

Kite Power on Ships Out Performs Sails Five Times Over

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SkySails kite powered ships save fuel photo

The idea of reinventing wind-power for ocean going transport is certainly a seductive one. But usually when TreeHugger reports on the idea of kite powered boats, whether it's [Kite For Sale's yachts](#) or [SkySail's cargo ships](#), we inevitably get comments from folks asking "what's wrong with traditional sail boats?" Now the folks at SkySail have set out to answer this very question (of course they have a certain vested interest in the outcome) by releasing the latest figures from their [ongoing tests on one of their kite-powered freight ships](#). And if their numbers are anything to go by, kites come out ahead. Way ahead:

"The latest measurements made aboard the cargo ship "Michael A." demonstrate how the SkySails-System delivers far more than five times the performance per square meter of sail than traditional wind propulsion systems. With the help of the wind, the 160 square meter kite generates up to 8 metric tons of tractive force — this approximately corresponds to the thrust of an Airbus A318 turbine engine. Depending on wind conditions, ships in the future shall be able to post fuel savings of between 10% and 35% using this auxiliary propulsion system. "Our own measurements show that we were able to temporarily save far more than half the fuel by deploying SkySails in favorable wind conditions," reports Gerd Wessels (37), managing partner of the Wessels shipping company based in Haren/Ems, adding that "alternatively we were able to increase the ship's cruising speed from 10 to 11.6 knots with the help of this towing kite propulsion." The innovative and environmentally sound wind-propulsion system retrofitted aboard the 90 meter long multi-purpose cargo ship "Michael A." has been undergoing pilot testing in European waters since the end of 2007."

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