



# CAYMAN SESSIONS

Brian Wright

All you'll need is "a pair of boardies, your towel, sun gear, and bags of motivation."

James Grainger's words resonate in the minds of beginning windsurfers before they go out for their first session in Cayman. He's a windsurfing instructor at Red Sail Sports at Morritt's Tortuga Club & Resort in the East End. And he loves his job.

## THE WIND OF THEIR SOUL

Windsurfing began in 1965 in Southern California and soon came to Cayman. Bruno Schermuly was one of the early Cayman windsurfers who came onboard with the original group at Morritt's. His nephew, Andrew Cousins, lives on Cayman now and continues the great legacy of Cayman windsurfing. He works in IT, but lives for windsurfing.

"Anytime it's windy, I just want to go windsurfing," says Andrew. "My whole life revolves around the wind."

Like James and many other windsurfers, Andrew keep his eyes on the trees to judge wind direction and velocity, constantly scouting for the perfect combination - the "wind groove."

"Most windsurfers in the world have a favourite tree that they judge the wind by," says James, who lives right next to Morritt's in the East End - an ideal place for windsurfing. "We just launch right out the back door."

James started windsurfing at the age of nine. He went to university in Southampton so that he could be close to the water

for windsurfing. He then sailed on a yacht around France with his girlfriend Frankie, a windsurfer. They got married, had a windsurfing honeymoon in Egypt where they met a windsurfer from Cayman, and moved to Cayman soon after to windsurf.

"When it's too windy to set the equipment out for work, I go windsurfing," he says.

James has been windsurfing for 25 years, even when the sport took a dip in popularity. Now, the sport is making a big comeback.

## FREESTYLE

There are three distinct styles of windsurfing - wave-sailing (with a short board), slalom (racing), and the most popular with the younger generation of windsurfers, freestyle.

Although kite surfing has taken a lot of the would-be windsurfers away from the sport, the local windsurfing base is holding steady and even growing, due in large part to freestyle windsurfing.

Santiago Campo, a manager at Red Sail Cayman for the past five years, says that freestyle is "cool, flashy, and doesn't require too much wind," which makes it the windsurfing style most apt for all kinds of weather.

"And you can do it close to shore so people can watch," he says, which helps the sport's popularity among fans and spectators.

The top freestyle windsurfer in the world is 21-year-old Venezuelan Jose "Golito" Estredo. He's the LeBron James of windsurfing, winning the Professional Windsurfing Association's Freestyle World Championship at the age of 17.





James and Andrew are both dabbling in freestyle windsurfing after spending years carving the waves and competing in slalom races.

"There's always something new to learn," says Andrew. "My goal is to crack a forward loop."

#### **CAYMAN WINDSURFING**

Andrew runs a Cayman windsurfing website, [caymanwindsurf.ky](http://caymanwindsurf.ky), dedicated to all things windsurfing. Local windsurfers can surf the site in the morning and find out the weather conditions for that day.

Because the windsurfing community in Cayman is relatively small, all of the windsurfers know each other and share information about the best spots for sessions.

According to Santiago, some spots on the Island are better than others depending on the wind conditions.

"For north, northeast and northwest winds, the best spots are Morgan's Harbour and Head of Barkers in West Bay, the most popular being the windsurf centre at Morritt's Tortuga Club in East End" he says, along with Seven Mile Beach for wave-sailing. "When the wind is blowing from the south, there is a very good spot in South Sound right by the public launch ramp."

Red Sail Sports in East End at Morritt's is an ideal location for windsurfing, and to rent boards and sails. Unlike other water sports, a beginner can be up in the water in their first session.

"You don't have to be at a championship level to have fun," says Andrew. "When you start planing, you're having fun." **WH**