

WIND FINDER

The Caymans ■ St. Louis Blues

GRAND CAYMAN

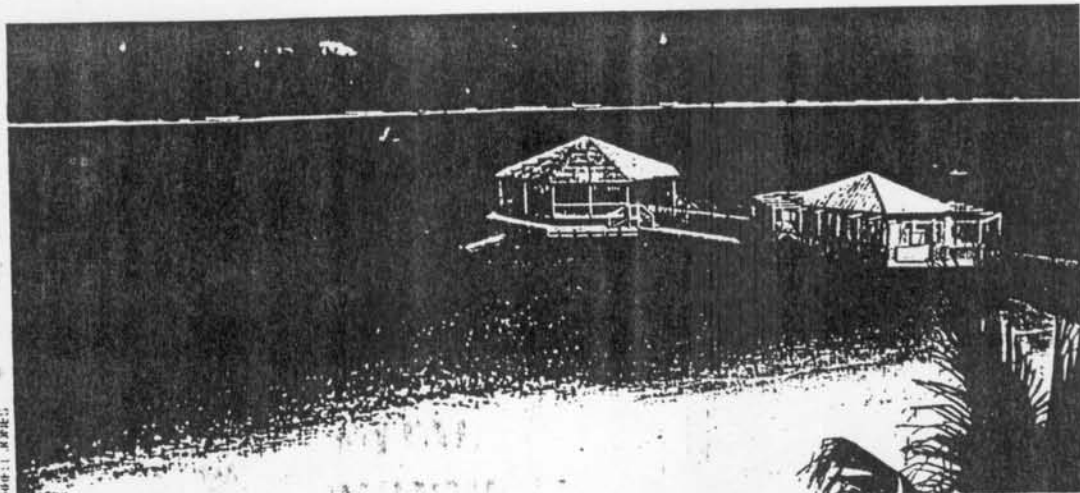
The Cayman Islands are a small archipelago located 90 miles south of Cuba. The group consists of three islands: Grand Cayman, Little Cayman, and Cayman Brac. The islands rise 17,000 feet from the ocean floor, barely poking through the surface of the water.

Aside from windsurfing, the Caymans are best known for their world-class diving. But let's not forget their 500 plus banks. Rumor has it the Caymans have the fifth largest banking deposit in the world. Grand Cayman is one of the wealthiest islands in the Caribbean. That's why Darrell Jones and I hang out there. Really!

I live on Maui, and it's hard to find a place with clearer water than Hawaii. But in all my years traveling and windsurfing, I've never

of the island. Just north is Seven Mile Beach where all the big hotels and many restaurants are located. You can find everything from the Hyatt to the Holiday Inn there.

If you want to escape all the madness, I suggest going to either the east or west end of the island. We spent the majority of our time on the east end of the island in Bodden Town. It's slower there, the streets are quiet, and the people are cruising with warm smiles on their faces. The beaches are empty and the water is warm and crystal clear. We spent many a morning waking up to a glassy surf session in Bodden Town. Yes, the Caymans have surf too. If you surf, don't forget your surfboard. If your hands are sore from sailing, you've got plenty of options. Oh yeah, if you like to hit the town at night, not to worry—there's plenty of nightlife.



Talk about non-threatening conditions. What more could you want than shallow flat water and onshore winds?

seen water as beautiful as in the Caymans. The locals consist of Caymanians, Englishmen, Americans, and a handful of others from Commonwealth countries.

One of the first things I noticed was the overall friendly attitude of the locals. There is zero unemployment

rate. As we know, on many islands throughout the world, the locals don't exactly greet you with open arms. It's also very clean with little or no poverty. The island is shaped like a big horseshoe, and is just over 30 miles from one end to the other.

George Town is where the

banks and large accounting firms are located—not to mention all the tourist shops, restaurants, etc. During the winter months, you'll see several large cruise ships anchored in the harbor, where hundreds of tourists go ashore daily. George Town is located in the middle

The sailing conditions on the island are great. You have everything from flat water to surf sailing. You'll find the winter months—from October to April—provide the most consistent wind. The winds are a fairly consistent 12 to 20 knots on a daily basis in the winter months, and the water is a warm 75 to 80 degrees. About the only time you need a wetsuit is when a front comes through from the northwest. The air tends to be a bit cooler, but the good thing is that the wind is usually a bit stronger.

