

KIDS

*the new
face of sup*



You've been reading about her adventures for years in the pages of *Standup Journal*, but who is Lou Bouvet? Like many Maui kids, Lou was exposed to the ocean at an early age. But in her case, the sup paddling experience actually began *before* she was even born. At Lou's home on Maui's north shore, a photo from August 2005 hangs on the fridge: Carine Bouvet, eight months radiantly pregnant with Lou, sits on the family's first sup board, an 11-foot-long Bic prototype. In her mother's belly, Lou was only a month away from a grand adventure that shows no sign of slowing down for the 11-year-old paddler. So, yes: Lou Bouvet is as old as the boom era of standup paddling.



Born with a Paddle in Her Hands **LOU BOUVET**





Lou Bouvet has grown up fast! In fact, she's very much an old soul—probably the result of an adventurous childhood with her globetrotting parents who have taken her to the most remote places in the world for extended periods of time.

Nonetheless, that exotic childhood nearly came to an end before it even started. When Lou was conceived, Carine and Manu had been traveling the world for five or six months out of the year, producing travel stories about off-the-beaten-path destinations like the Sultanate of Oman, the Chagos Islands, Zanzibar, India and Sri Lanka. At no all-inclusive windsurfing centers to lodge, they were either camping on the beach or hiring local boats on which to live. Many of the French couple's friends expected them to slow down with their Bohemian lifestyle once a newborn entered the picture. "I guess people expected us to stay home and watch the Discovery Channel instead," laughs Carine.

"Instead of going for a family walk, Lou and the Bouvets are more often out 'walking' on their sup boards"

But there was still way too much adventure in Lou's parents to not give it a try and see if they could learn to change a diaper in a tent, on a plane, or on a boat. "Finally, we acknowledged that a diaper does not need to be changed that often," jokes Lou's father, Manu. Today, 11 years later, Lou has learned how to change her younger sister Shadé's diaper on the road, too.

Lou Bouvet has attended school in France, the Marshall Islands, Chile, the Caribbean, and Tahiti while her parents have been busy producing images and watersports travel features. Lou has been witnessing the world firsthand, and she even has a key role in family adventures that are aimed at raising awareness for environmental challenges via sup boards.

Since that day in 2005 when Lou shared a sup ride in her mom's belly, sup has been the keystone of the family's adventure. The sport of standup paddling came along right on time for them to pursue a family quest for waves and to share their love for the ocean and their desire to protect it. There is no better way to enjoy the sea together than on sup boards. Instead of going for a family walk, the Bouvet ohana is more often seen on their sup boards, "walking" on water. That is how Lou got her first contact with sup: on Manu's back, comfortably nestled into an Ergobaby backpack. Soon she was old enough to sit on the board with Manu and Carine, and then eventually she was out paddling on her own.





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Sustainable Life is the Goal

Growing up, Lou enjoyed the oceans of the world—surfing, stand-up paddling, or windsurfing—and she started caring for it by spontaneously doing her own beach clean ups. Mom Carine observes that "Lou belongs to that generation of kids that is processing the fragility of our oceans at a very young age because she is exposed to it on a daily basis."

The relationship that Lou has built with her favorite environment is as much about what she can give as what she can take. She grew up helping her parents do ocean preservation workshops in schools all over the world. Today, Lou is a youth ambassador for the Race for Water Foundation, which works on water protection (raceforwater.com), and for Raw Elements USA, an eco-friendly, reef-safe, biodegradable sunscreen. (She asked her parents to contact the brand on her behalf after hearing that most sunscreens damage reefs and can hurt sea life.) Along the way, Lou has also become sponsored by Bic Sup, Bic Sport, NP, Maui Fin Co., Pakaloha Bikinis, and Honey Girl Organics.

"Beware of What You Wish"

Carine and Manu have always wanted their daughter to be comfortable in the ocean while caring for it, and they've hoped that she would get into one of the board sports that they love. And what they've wished for has come true—and then some! All they hear now is, "Please take me surfing right after school," or "When is our next travel adventure?" And of course, "Don't use that much water; it's precious."



It's funny to think that sup came to the world at the same time as Lou did. They have both grown up quickly, but they are still fragile at the same time. They have a bright future ahead of them that will depend on our ability to protect the environment on which that they both depend.

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There is no future for sup with a dying ocean, and there is no happy water world for Lou without a sustainable future. But the good news is that Lou and her fellow pre-teen friends are going to be in charge soon—and they are way better at it than their parents. The last time we spoke with Lou, she shared a couple tips for families with young paddlers:

SuJ: How long have you been standup paddling?

Lou: I was on a sup with my parents before I could walk. I can't remember when I first standup paddled by myself, but I now I take my little sister for a ride sometimes, if she is nice to me :) ...so that soon she will also standup on her own.

SuJ: What do you like about sup and what don't you like about it?

Lou: What I didn't like in the beginning was that it was a bit frustrating because I did not have a board or a paddle that fit my size and my strength. They were either too long or too heavy, so it felt like too much work—especially when I was going long distances with my parents during trips. But when I turned six, I got a 6'6" board that allowed me to paddle more easily, and also to catch my first waves. My dad also cut a carbon paddle down to my size, and that was so much easier.



