

Beaches, Scuba Diving & Other Outdoor Pursuits

Almost-guaranteed sunshine, one of the world's most beautiful beaches, and the Caribbean's best scuba diving and snorkeling have permanently anchored Grand Cayman on the tourist map.

Grand Cayman has a number of smaller beaches, but it's so-called **Seven Mile Beach** (actually 8.9km/5½ miles) is the major attraction, with its vast expanses of powdery white sand. Unlike the beaches on some islands to the south, such as Jamaica, Seven Mile Beach is litter-free and also relatively free of annoying peddlers hawking souvenirs.

The beach is so big that there's always plenty of room for everybody, even in the midst of the winter tourist season and at the peak of the cruise-ship arrivals. Most of Grand Cayman's hotels, restaurants, and shopping centers are found along this much-frequented strip of beach. Many scuba-diving outfitters are also located here.

Along with swimmers and beach buffs, scuba divers are attracted to the Cayman Islands in droves and from around the world. As diver Bob Soto—who opened the first dive shop in the Caribbean back in 1957—puts it, “If there's any spot on the planet that God created just for divers, it is Grand Cayman.” One-third of all visitors to the Cayman Islands arrive here to go scuba diving or snorkeling.

More than 200 named and explored dive sites are in the Cayman Islands. The dive outfitters (see below) are familiar with the best of them and will guide you to what interests you the most. The Cayman Islands, unlike some other islands in the West Indies, have the most reliable outfitters in the Caribbean, rivaled only by those on the little island of Bonaire. Some of the most dramatic dive sites have not been thoroughly explored (and unfortunately aren't on the itineraries of most dive outfitters), owing to the massive coral reef and drop-off that surrounds not only Grand Cayman but Cayman Brac and Little Cayman.

If you're not a scuba diver or snorkeler, you'll find many other attractions on the water, including fishing, boating, kayaking,

water-skiing, and windsurfing. If you're a landlubber, there's always hiking, golfing, and horseback riding. But most landlubbers never seem to leave Seven Mile Beach.

1 Hitting the Beaches

One of the finest beaches in the Caribbean, Grand Cayman's **Seven Mile Beach** ★★ ★ boasts sparkling white sands rimmed with Australian pines and palms. (Technically, the beach is named West Bay Beach, but everybody calls it Seven Mile Beach.) This haven of white sands stretches all the way from George Town to Long Point. It tends to be crowded near the big resorts, but the beach is so big that you can always find some room to spread out your towel.

Because the beach is on the more tranquil side of Grand Cayman, the water is generally placid and inviting with no great tide, making it ideal for families, even those with small children. A sandy bottom slopes gently to deep water. The water is great for snorkelers and swimmers of most ages and abilities, and it's so clear that you can easily see what's swimming around below you.

Along the stretch of the beach, from one end to the other, there are hotels and condos, many with beachside bars that you can visit. All sorts of watersports concessions can be found along this beach, including places that rent snorkel gear, boats, windsurfers, wave runners, paddlecats, and aqua trikes (these two latter are floating pedal toys).

The hotels that line the beach have bars and restaurants open to nonguests. Most of these hotels also have watersports and beach kiosks where you can book parasailing or windsurfing experiences or rent snorkeling equipment for a morning, an afternoon, or the full day.

Of all the bars and restaurants strung along the beach strip, one of the friendliest is the **Beach Club Colony Hotel & Dive Resort**, West Bay Road (☎ 345/949-8100; www.caymanresortsonline.com), which welcomes nonguests. Hurricane Ivan forced this spot to shut down, but it reopened in July 2005. The restaurant is open daily from 7:30am to 9pm and the beach bar is open Monday to Friday 10am to 11pm and Saturday and Sunday 11am to 11:45pm. For divers, a special offer here is a certified boat diving package costing CI\$61 (US\$76) per person, including a two-tank boat dive. The on-site dive shop is open daily from 7am to 5pm.

