

VAYU AURA X V3

You’ve probably already read some great reviews of Vayu gear in this magazine, but for our Tarifa-based test team, this was our very first opportunity to try one! As always, Tarifa delivered perfect conditions the very next day after the Aura V3 arrived. Following our standard practice, we went in blind, knowing only that we had a 4m wing and, thanks to a tag on the bag, that it featured Aluula fabric.

Even on the short walk from the van to the shore, we could already appreciate Vayu’s attention to detail. The bag includes a padded shoulder protector designed to rest your board mast while carrying all your gear. The real surprise, however, came when we opened the bag. We were expecting to find Aluula Gold, but instead, we discovered that the wing was built with Aluula’s latest generation materials. The frame uses a mix of Aluula Aeris X for the central section, while tips and strut are made from Aluula Aeris. The canopy also uses a mixed-materials approach, with a lightweight 2x2 yarn in low-stress areas and a robust 5x5 yarn everywhere else. The Aura X v3 comes equipped with a boom, but it’s also possible to install handles if you prefer. Altogether, these choices create a wing that feels exceptionally light yet remarkably stiff, right out of the bag.

The first standout feature of this wing became clear within the first 30 seconds on the water: stiffness. The Aura X V3 is incredibly rigid, with zero canopy flutter and no frame flex at all. This translates into instant, direct power transmission, making waterstarts and pumping feel effortless. As we headed upwind in search of stronger wind, we quickly realized another defining characteristic of this wing: its phenomenal upwind performance. It locks perfectly in position in front of you, generating impressive speed and giving that “pro racing” feeling, an absolute joy to ride. While cruising upwind, we also noticed just how light the wing feels. It’s almost like holding a feather. That lightness becomes a real advantage during transitions and when maneuvering the wing, as there’s virtually no resistance. The whole process feels natural and intuitive.

We were particularly curious to test the wing’s high-end performance, since wings built with ultra-stiff materials sometimes become more demanding at the top of their range. However, that wasn’t the case here. The Aura X V3 remained stable, responsive and easy to control even in strong gusts. This is likely thanks to good engineering and wingtips made from Aeris, which is slightly more flexible than Aeris X and helps smooth out the handling at higher loads. Even at the very top of its wind range, the Aura X V3 kept flying beautifully and maintaining that same light, balanced, “feather-like” feel we loved from the start.

As we got comfortable with the stronger conditions, we moved into



our freestyle routine, which is a great way to really get to know the wing. The lift and hangtime are excellent, and during jumps, the wing feels incredibly responsive to even the smallest inputs. But it was in rotational tricks where it truly shined, where its speed and ease of handling made maneuvers feel fluid and controlled. After that first session, we had plenty more, which only confirmed our initial impressions. On lighter wind days, the Aura X V3 proved to be impressively efficient in the low end, maintaining the same smooth and balanced feel across its entire wind range – from light breeze to top-end conditions.

We didn’t get proper waves during the test period, but we did manage a few downwind runs, where the wing showed its neutral, well-balanced behavior. It stays steady and predictable, never getting in the way while gliding down swells – one of those few wings that truly let you enjoy the ride without constantly having to manage it.

So, who is this wing for? Thanks to its simplicity, intuitive handling and high performance, the Aura X V3 is a wing that suits almost any rider, from ambitious beginners to experienced pros. Whether you’re into freeride, freestyle or just cruising (fast), it delivers top-tier performance across all conditions.

VAYU AURA X V3	
POWER DEVELOPMENT	OVERALL STABILITY
DEPOWER ABILITY	UPWIND PERFORMANCE
RESTING STATE ABILITY	SETUP SPEED
AGILITY	DURABILITY

APPLETREE ZAPPLE S

Since the launch of the Gen 2, Foil Drive are an unstoppable juggernaut, and we’re probably seeing the most uptake of any discipline currently with foil assist. Trench boards came to the market around a year ago and Appletree’s production facility was quick off the mark and nimble enough to produce an excellent mid-length shape, in the aptly named Zapple, to meet the consumer demand, cementing themselves as a benchmark platform in the process. Nine months later, and with the release of the High Power motor and battery from Foil Drive, as well as skill levels of the end user ramping up, demand for a smaller Zapple was obvious. Three stock sizes are available in 4’4, 4’6 and 4’8, ranging between a diminutive 29.6L to 33.3L.

With a focus on prone-style performance wave riding, it made sense to shift from mid-length to a more pure, prone-board shape, minimizing volume, drag and swing weight. Compared to the standard Zapple, you need a more snappy pop up and good technique to benefit from the more compact dimensions.

They’ve geared this for as efficient takeoff as possible in a compact shape, retaining quite flat subtle continuous rocker through the majority of the board with a quick kick in the nose and with a gentle V entry to let it bounce well off the water. The lower rails are chamfered at a generous angle to prevent any catchy behavior on the water. This

harsher rail shape is smoothed out into the nose section, which retains quite a lot of width and volume, and planing ability under your chest area. The deck standing area is very lightly concaved giving you that planted feeling on the board and a little awareness of where your feet are relative to the rail. The kick pad is well placed and we found our back foot planted on it with a comfortable stance width as soon as we were transitioning from motor to wave power.

