



## Discover the Thrill of Foiling on a Private Island Paradise: Inside Carl's Launch Pad Windsurf Academy

Imagine gliding across crystal-clear waters, harnessed to the wind, with granite rocks and windswept pines framing your every move. Now picture this scene on your very own private island in Ontario's Georgian Bay—a spot so windy, the trees lean sideways as if bowing to the breeze. This isn't a Caribbean fantasy; it's the real-life playground of Carl, the passionate founder of The Launch Pad Windsurf and Foil Academy. In a recent episode of our podcast, host Luc Moore sat down with Carl for an inspiring chat that traces his 45-year love affair with windsurfing, his globe-trotting adventures, and how he's turning his island retreat into a haven for aspiring foilers and windsurfers.

### From Humble Beginnings to Global Waves

Carl's story is the stuff of windsurfing legends. As a kid who "failed at every other sport" his parents threw at him—karate, hockey, tennis—he discovered his calling on a borrowed Windsurfer One Design board with a teak boom. Self-taught on Georgian Bay, he spent days mastering upwind sailing, prompting his thrilled parents to buy him a Yipsy Whaler (which he still owns today). From there, Carl rode the sport's evolution: adding harness lines, nailing water starts, and conquering shortboards like the Astro Rock that "changed my life."

His journey didn't stop at local shores. Inspired by early instructors like Dasher in Aruba and Andy Brandt in Bonaire, Carl chased waves worldwide. He competed in the International Windsurfing Tour (IWT) as an amateur and master, hitting spots like the Aloha Classic in Maui, Cape Verde, Morocco, and Baja.

Rubbing shoulders with pros like Robbie Naish, Kai Lenny, and Josh Angulo, Carl soaked up tips that fueled his skills—and now, his teaching. “The IWT was amazing,” he recalls, “traveling to Cape Verde and Morocco... really cool places.”

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Spies still has his first board, which he uses to teach newbies. One of the beginners I taught four years ago is now a windsurfing instructor himself, he says.

**GONE WITH THE WIND**  
When he's not assisting clients, **Carl Spiess** can most likely be found with the wind in his sails

**"COOL IMAGES"** of windsurfing in the pre-social-media era of his teens prompted Carl Spiess to borrow a friend's windsurfer one weekend and get out on the water at the cottage.

"Over a weekend, I taught myself how to use it," says Spiess, a Toronto-based portfolio manager with the Spiess McGlade Team at Scotia Wealth Management. "It was the only sport I ever succeeded in."

In the years since, Spiess has made windsurfing a mainstay of his life, making regular trips to windsurfing-friendly destinations such as Hawaii, Bonaire, Morocco and San Francisco – an especially treacherous passage.

While he enjoys the challenge and the motivation to keep fit, the most rewarding aspect of the sport for Spiess, who now leads a team of 10 at his job, is the peace it gives him.

"It's very zen to be focused on the waves," he says. "It helps me recharge so I can return to work refreshed and ready to give it my all."

**\$1,500**  
Price of Spiess' first windsurfer, bought when he was 15

**6**  
Number of windsurf boards he family owns (going with 10 sails)

**60km**  
Typical distance Spiess covers in an afternoon sail

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But after a successful career in Toronto's financial world, Carl retired four years ago to pursue his true passion: sharing the stoke. COVID derailed his bucket-list IWT tour, so he pivoted to building his academy on a stunning island he bought after a casual beer with its previous owner. "It's got seven trees, which is great for the wind," Carl laughs. The spot, reminiscent of the British Virgin Islands, boasts consistent thermals from the Canadian Shield rocks—delivering 10-15 knots on sunny summer days, making it Ontario's windiest gem.

## A Tailored Adventure Awaits at The Launch Pad



Nestled in Key Harbour, The Launch Pad offers customized private lessons for 1-3 students in windsurfing, windfoiling, wingfoiling, and tow foiling. Whether you're a total beginner or honing advanced jibes, Carl tailors sessions to your skill level, interests, and the day's conditions. Sessions kick off on land with his ingeniously wobbly simulator—built on a lazy Susan for ultimate balance training.

"Until someone can stand and steer on the world's wobbliest simulator, I don't put them on the water," Carl explains. This dry-land prep means less exhaustion and faster progress; some windsurfing students never even fall in!

Once on the water, the magic unfolds. Carl uses BBtalkin headsets for real-time coaching over a kilometer away—no shouting required. A Seadoo zips alongside for support, snapping progress photos, while all gear is provided: top-tier Duotone wings (including the kid-friendly iRig), North gear boards like the foam-edged Seek for forgiving starts, and even donated wetsuits for most sizes. For tow foiling, he employs a 2-foot mast to ease recoveries, and he's experimented with innovative setups like boat-side rigs and a Kai Lenny-inspired rescue sled.

Demand splits evenly between windsurfing and wingfoiling, with windfoiling suiting seasoned windsurfers for quick mastery. Carl emphasizes upwind skills for independence—"no walk of shame"—and draws from his own training with legends like Dasher and Andy Brandt. He's even guest-coached at ABK clinics and helped certify instructors through [Sail Canada](#) and [WeCANFoil](#) events.

The island's boat-access-only vibe adds to the adventure. Dock your vessel (up to 40 feet) or rent one via local links on the website. Stay overnight at nearby fishing camps, camp on Crown land, or make it a multi-day trip for varied winds. At just \$175 for a two-hour lesson (and all 2025 revenue donated to the Toronto Windsurfing Club's learn-to-windsurf program), it's an unbeatable deal from someone who teaches purely for joy. "I'm not running this to make money," Carl says. "If someone smiles at the end, it's awesome."

## Why Georgian Bay? Why Now?



Georgian Bay isn't just windy—it's iconic. Fun fact: Windsurfing inventors Hoyle and Diane Schweitzer summured here, and Zane Schweitzer recalls its relentless breezes. With thermal onshore winds, it's a summer foilers' paradise in a region often calm. Carl's spot offers everything: flat water for beginners, waves for downwind pumping (he's eyeing parawinging next), and that private-island exclusivity. He's had students from France, Germany, the Netherlands, and beyond, some inspired to become instructors themselves

themselves.

As foiling explodes—with SailGP nurturing young talent and gear evolving rapidly (from V1 wings to sixth-gen marvels)—The Launch Pad stands out as a nurturing, expert-led gateway. Carl’s full-circle journey, from student to mentor, echoes in every lesson. “I’m stoked to share the excitement of foiling,” he beams.

Ready to launch your own adventure? Dive deeper into The Launch Pad Windsurf Academy—explore services, pricing, gear details, boat access, and accommodations—on our website’s school listing. Book a session, feel the wind, and create your own Georgian Bay memories. Visit now and let Carl guide you to new heights on the foil!

Edited by Luc Moore

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