Grand Cayman also has a number of minor beaches, although they pale in comparison to Seven Mile Beach. Visit these if you want to escape the crowds. Beaches on the east and north coasts of Grand Cayman are good—filled with white sand and protected by an off-shore barrier reef, so waters are generally tranquil.

In total contrast to the glitz and glitter of Seven Mile Beach, an attractive little beach lies on the west side of George Town. **Smith Cove Public Beach** is located between Coconut Harbour and Cayman Coves. The sandy strip is small but top-notch. It's a good spot for snorkeling and makes a nice venue for a picnic, as trees shade the picnic tables. Changing facilities and bathrooms are available here.

On North Sound along the northern coast, **Rum Point** lies 40km (25 miles) north of George Town and offers one of the best beaches in Grand Cayman, though it is also one of the most remotely located. You can reach the beach by taking the *Rum Pointer* ferry (p. 52). Calm, clear waters make this tree-shaded beach an excellent spot for swimming. Snorkeling is also good here, with rainbow-hued fish and swaying sea fans composing the majority of the underwater life. Changing facilities are also here, along with public toilets and showers. On-site is the Wreck Bar if you want a drink. Saturday afternoon from 2 to 5:30pm is the big time here, with a barbecue and live entertainment right on the beach. The water-sports operation here is run by Red Sail Sports (see below).

One of our favorite beaches is on the north coast, bordering the **Cayman Kai Beach Resort**, directly to the southwest of Rum Point. This beach is a Caribbean cliché of charm, with palm trees and beautiful sands. You can snorkel along the reef to Rum Point. The beach is also ideal as a Sunday-afternoon picnic spot. Bathrooms and changing facilities are available here. **Awesome Charters** (☎ 916/406-9345) leads deep-sea fishing, bonefishing, and snorkeling trips here.

The best windsurfing is found in the East End, at the beach near the settlement of **Colliers**, reached along Queen's Highway and lying near Morritt's Tortuga Club.

2 Scuba Diving & Snorkeling

What they lack in nightlife the Cayman Islands make up in water-sports, especially diving and snorkeling. Coral reefs and coral formations encircle all three islands and are filled with loads of marine life, which scuba divers and snorkelers are forbidden to disturb.

Important: For our recommendations of the best scuba-diving and snorkeling sites, be sure to refer to p. 4 and p. 5 in chapter 1, “The Best of the Cayman Islands.”

The full diving scene in the Cayman Islands would fill a book unto itself—and it has done just that. If you’re a serious diver, pick up one of three comprehensive guides published: *Diving Cayman Islands*, by Jesse Cancelmo (Aqua Quest Publications, 1997); *The Dive Sites of the Cayman Islands*, by Lawson Wood (Contemporary Books, 2001); or *The Cayman Islands Dive Guide*, by Stephen Frink and William Harrigan (Abbeville Press Publishers, 1999).

It’s easy to dive close to shore, so boats aren’t necessary, although plenty of diving boats are available. For certain excursions, we recommend a trip with a qualified dive master. Many dive shops here offer rentals, but they won’t rent you scuba gear or supply air unless you have a card from one of the national diving schools, such as NAUI or PADI. Hotels also rent diving equipment to their guests, and will arrange snorkeling and scuba-diving trips.

Universally regarded as the most up-to-date and best-equipped watersports facility in the Cayman Islands, **Red Sail Sports** maintains its headquarters at the Hyatt Regency Grand Cayman, West Bay Road (☎ 877/RED-SAIL in the U.S. or 345/945-5965; www.redsailcayman.com). Other locations are at the Westin Casuarina (☎ 345/949-8732) and at Rum Point (☎ 345/947-9203). Red Sail has a wide range of offerings, including deep-sea fishing, sailing, diving, and more.

Red Sail offers certified divers a variety of boat dives each day. A two-tank morning or afternoon dive goes for CI\$80 (US\$100), with a one-tank afternoon boat dive costing CI\$52 (US\$65). Special dives include a one-tank Stingray City dive for CI\$52 (US\$65) and a one-tank night dive also for CI\$52 (US\$65). Full PADI open-water certification costs CI\$400 (US\$500), and all types of scuba gear can be rented.