As far as sailing sites go, there are several great locations. My favorite spot was up on the east end at Morritt's Tortuga Club. Local sailor Chris Narborough has opened a BIC Center there, offering a full range of equipment. The club offers great accommodations right at the sailing site, as well as a full diving school. If you want to bring your own equipment, it's no problem. Cayman Airways will gladly accommo-

The club offers safe sailing with no shorebreak, and the bottom is mostly sand and turtle grass. You sail in eight-mile-long lagoons that are bordered by a reef, which is surrounded by ocean. The wind is onshore so you sail all eight miles over crystal clear water, and after you reach the end you can check out the wreck at the far end.

The water varies in depth anywhere from three to 10 feet. If you want a bit more of a challenge, you can sail out through the channel where you can ride and jump the waves. I had many a fun afternoon screaming along the lagoon,

often I would head out through the channel for some big jumps.

When it's lunch time, just put down your rig and walk up to the hotel. There you can either sit and have your lunch in the shade of the lanai overlooking the ocean or sit poolside. It's fantastic! You can have everything from the local catch of the day to sandwiches. As far as the accommodations go, the Tortuga Club's Caribbean-style hotel is complete with all the needs to enjoy your vacation. And the best thing is that you can check the wind right from your room—if it's up, you're on it in minutes. You'll love it!

COLLIERS CHANNEL

Just north of the Tortuga Club offers a bit more radical sailing. On a good day, the waves can be head high or bigger. The wind blows side-onshore, and you sail on a starboard tack. But be careful, it's shallow in spots.

Don't go out jumping waves on your slalom board with a big fin on those light days.

Take it from me, I did some light-air dredging and it wasn't much fun. Stick to your waveboard in these types of locations. You'll enjoy it much more.

MORGAN'S HARBOUR, WEST BAY

The harbour is directly on the other side of the island from the Tortuga Club. This is a more convenient location for those staying in the Seven Mile Beach area. It's located on the western shore of North Sound and offers about 30 square miles of fun sailing. The water is shallow, and on the bottom it's mainly sand and turtle grass. It makes for great slalom sailing, and when the wind is up, the chop is great for jumps. This is where a lot of the local slalom hot shots like Kirk McCarthy spend their afternoons ripping around.

PAPAGALLO, WEST BAY

This is the West Bay's wave sailing spot. It produces the smoothest waves for sailing, and it's also good for surfing. It's got a bit of a tricky launch, making it a place for experienced sailors.

SEVEN MILE BEACH

This is where you'll find Jay Henderson's Mistral Center. It's located about halfway up Seven Mile Beach. The wind direction is generally offshore. It makes for some nice flatwater conditions. Jay offers a full line of Mistral

equipment and lessons. The bottom is all sand, and there tends to be some small shorebreak. And when a front comes through from the northwest, Seven Mile Beach goes off! The wind will be side-offshore and the waves will be overhead. If you're there and a front comes through, don't miss it.

NON-SAILING ACTIVITIES

Go diving! This was the first time for me and it was fantastic. Visually, it was one of the best—the underwater beauty is something that shouldn't be missed. Also, there's water skiing, parasailing, tennis, golf, squash, and more all along Seven Mile Beach.

As far as food goes, I recommend the Crow's Nest on South Sound and The Edge in Hidden Town. If you want to have a beer or three, check out the Lone Star's Tex-Mex. Then there's the surfing—the Caymans have some clean waves. Shhh! No crowds. There are not many places you can go out with just your friends. If you surf, you had better bring your board 'cause there are no surf shops.

OVERALL

Thanks to Chris Narborough for sharing The Caymans with us and showing us a great time. And a thank you also to my main man Howie and the lovely Miss Anne (Anne Morris and Howard Feitelburg). If wind or surf was up, they were with us. I'm surprised they all have jobs after we left. These folks enjoy themselves! And Darrell Jones, thanks for sharing the underwater work with me.

"Don't worry, Scott, you'll be fine, just put the tank on and listen closely,"

he told me. "Darrell, are you sure about this?" I asked him. "Scott, shut up and get in the water." The next thing I know I'm 40 feet down swimming around with 40 or 50 stingrays surrounding me.

I'll be back next year. Mucho mahalos, Chris Narborough, Howard Feitelburg, Anne Morris, Cayman Airways, and the Cayman Tourism Board.—*Scott Trudon*