



Niviuk is an interesting company, new to the paragliding scene but made up of individuals with a pedigree. Raul Rodriguez, acro champion, and Olivier Nef, ex-Advance designer and French team member form part of the top echelon of this very differently named company. To quote the company on its choice of name: "Niviuk Naktuk' means (in Inuit) that by putting our attention to small details we construct big things."

First publicised on the paragliding scene at St. Hilaire in 2004, Niviuk's initial offerings were the DHV1 NK1 and the N-Gravity acro wing. To that range has been added this DHV1-2, the DHV2 Artik and a comp wing, the Icepeak. Niviuk gliders are made in Eastern Europe and the Far East. The importer in the UK is Surface to Air Merchandise. They added the Niviuk range to their portfolio last year, complementing the Skywalk range they already handle.

The Hook was released last year and is a mid- to top-end DHV1-2. The glider covers all-up weights from 60 - 130kg in four sizes. The glider is made of

overshoot. Once overhead very little effort or concentration is required to keep the glider there. Asymmetric inflations also work well. It's possible to get the glider back overhead after it has gone a very long way off to either side, to the point where I could touch a tip on the ground and then get the glider back overhead, something I couldn't do on most other gliders. All told, ground handling is top notch.

My first few flights on the Hook were at a local site in marginal conditions, then bouncy stuff. The Hook was very reassuring, and simply allowed me to concentrate on flying without really having to acclimatise to the glider. Feedback is well balanced through the brakes and harness - you'll know what's going on without feeling twitchiness. The brakes feel firm and small movements translate nicely into turns. I applied sensible amounts of weight shift and everything seemed to be very well co-ordinated. The Hook seems to avoid that tendency some gliders have to flatten out of the turn after 180 degrees, and is very accomplished at thermalling. When you start to push it a little bit

feature that the pressure really builds up very steeply as you get close to the stall. For the newer and not very experienced pilot, this is a marker to an area to avoid except on landing flares. For the more experienced pilot, it's an area here that is usable on slope landings where the glider can be flown very slowly with a steeper descent without stalling, in a very controlled manner.

Straight line performance was good with trim speed measured at 37 - 38km/h. On straight glides only the slightest amount of brake was needed to damp the exit from thermals. The speed system, although intricate, was very light and easy to use, probably among the best I've tried. I didn't get to use full bar for any length of time but used half bar quite a bit. The results were encouraging and the glider felt solid. The glider retains energy very well and also seems to convert gusts into climbs (and picks up speed in sink), but smoothly and without undue pitching.

Big ears, using the handle, initially resisted the pull in but then allowed a fair-sized set of ears to appear.



the very popular Porcher Sport 9017 40g cloth with the E77 water-repellent coating, which seems to pay dividends at inflation time. The glider inflates in the lightest winds and its inflation behaviour is very good. Lines are Edelrid. The glider does not have split As but has a pulley on a handle that hides behind the A riser.

The speed system is intricate and well made with the pulleys hidden between the A and B risers. There's a butt hole for removing debris in the extreme tip of the wing. Brake handles are secured by magnetic poppers, with the handles made with internal reinforcement. The glider comes with a rucksack, which is spacious and has compression straps to eliminate any slack in the bag once packed. There is also a speed bar, repair tape, a manual, a compression strap and an inner bag to complete the package.

I've already touched on the inflation behaviour. The glider needs only the lightest of breezes to inflate and then pulls up overhead without any tendency to

harder, the agility comes more to the fore, and with either more brake, or weight shift, or both, the glider can be made to turn on a sixpence.

I did notice when weight shifting hard that the innermost A line would go slack, but the glider's comportment was always very good. Some gliders achieve their agility by being very sensitive to small brake inputs, which can make them difficult for the new pilot to fly as they tend to dive into turns. The Hook avoids both these traps and is nice and easy to fly with small to medium brake inputs, and when pushed harder rewards the pilot with highly-banked turns that remain that way without the need for constant intervention with the outside brake or the tendency to roll out.

The Hook is also good in the light stuff, passing on the small nuances required for working weak thermals, and also seems to float along quite well, especially if slowed up on the brakes.