Red Sail offers the most comprehensive watersports program on the island, including all equipment rentals for everything from a banana-boat tube ride to kayaking and water-skiing.

The company also offers boating trips, including parasailing excursions. Catamaran sails are offered, the most popular being a 4½-hour jaunt to Stingray City, with lunch and snorkeling included, that goes for CI\$64 (US\$80) for adults or half price for children 12 and under. Two-hour sunset sails along the North Sound cost CI\$28 (US\$35) for adults or half price for children 12 and under, and you can also book a dinner catamaran cruise for CI\$56 (US\$70) for

adults or half price for children 12 and under. Glass-bottom-boat snorkeling trips are offered at CI\$32 (US\$40) per person with equipment included. And these are only some of the offerings. Although there are many other outfitters on the island (see below), Red Sail will be able to handle most of your needs above and below the water.

Divetech, Cobalt Coast Resort & Suites, 18 Seafan Dr., Boatswains Bay (☎ 866/622-9626 in the U.S. or 345/946-5658; www.divetech.com), is one of the genuinely excellent dive operations in the Cayman Islands. It's one of the best-organized and most attentive outfitters, with a fine reputation and a location near deep marine walls and drop-offs that divers find superb—in fact, the best shore diving on the islands. The operation is headquartered in a clapboard-covered cottage on the grounds of the recommended Cobalt Coast Resort and Suites (p. 69), on Grand Cayman's most northwestern tip, far from the touristy glitter of Seven Mile Beach. Don't come here expecting a sandy beach: The coastline is treacherously jagged, covered with bruising rocks that can puncture the side of any watercraft that ventures too close. Consequently, Divetech boats moor at a massive 36m (120-foot) concrete pier that juts seaward. From here, within a relatively short distance, divers have access to a cornucopia of dive options that are difficult to duplicate anywhere else.

Many, but not all, of Divetech's clients opt to stay at its well-recommended associated hotel, Cobalt Coast Resort and Suites. (Those who don't stay at Cobalt Coast must either drive or make special arrangements for transportation from hotels on other parts of the island.) Prices are invariably cheaper when they're clustered within one of the resort's many dive packages, but for a rough idea of prices, a two-tank dive for certified divers costs CI\$76 (US\$95), and a 3½-hour resort course for a first-timer goes for CI\$100 (US\$125). Open-water certification costs CI\$340 (US\$425). Guided shore dives are CI\$40 (US\$50). Canadian-born Nancy Romanica is the organization's founder and creative force. She's also an authority on the curious pastime known as free-diving, recommended only for very experienced divers, where aficionados (without scuba tanks) reach alarming depths using only their carefully trained lung capacities. The cost for a guided free dive and a lesson (usually taught by Nancy herself) is CI\$80 (US\$100) per person for a half day and CI\$160 (US\$200) per person for a full day.

Ocean Frontiers, East End (☎ 345/947-7500; www.oceanfrontiers.com), specializes in scuba diving and snorkeling trips in the East End, where divers find some of the best coral reefs in the Caribbean, including such shipwreck sites as the HMS *Convert* and

Marybelle. This is the best outfitter for experienced divers. Taking out small groups, Ocean Frontiers avoids the crowds along Seven Mile Beach. It offers regular scuba diving: CI\$52 (US\$65) for one tank, CI\$79 (US\$99) for two tanks, CI\$119 (US\$149) for three tanks, and CI\$127 (US\$159) for four tanks. A half day of snorkeling is also offered on Wednesday, costing CI\$28 (US\$35). Equipment can be rented.

