls seems a notch above anywhere else. The airports



read swell direction and ponder the nuances of tidal changes. I am a strong believer that reading waves and studying the bigger picture is an art that has broader implications to your surf game than most might think.

At Beran we never make a plan without consulting the tide tables and getting a full assessment of the swells running in the water. We might load up the big, comfortable Indies Surveyor, or use one of the smaller yet faster boats to get to destinations quicker. If there's no swell, we may hang around the island in the freestyle slick or spend our days fishing or diving. The water is so clear in this ocean that on a brilliant day you can have 300-foot water visibility. We've dropped chain in 100 feet of water where you can see the fish swimming around the anchor. The Marshalls are known for their recreational diving, which is a great backup plan, but Beran is quickly putting itself on the kitesurfing map one guest week at a time.

My favorite reef pass at Beran is about three miles away and it's probably the most consistent right hand wave you'll find on this planet. It's got a 6-foot tide gap on a spring tide, which means that the wave can experience gigantic shifts throughout the day. On a high tide, you get these long, peeling waves that cover the entire span of the reef. With that extra water you can take off 150 feet higher up on the reef than at low tide, the wave is friendlier and the chances of bloodying up on the reef below are significantly less. Yet this same wave at low tide demands you take off on the elbow of the reef, farther down the line. The lower section with the shallower tide delivers a shorter but more intense ride. This is the part of the Beran experience that gets me fired up. When the lip jacks up into a nice hollow section, you can stall and park the kite for a very makeable yet charging barrel ride that eventually folds into deeper water.

The wind is perfectly side shore on the predominantly northeast trade winds and the angle of the wave doesn't really change relative to the wind. Most often, this wave offers a perfect down the line direction with a hint of offshore, which makes kite control fairly easy and just about the ideal setup for getting barreled. On the days where the wind clocks to the east, it can go offshore and the wind shadow from the coconut trees can be a problem. Martin has the place dialed in for surf, but every day we are learning more about the kitesurfing. Having spent eight weeks down here this year, I'm beginning to build a good mental map on the connections between swell, tide and wind direction. There's a couple of different breaks that we know handle different sized swells, so we can always tune up or tone down the performance level based on the group we are kitesurfing with. We have spots that pick up swell from every direction and other spots that as



LEFT: The Marshalls are located in the epicenter of cyclone activity which means they rarely receive the full brunt of tropical storms. RIGHT: Tricks of the trade: Reo takes different approaches to the same wave. Backside surf shifts to frontside attack with a kite. The commitment and style are just the same.







LEFT: If the machine-like right isn't enough, the real draw of Beran Island is the empty lineup and the rare escape to a part of the world that can still offer a low human density experience. RIGHT: When the wind isn't firing, there's always something equally spectacular for the adventurous traveler to see and do.

you turn the corner can be half the size of anywhere else. The hardest part about Beran is that you have to load the boat and head in one of two directions. You have options and with that comes a fateful decision and the corresponding fear of missing out (FOMO). On my earlier trips, we never quite knew exactly what to expect, but if I had to peg a theme to my second season working out of Beran, it's been one of exploration and recording notes that help making those calls easier by the day.

Having started this sport at an extremely young age, my kitesurfing career has spanned most of my adult life. Much of that time I have spent traveling around the world trying to make a living while seeking out the best kitesurfing locations that rival my home in the Hawaiian Islands. As if fate almost had a hand, from the moment I first stumbled upon the Marshall Islands to the first days of my coaching career and now to the opening of Beran Surf Lodge, I can't help but think things fall into place for a reason. And if paradise is a kitesurfing destination, I do believe it has been found. [tikb](#)