Signal issues are a distant memory with these boards; the whole nose is an S-glass signal window, and transmission is, in our experience, absolutely flawless. With a board aimed for more consequential wave conditions this is massively important, as your duck dive needs to be on point. With this lower volume board a powered duck dive will pull you quite a way underwater and avoid any potential thrashings. Inserts are also built in with a Y configuration on self-tapping inserts if you want to use foot straps.

Appletree advise a chip in for this board for your average sized rider, but this depends very much on your weight, skill level and foil size and of course whether or not you’ve got the High Power upgrades. Here’s our benchmark with the 33L 4’8 board, currently sitting at a robust 92kgs – we could flat-water start the 33L Zapple S with an Armstrong MAV2 990 with little effort with a standard taped mast and HP hard-

ION SURF SHIELD RANGE

We were lucky enough to get our hands on the ION Surf Shield Rashguard Longsleeve, Surf Shield Tights Long and the Surf Shield Boardshorts (20”), and the first item we unpacked was the rashguard and its unique texture and weight immediately signaled that it was far from average. Since cut protection isn’t exactly our field of expertise, we decided to check the spec sheet to learn about it. Turns out the rashguard is built using cut-resistant HPPE fabric and rated Level 4 out of 5 for cut protection (EN388) meaning it’s specifically engineered to withstand encounters with sharp foil edges, reef scrapes and fin cuts. Once we unpacked the rest of the products, we found they are made from the same advanced materials and obviously, our first reaction was to try everything on!

The rashguard offers a snug, second-skin fit that, thanks to its soft and elastic nature, allows for completely unrestricted movement. When putting on the shorts, we realized they include a clever Slip_Loop system that connects the top to the boardshorts (or the tights), preventing the rashguard from riding up mid-session, a small but very useful feature.

On a windy afternoon, we took the full setup – rashguard and boardshorts – out for a wingfoil session. As we powered through changing conditions, the synergy between both pieces really stood out. The rashguard stayed perfectly in place, never moving up and the Slip_Loop kept everything aligned even during twists and surprisingly, even when crashing. We have to admit, the protective promise feels real. After spending more time on the water, we also noticed how minimal the drag was, especially during surf sessions or swimming back to our wingfoil board. The fabric feels light, never heavy (even when fully wet) or restrictive and allows you to move freely without resistance. Both garments provide a sense of safety, not like wearing armor, but definitely a much more reliable shield than standard Lycra, swimwear or neoprene. Combined with the UPF 50+ sun protection and super quick drying capabilities, it’s an outstanding choice for warm-weather users as a one-layer set up.

After one surf session, we decided to really put the gear to the test by deliberately rubbing it against our foil edge and rocks to see how it would hold up. The result? All parts worked flawlessly, showing no signs of slicing or tearing. Of course, it’s not bulletproof protection against hard impacts or sharp gear, but it provides a serious safety margin that gives you confidence to push harder. As a fun anecdote, we always bring our dog to our sessions, and while playing with her, we immediately noticed a huge difference in how her playful bites felt!

Finally, the temperature regulation is worth noting. The rashguard



and shorts maintain a neutral feel when using it as the only layer. They don’t trap heat like neoprene, which makes them ideal for warm climates. The tights, however, include a bit of neoprene in the upper section, adding a touch of insulation that makes a noticeable difference when the wind picks up. We also tried wearing it over a shorty as a second layer, and the difference was clear, it kept us noticeably warmer throughout the session.

If we had to recommend this setup, we’d say it’s perfect for riders who frequently get close to foil wings, fins or reefs and are looking for something more protective than just Lycra but less bulky than neoprene. The fit is important: too loose and you lose the protection alignment; too tight and comfort might suffer. But when sized right, this ION Surf Shield trio perfectly blends protection, comfort and performance into one smart package. And let’s not forget our dedicated instructors across all disciplines! For them, this could be one of those must-have pieces of gear for daily use at the beach.

ware. Weave an integrated mast into the mix (thanks Armstrong) and this became easily achievable. Chip ins with the MAV2 690 meant we could tackle overhead-high waves without feeling remotely over foiled.

What most people are chasing with foil assist is a feeling closer to prone foiling as possible, and the Zapple S reduces the distance from your feet to the mass of the battery unit to an absolute minimum, sharpening up turning inputs. Its compact dimensions allow you to be more risky in steeper waves and go for that bounce off white water you previously definitely wouldn’t have made. The notable stiffness of a vacuum-infused board means it’s a super connected feel when you put in a turning input, and further disguises the battery weight. For the more progressive, wave-focused Foil Drive enthusiast, this Zapple S further refines the assisted experience, and is going to skyrocket your progression when it comes to tighter, more critical turns.

APPLETREE ZAPPLE S	
TAKE OFF	BATTERY CHANGE
TOUCH DOWN	DECK COMFORT
RESPONSIVENESS	STIFFNESS
SIGNAL	