The most enduring and longest-established dive operator in Grand Cayman is **Bob Soto's Diving Ltd.** (☎ 800/262-7686 in the U.S. or 345/949-2022 to make reservations; www.bobsotosreefdivers.com or www.caymanvacations.com). Owned by Ron Kipp, the operation includes full-service dive shops at Treasure Island, the SCUBA Centre on North Church Street, and Soto's Coconut in the Coconut Place Shopping Centre. This is the best outfitter for novices. A full-day resort course, designed to teach the fundamentals of scuba to beginners who know how to swim, costs CI\$104 (US\$130): The morning is spent in the pool and the afternoon is a one-tank dive from a boat. All necessary equipment is included. Certified divers can choose from a wide range of one-tank (CI\$44/US\$55) and two-tank (CI\$68/US\$85) boat dives daily on the west, north, and south walls, plus shore diving from the SCUBA Centre. A one-tank night dive costs CI\$48 (US\$60). Nondivers can take advantage of daily snorkel trips (CI\$24/US\$30–CI\$40/US\$50), including excursions to Stingray City. The staff is helpful and highly professional.

Don Foster's Dive Cayman, North Church Street, George Town (☎ 345/907-9821; www.donfosters.com), dating from 1982, is one of the best and most respected dive outfitters. A big, well-run operation, it features one-tank dives for CI\$36 (US\$45) and two-tank dives for CI\$60 (US\$75). Night dives cost CI\$44 (US\$55), with a resort course going for CI\$80 (US\$100) and open-water certification costing CI\$360 (US\$450). The outfitter also features snorkeling from 2 to 4:30pm daily at Stingray City, at a cost of CI\$24 (US\$30) per person. Equipment can be rented.

Seven Mile Watersports, West Bay Road (☎ 345/949-0332; www.7mile.ky), operates from the Seven Mile Beach Resort and Club and is particularly sensitive to the requests of individual divers. The outfitter takes out only 15 divers at a time in its 12m (40-ft.) dive boat. Most of its diving jaunts are to the north wall. A one-tank boat dive costs CI\$48 (US\$60), and a two-tank dive goes for CI\$64 (US\$80). A special feature is a three-tank dive, including lunch, for CI\$124 (US\$155). A one-tank dive at Stingray City costs CI\$48

(US\$60) per person. A snorkel excursion, called the Sunset Trip, also makes stops at Stingray City, the Coral Gardens, and the Barrier Reef. Offered every Tuesday, it leaves at 3pm and lasts until dusk. The Sunset Trip costs CI\$36 (US\$45).

Off the Wall Divers, West Bay Road (☎ 345/945-7525; www.offthewalldivers.com), also caters well to the individual diver; it specializes in custom dive jaunts for groups of 2 to 10 (no more) divers. The outfitter offers resort training courses and full certifications, plus Nitrox certifications. A one-tank dive goes for CI\$40 (US\$50), two

Moments **Your Temporary Caymanian Pet: A Stingray**

The offshore waters of Grand Cayman are home to one of the most unusual (and ephemeral) underwater attractions in the world, **Stingray City** ★★. Set in the sun-flooded, 4m-deep (12-ft.) waters of North Sound, about 3.2km (2 miles) east of the island's northwestern tip, the site originated in the mid-1980s when local fishermen cleaned their catch and dumped the offal overboard. They quickly noticed scores of stingrays (which usually eat marine crabs) feeding on the debris, a phenomenon that quickly attracted local divers and marine zoologists. Today between 30 and 50 relatively tame stingrays hover in the waters around the site for daily handouts of squid from increasing hordes of snorkelers and divers. To capitalize on the phenomenon, various outfitters lead expeditions from points along Seven Mile Beach, traveling around the land-mass of Conch Point to the feeding grounds. One well-known outfit is **Treasure Island Divers** (☎ 345/949-4456; www.tidivers.com), which charges divers CI\$52 (US\$65) per one tank and snorkelers CI\$32 (US\$40). Trips are made daily at 1pm. (Be warned that stingrays possess deeply penetrating and viciously barbed stingers capable of inflicting painful damage to anyone who mistreats them. Above all, the divers say, never try to grab one by the tail. Despite the potential dangers, divers and snorkelers seem amazingly adept at feeding, petting, and stroking the velvety bodies of these batlike creatures while avoiding unpleasant incidents.)