Brake pressures are sensible, with the added

Letting them go caused them to pop out sharply and evenly on both sides. Getting the ears to go larger than the attachment put them was a little bit more involved, and would have involved either detaching the big ears handle or grasping the outer A line in the traditional way. This sort of negates having the big ear attachment there to start with, but then the big strength of the attachment is the ease with which an inexperienced pilot can get the ears in to a defined and symmetric point. This point is well chosen, and is about what you would think is a good size of ears for that level of pilot.

I'd just about finished doing all the flying for this review and rushed out one morning to do a last flight, simply to measure the trim speed. When I arrived at the local site it was just before 10 o'clock and barely soarable. I flew the Hook for just under an hour, found myself at 3,000ft amsl at 10:40am and back on the deck looking at blown-out conditions by 11am. During that last flight my appreciation of the Hook jumped up about three big steps.



The vario showed lift peaking at 1,100ft/min and sink at 750ft/min. In the broken thermals with strong cores, and the kicking turbulence, the Hook behaved impeccably and did not put a foot wrong. One tiny tip rustle occurred whilst I was skirting round another glider to get to a gaggle of frenzied swifts. Other than that the glider seemed to be an extension of me as I cranked it up in the little cores, exited the thermals as they were blown back over the ridge, used some bar on long transitions into wind and generally went for it big time.

The only other glider that climbed out in those conditions was a Sky Ares. He went XC whilst I had my second-best-ever flight on that site in terms of distance flown upwind and height gain. One low-airtime pilot observed how easy I made it look, but that is the essence of this glider - it offers a lot of quality and agility but is also so easy to fly. I was going to file this glider under the, "Very nice, must try" category, but then had to change it to "Very good until it all kicks off, at which point it changes to excellent." You may never see this side of the Hook's attributes, but to know it exists, especially if you fly abroad in strong conditions, is a big plus.

The Hook puts Niviuk firmly on the UK scene. To be able to open your range with something targeted at the majority of pilots with such quality is a great achievement, but maybe we expected this from the names involved. The quality of construction is snapping at the heels of the very best, with nothing to fault or complain about.

The Hook will appeal to the low-airtime pilot upgrading to their second or third wing, but will also delight the experienced pilot downgrading for whatever reasons. If you are test flying it, you'll need a variety of conditions to appreciate just how good it really is. An excellent introduction to refined agility.

Summary



Easy to ground handle and fly
Agility without nervousness
Rock solid
Intuitive



May take two or three flights to appreciate fully

Importer's comment

The word Niviuk within the paragliding community usually evokes a look of confusion, closely followed by the words, "Nivvy what?" It is fair to say that Niviuk are the new kids on the block, however the pedigree and expertise of the design team should not be underestimated. Niviuk has been borne from the passion and commitment of world-class pilots and designers who have joined together to create this already very successful company. They have taken the time and effort to design and produce a range of wings which offer performance and complete harmony with the pilot. The DHV1-2 Hook has been described in a previous review as the Spitfire of this class, however this shouldn't worry pilots into thinking it is a ship too hot to handle. It is a wing which rightly belongs at the top of that class but, as Steve has pointed out, the Hook offers well-balanced feedback, sensible brake pressure and refined agility, and all with maximum safety. The Hook fits perfectly into the range of pilots wishing to move up from a more sedate DHV1-2, and yet it also fits perfectly into the range of any pilot wishing to move the opposite way, down from a DHV2. Go beyond mainstream... Niviuk is here to stay!

ANDY TALBOT, SURFACE TO AIR



Specification

Model	XS	S	M	L
No of cells	47	47	47	47
Span (projected, m)	8.78	9.29	9.60	10.06
Area (flat, m ²)	23	25.87	27.7	30.5
Aspect ratio	5.11:1	5.11:1	5.11:1	5.11:1
Max. chord (m)	2.67	2.83	2.93	3.07
Line diameters (mm)	1.9/1.7/1.5/1.4/1.0			
All-up weight range (kg)	60 - 80	75 - 95	90 - 110	100 - 130
DHV certification	1-2	1-2	1-2	1-2
Guarantee	2-year materials and workmanship			
Price	£1,700	£1,750	£1,800	£1,850

An XXS model is also available at £1,650.

UK importer

Surface to Air Merchandise UK, Taylor House, Bradford Road, Dewsbury, West Yorkshire WF13 9LQ, tel: 07812 961102, e-mail: surfacetoairuk@aol.com, URL: www.surfacetoair.aol.com.