

Appletree Klokhouse 5'10 Kite S+

ALL-ROUNDER TEST



Appletree was founded by two brothers, who initially manufactured in a shed on a Dutch apple farm owned by their parents. From these small seeds, a mighty orchard has grown, into the shape of their own bespoke board production facility in Portugal with their own in-house designed CNC machines for milling a specific type of 50kg/m water-proof closed cell foam that they use across their board range, which spans directional kiteboards, wing, foil as well as traditional surfboards. Appletree offer a full customization service for each board model; this starts with dimensions, several different laminate choices, a choice of Futures or FCS2 fin boxes, inserts, tail dips, all the way down to a custom message to the lucky recipient on the stringer.

First off we'd like to congratulate Appletree on some genius packaging. They've reused the aforementioned foam block that they cut your board from to provide some perfectly tailored lightweight bump protection for your board in transit, turning waste into something very useful. It's also worth noting they are approved by Sustainable Surf.

We were presented with the Klokhouse to test, probably one of the most classic surfboard shapes in their extensive range with a squash tail and gently rounded outline. We tested the tougher S-glass construction, and fitted some medium size Futures fins. The EVA pad is perfectly designed to match the board, so it fits perfectly into the tail, and the kick sits exactly where it should over the fins. It's relatively thin to give you a good connection to the board. The ribs run parallel to the rail, meaning it's easy to slide your feet for foot transitions and weight shifts for balancing the board upwind, but means you have better grip rail-to-rail for pushing hard into a top turn. There's also a raised section in the center of the kickpad that sits under the arch of your foot to help you centrally locate your rear foot without having to look down. This is particularly useful when riding further up the board to pinch upwind, and then wanting to get your rear foot back over the fins to throw some spray. You don't have to look down, which when the conditions are more consequential, makes a big difference.

You'll notice a hexagonal pattern on the deck – this isn't there for decoration. The S-glass board we rode has a sandwich construction over the majority of the deck to reinforce it, avoiding heel dents. It feels tough enough underfoot to do strapless airs on without any worries.

In the water the squash tail combined with the rounded outline feels lively and agile, and probably suits waist-high surf plus up. The rocker is intelligently placed and well balanced enough to clear some steep



drops and big lumps of whitewater, without a huge sacrifice on upwind performance. The flex level in the board provides a decent level of response and enough shock absorption to ride comfortably through chop without feeling spongy; the gentle single concave also feeds into this smooth and controlled nature. The Klokhouse likes to maintain speed and doesn't suffer from any nose flap, it seems to skim through a choppy sea state with level of composure.

The low volume in the tail gives you the option to add rear foot pressure and slow yourself down on the wave allowing you to get a better position on the face. Its nimble nature lends itself to a very vertical top turn with plenty of grip at the critical moment, and reliable re-entry into a steep face.

It's great to see a young company produce such a high quality product, both in terms of performance and manufacturing, and to high environmental standards. The Klokhouse is going to suit riders coming from more of a dedicated surf perspective, who want to focus on drawing satisfying lines on waves precisely where they want them.

North Carve 2022

ALL-ROUNDER TEST

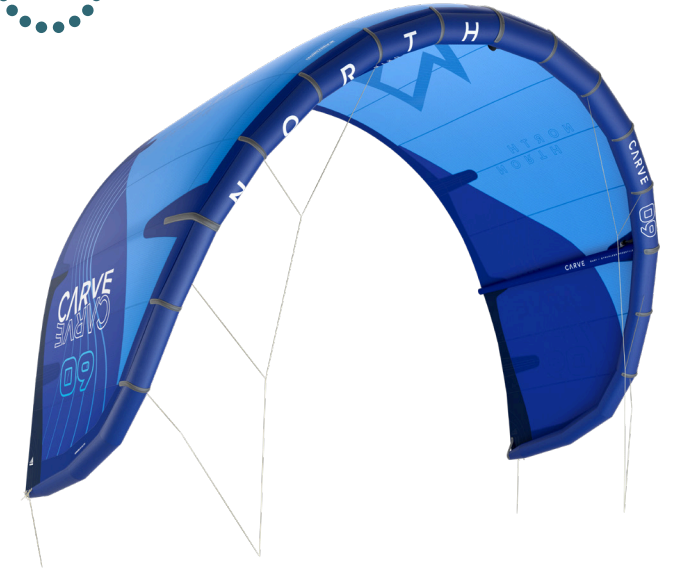


Whenever Pe'ahi wakes up and provides those other worldly barreling watery mountains, more often than not we get a drop of mind-blowing photos from a certain Jesse Richman, attached to North's wave-specific Carve kite, doing something rad. It's a few years into production now, and with an impressive reputation and user base we were intrigued to see what changes they have made for the third 2022 model.

In the build, there's been some definite weight savings, with the 9m weighing in at a competitive 2.9kg on our scales. This has been achieved with some revised material use – a crisp mid-weight cloth framing the trailing edge as well as replacing Dacron on the intermediate section between canopy and leading edge tube. Two small flexible battens are hidden in the wingtips to firm things up in the trailing edge. Some new lightweight bladder material has also been employed. In practice, this has translated into a more mobile kite with an extended wind range, particularly noticeable in the low end. The bridling has seen another comprehensive rework, which North have coined the Active Load Distribution; it's comprised from a low diameter minimal parasitic drag material. No pulleys are in place, keeping everything pleasantly direct and simple. Inflation is via the same screw in bayonet valve that's been in place for the last couple of years.

In the field, we found the kite far more perky to initiate turns than last year's model, but the Carve still has the inherently solid feeling and background pull from previous years, letting you constantly know where it is in the sky. It feels instantly familiar and quick to dial into.

It's a very stable and predictable platform, even when the conditions are super variable. We felt the weight distribution has improved its fore and aft balance; where the previous year could sometimes be a little nose heavy, this year the Carve seems to drift more predictably. The Carve's low end is as impressive as ever, and you certainly can be conservative about size choice without feeling too underpowered; the marked increase in mobility also helps you generate more low-end power by moving the kite around to fill any lulls. When the kite whips across the wind window, it remains super composed and it's very easy to feather out the spike in power; it's got a high level of depower at the bar, and isn't going to pull you off your board during an aggressive bottom turn. On the waves, it does everything correctly. The drift is there in spades, the turning capability lets you line up well and find a good rhythm for drawing the lines you want, and there's enough power on



tap simply with the sheeting to make sections without having to whip the kite around too much. This comes into play when it comes to strapless freestyle, where you can translate that power increase into some nice floaty lift, and importantly a predictable and soft descent. The more reactive and lightweight airframe crosses over well into freeride hydrofoil use. The nipper nature and instant power on sheet whips you out of your transitions smoothly and with decent pace.

For 2022 the Carve has had what can only be described as a fairly major handling overhaul, making it a more mobile and precise kite than ever with intuitive turning characteristics. It achieves this without sacrificing its solid and predictable nature too much. It does this in a balanced fashion and at no point does it feel twitchy. These subtle but effective revisions make it ever more versatile to differing conditions, and a key piece of any serious wave conqueror's arsenal.

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