Finds **Wreck of the Ten Sails**

On February 8, 1794, Captain William Martin was steering a lead ship, HMS *Convert*, when it hit a reef. The captain fired a cannon to signal a fleet of other merchant vessels about the treacherous reefs that lay ahead. The captains of the other ships mistook the signal for a warning of an impending pirate attack. One vessel after another in the convoy of 58 merchants ships, most of them square-rigged sailing vessels bound for Europe, met the same fate as the *Convert* in the rough, pitch-black seas.

In all, 10 ships were wrecked that disastrous night. By some miracle, villagers of the East End of Grand Cayman managed to save all 400 or so sailors and officers wrecked that night, bringing them ashore in canoes.

Four of the ships were eventually salvaged, and the other vessels sank to the bottom of the sea. The cannons from the wrecked ships were eventually salvaged and sent to England as scrap.

In the little community of Gun Bay in the East End, a monument can be seen commemorating that tragic maritime event. Queen Elizabeth II dedicated the statue on her visit to Grand Cayman in 1994. A local legend—untrue—maintains that King George II gave the Caymanians tax-free status because of their heroic rescue. If you'd like to explore this shipwreck site, it is often included in the diving programs offered by Ocean Frontiers (p. 111).

tanks for CI\$60 (US\$75), and three tanks for CI\$96 (US\$120), with a PADI open-water certification course costing only CI\$300 (US\$375). Resort scuba courses cost CI\$80 (US\$100), and equipment rentals, including dive computers, are available.

Another good dive outfit, **Tortuga Divers** (☎ 345/947-2097; www.tortugadivers.com), operates out of Morritt's Tortuga Club and Resort at East End. This outfitter caters to both experienced and novice divers, offering two daily dive jaunts at 9am and 2pm. Half-day or full-day snorkeling adventures can also be arranged, and all types of gear can be rented on the premises. The morning two-tank scuba dive costs CI\$80 (US\$100), the afternoon one-tank dive

goes for CI\$48 (US\$60). A half day's snorkeling costs CI\$52 (US\$65), going up to CI\$64 (US\$80) for a full day.

Although nearly every scuba outfitter also offers snorkeling tours, the best outfitter just for snorkeling (no scuba trips) is **Captain Marvin's**, Cayman Falls Shopping Center, Seven Mile Beach (☎ 345/945-4590; www.captainmarvins.com). A 2-hour trip costs CI\$27 (US\$34) for ages 12 and over, and CI\$16 (US\$20) for ages 4 to 11, including stops at Stingray City and the Barrier Reef. A 3-hour trip goes for CI\$31 (US\$39) for ages 12 and over, or CI\$18 (US\$22) for ages 4 to 11. The full-day excursion costs CI\$50 (US\$63) for ages 12 and over, or CI\$26 (US\$32) for ages 4 to 11. All prices include snorkel gear and instruction if required and food for feeding the stingrays. Boats range in size from 9m to 14m (30–45 ft.). Captain Marvin, who launched his tours with a borrowed sailboat in the 1950s, is now one of the leading charter-boat operators in Grand Cayman.

Captain Bryan's, North Church Street in George Town (☎ 345/949-0038), features snorkeling, fishing, and sailing trips on 15m (50-ft.) boats. Sunset sails and private snorkeling charters are also available. Most watersports buffs use these services for snorkeling; a half-day trip costs CI\$31 (US\$39), or CI\$20 (US\$25) for children under 10.

Captain Crosby's Watersports, Coconut Place, West Bay Road (☎ 345/945-4049), was a pioneer of snorkeling trips to Stingray City. The outfitter still conducts either half-day (CI\$31/US\$39) or full-day (CI\$41/US\$51) trips to the site on a 12m (40-ft.) trimaran. A freshly prepared seafood lunch is part of the package. Bonefishing and reef-fishing trips can also be arranged.

In addition to the above outfitters, you'll find dozens of kiosks along Seven Mile Beach offering snorkeling gear.

3 More Fun in the Surf

BOAT RENTALS

Many travelers dream of sailing their own boat beneath an azure Caribbean sky, without the company of a crew. Alas, unless you're a very experienced sailor, and unless you can afford it, it might not be feasible to rent one of the very large sailing vessels that are the norm at most boat-charter outfits, and which often require a substantial cash deposit before a newcomer will be entrusted to take it out onto the deep blue. However, there are numerous ways for less-experienced sailors to rent small boats.

Small (about 3.3m/11-ft.-long) sail craft are the specialty at the **Cayman Islands Sailing Club**, Spinnaker Road, Red Bay, near the hamlet of North Sound (☎ 345/947-7913). On a sunbaked, gravel-covered compound, isolated from the traffic and congestion of West Bay, you'll find a two-story warehouse crafted from wood planks and corrugated metal panels, a clubhouse with its own trophy-filled bar, and an inventory of about 70 small-scale sailboats, usually Picos, Lasers, or (least high-tech of all) simple sailing dinghies, each suitable for either one or two persons. Most boats here rent for 2-hour periods, during which you can do some quality brisk sailing in Grand Cayman's North Sound. Boat rentals are CI\$24 (US\$30) per hour. Rentals are available every day from 9am to 5pm and require at least a rudimentary level of prior sailing experience. If you don't feel completely proficient, you can sign up for a series of five sailing lessons, each lasting 2 hours, for a fee of around CI\$504 (US\$630).

SUBMARINE RIDES

Atlantis Adventures (Cayman) Ltd. (for information and reservations from the U.S., dial ☎ 800/887-8571; from the Cayman Islands or other parts of the world, dial ☎ 345/949-7700; www.atlantisadventures.net) is the better-established of two outfits on Grand Cayman that promise to take you, safely and panoramically, beneath the surface of the waves. The company offers three distinctly different underwater tours, any of which will provide views of the remarkable geology beneath sea level around Grand Cayman. None of the three excursions requires any advance diving experience or skill. Each trip departs from a clearly signposted building set directly on the waterfront of George Town, immediately south of the cruise-ship piers.

The cheapest submarine experience, limited to relatively shallow waters, is offered within the *Seaworld Explorer* semi-submarine. Developed in Australia for viewing marine life from the surface of the Great Barrier Reef, this is a steel-hulled watercraft that only appears unusual beneath the waterline (it looks like a regular boat from above). In the ship's lowest level, in cramped proximity to up to 45 other passengers, you'll be seated next to long rows of windows that angle downward for panoramic views of the deep. Because the ship never descends beneath the surface of the sea, a ride within its hull is best suited for viewing sun-flooded underwater reefs, shipwrecks, and objects lying no more than 7.5m (25 ft.) beneath the surface. Part of the attraction of this trip derives from

the scuba divers who dispense scraps of fish to all manner of hungry marine life, including Bermuda chubs, sergeant-majors, and angelfish. One-hour boat rides are priced at CI\$26 (US\$32) per adult, with children ages 2 to 12 paying half price.

The second option is offered aboard the *Atlantis* submarine, a fully submersible craft holding 48 passengers. A 1¼-hour tour priced at CI\$67 (US\$84) per person descends to depths of 30m (100 ft.). Children ages 4 to 12 pay half price, and teenagers (ages 13–18) are charged CI\$47 (US\$59) each. No children under 4 are permitted onboard. There's a lot to see underwater at this depth, and there's still enough sunlight to allow for the growth of thousands of kinds of plant life, vital for the sustenance of thousands of species of fish. This is the most popular, and perhaps the most visually rewarding, of the submarine experiences, with lots of plant and marine life observable through the windows.

Most unusual and expensive of all is a ride aboard the *Atlantis Deep Explorer*, a yellow-hulled submarine that carries two well-funded passengers at a time to depths of between 240m and 300m (800 ft. and 1,000 ft.) beneath the waves. Unlike the *Atlantis* submarine, whose counterparts appear in other destinations, this is the only submarine in the world that offers descents to these depths to members of the general public.

The environment at these depths is harsh, cold, and unforgiving, with life forms becoming increasingly sparse as depths increase. There's very little light and very little plant life, and you might have difficulty gaining visual perspective as your minisub free-falls through progressive layers of water temperatures. Below about 180m (600 ft.), the water only supports weird, palm tree-shaped creatures known as crinoids that are of distinct interest to zoologists and botanists, but not all that dramatic to laypersons. Crinoids resemble a miniature version of a palm tree but are colored an iridescent pale gray because they're completely devoid of chlorophyll. If you opt for this deep ride, be prepared to be uncomfortable, cramped, and claustrophobic, and be aware that the submarine's captain and guide may or may not be articulate, or even particularly informative, about your underwater sightings. Also be prepared to pay a steep price for your descent to the dark and chilly deep. A descent to 240m (800 ft.) costs CI\$280 (US\$350), and a descent to 300m (1,000 ft.) costs CI\$364 (US\$455). Frankly, the difference in what you'll see at each of those depths isn't distinct. Know in advance that the deep dive will require a 15-minute transit by

motorboat from the point of departure to the submarine (the company operates two of them), which is usually moored several hundred feet offshore.

The less-recommended competitor of the *Atlantis* submarines is the 60-passenger **Nautilus**, Bush Centre, George Town (☎ 345/945-1355; www.nautilus.ky), a semi-submarine with a protected glass hull that cruises 1.5m (5 ft.) below the sea's surface. The craft, named after Jules Verne's futuristic vessel, departs from Rackham's Dock behind Rackham's Pub in George Town. The trips, which include commentary, take visitors to the *Cali* and *Balboa* shipwrecks and on to Cheeseburger Reef, where passengers can view divers feeding the fish. Departures are daily at 11am and 3pm, with the afternoon tour allowing passengers 30 minutes of snorkel time. The morning tour takes 1 hour and the afternoon tour takes 1½ hours. The morning tour costs CI\$31 (US\$39) for adults and CI\$15 (US\$19) for children 3 to 12 (children under 3 are free), with the afternoon tour going for CI\$36 (US\$45) for adults and CI\$20 (US\$25) for children 3 to 12 (children under 3 are free). A murder mystery theater trip is also offered; it costs CI\$38 (US\$48) for adults and CI\$20 (US\$25) for children 3 to 12.

WINDSURFING

Avid windsurfers rate the 6.4km (4 miles) of reef-protected shallows off East End as the best location for windsurfing. Prevailing winds there are 24kmph to 40kmph (15–25 mph) from November through March, with 6- to 10-knot southeasterly breezes in summer months.

The best outfitter to hook you up with windsurfing gear and lessons is **Cayman Windsurfing** at Morritt's Tortuga Club (☎ 345/947-7492), in the East End of the island, an hour's drive from George Town. Open daily from 8:30am to 5pm, it charges CI\$32 (US\$40) per hour or CI\$72 (US\$90) for 3 hours for windsurfing gear. If your stamina demands 5 hours, the cost goes up to CI\$104 (US\$130). Windsurfing-lesson packages are also offered, beginning at CI\$32 (US\$40) for 30 minutes and going up to CI\$224 (US\$280) for 7 days, including training classes. Snorkeling equipment can also be rented here at a cost of CI\$16 (US\$20) for 24 hours.

4 Other Outdoor Pursuits

FISHING Grouper and snapper are the most common catches for those who bottom-fish along the reef. Deeper waters turn up barracuda and bonito. Sport fishermen from all over the world come

to the Caymans with hopes of hooking one of the big ones: tuna, wahoo, or marlin. Most hotels can make arrangements for charter boats; experienced fishing guides are also available. **Red Sail Sports** (see section 2 of this chapter) offers deep-sea-fishing excursions in search of tuna, marlin, and wahoo on a variety of air-conditioned vessels with an experienced crew. Tours depart at 7am and 1pm, last half a day, and cost CI\$400/US\$500 (a full day costs CI\$560/US\$700). The fee can be split among four to six people. Bonefishing and reef fishing tours are also available at a cost of CI\$240 (US\$300) for a half day and CI\$480 (US\$600) for a full day.

GOLF The best course on the island, the **Britannia Golf Club**, next to the Hyatt Regency on West Bay Road (☎ 345/949-8020), was designed by Jack Nicklaus and incorporates three different courses in one: a 9-hole championship layout, an 18-hole executive setup, and a Cayman course. The last was designed for play with the Cayman ball, which goes about half the distance of a regulation ball. Greens fees are CI\$88 (US\$110) for 18 holes or CI\$56 (US\$70) for 9 holes. Cart rentals are included, but club rentals cost CI\$16 (US\$20) for 9 holes or CI\$32 (US\$40) for 18 holes.

Constantly windswept, the **Links at Safehaven** (☎ 345/949-5988) is a par-71, 6,011m (6,605-yd.) course designed by Roy Case set in what is tantamount to a botanical garden. On-site are a clubhouse, pro shop, and restaurant. Greens fees are CI\$104 (US\$130) per person for 18 holes, with mandatory golf carts included. The golf course lies across Seven Mile Beach Road, opposite from the Westin Casuarina.

A smaller, less-important course is the **Sunrise Family Golf Centre**, Sunrise Landing, Savannah (☎ 345/947-4653; www.sunrisecayman.com). This 9-hole, par-3 golf course, with a full-length driving range and clubhouse, is just a 15-minute drive east of George Town. Greens fees are CI\$17 (US\$21) for adults and CI\$8 (US\$10) for children 18 and under, with club rentals available for CI\$8 (US\$10). A pro on hand offers golf lessons for CI\$55 (US\$69) per hour.

Golf courses in Grand Cayman are open daily from 8am to 6pm. Many golfers like to avoid the intense noonday sun.

HORSEBACK RIDING **Nicki's Beach Rides** (☎ 345/945-5839; www.caymanhorseriding.com) collects riders anywhere in the vicinity of Seven Mile Beach and takes them on early-morning or late-afternoon rides on the beach, with some riding on trails that cut inland. Nicole Eldemire ("Nicki") is a wealth of information about

life in Grand Cayman, and she adds to the enjoyable experience of horseback riding with her anecdotes about island life and its flora and fauna. You're in the saddle for 1½ hours for CI\$56 (US\$70) per person. Sunset rides can also be arranged if at least six riders are interested.

Honeysuckle Trail Rides, Savannah (☎ 345/947-7976; www.caymanhorseridingtours.com), will also arrange to pick you up if you're staying in the vicinity of Seven Mile Beach. This outfitter offers morning and sunset rides lasting 1½ hours at a cost of CI\$48 (US\$60) per rider. Both Western and English tack are offered.

TENNIS Many of the big resorts have their own tennis courts available to guests. However, if yours does not, you can go to the **Cayman Islands Tennis Club** (☎ 345/949-9464), open daily from 8 to 11am and 2 to 9pm. The charge for playing is CI\$9.60 (US\$12) per person. The club—located behind the Grand Cayman Rugby Club on South Sound Road—rents equipment and also offers various lessons.

5 Indoor Activities for Inclement Weather

If it's raining, or too hot, but you're desperate to put your body in motion, try the original fitness center on the island, **World Gym**, West Bay Road (☎ 345/949-5132; www.worldgymcayman.com). You'll find it behind a branch of Wendy's on Seven Mile Beach. Still going strong, it features such state-of-the-art equipment as Nautilus and cardiovascular machines, plus activities such as aerobics on a sprung wood dance floor, bodybuilding, jujitsu karate, massages, weights, and the like, with five personal trainers on call. A 1-day pass costs CI\$16 (US\$20). The center is open Monday to Friday 5am to 9pm, Saturday 8am to 6pm, and Sunday 8am to 4pm.

A competitor is **Fitness Connection**, Glen Eden Road, South Sound (☎ 345/949-8485; www.fitness.ky), which is a full-service facility with a lot of extras—even high-gyrating belly dancing and tap dancing. Of course, regular gym workouts are offered, along with personal training and yoga. The admission cost is CI\$25 (US\$31) per day for everybody (aerobics and dance classes are included in this fee), plus an additional CI\$8 (US\$10) for use of special facilities and for special programs. The complex is open Monday to Friday from 8am to 6pm and Saturday 9am to 1am.