



Photo by Lori Makabe

By Noel O'Brien & David Mertens



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Rio Vista Grand Slam

As we shake off the winter weather and the days begin to get longer and sunnier, the winds are preparing for another cycle of outstanding conditions for this year's Grand Slam Windsurfing event. The Rio Vista Grand Slam is part of the American Windsurfing Tour that involves numerous locations throughout the world. The 2016 tour included Maui, Peru, San Carlos and New York — to name a few of the locations to ride on the wind.

The Rio Vista Grand Slam event typically takes place mid-June at Sherman Island County Park at the convergence of the Sacramento and San Joaquin Rivers, a perfect spot for the strong thermal summertime winds to take on the best of the challengers. The level of professionalism that this sport demands has developed some top athletes. Events such as the Rio Vista Grand Slam encourage windsurfing enthusiasts to develop increased membership and participation to take on these challenging events. The event's growing popularity indicate that the resurgence is real and continuing to grow; and the Delta is a welcoming location for this event year after year.



The stiff and steady summer winds at Sherman Island provide a sizable chop and swell that windsurfers love to take on. Combine the wind with the tidal flow, and the water can take on a life of its own, creating some exciting wave action. Contestants can put on quite a show for us spectators who are there for the day. To address the level of expertise is important. There is a new generation of windsurfers learning from their more seasoned elders (Grand Masters 45 and older) and are ready to join them as they hit the waves. The interest and camaraderie from both the teacher and student is great. There are no secrets as they show their stuff and learn new tricks to develop their acrobatic skills.

The Rio Vista Grand Slam draws a wide range of windsurfers. From the pros to beginners, seniors to juniors, competitions take place in various age and skill categories. Family, friends and fans flock to Rio Vista to observe all levels during this outstanding windsurfing presentation. Expect windsurfing celebrities to have some fun too! To name a few, ex multi-World Champion Kevin Pritchard from Hawaii, US National Champion Jesper Versteroem and freestyle champion Casear Fenes from Bonaire (Dutch Antilles) are past competitors.

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Rio Vista Grand Slam (continued)

The competitive events and the ongoing demonstrations introduce windsurfing to those unfamiliar with this thrilling wind and water sport.

Windsurfing is performed on a large surfboard type craft with a large sail attached and a horizontal control bar for the windsurfer to hold onto and execute various turns and jumps. This demands the knowledge and skill of both sailing and surfing while applying an acrobatic flair. Commitment to strength, endurance and stamina develop advanced techniques for competing at top levels. The best of windsurfing pros are continually learning new skills and tricks as they travel the international circuit of great windsurfing sites in Maui, Hood River in Oregon, and the San Francisco Bay Area.

The Grand Slam features the following events: Speed Open - World Cup style speed runs (Bring your own GPS if you are competing); Slalom Pro/Am - short or long downwind run depending on course conditions; Kid's Slalom - in the flat water area near the beach; Freestyle Pro/Am - for those with creative, acrobatic skills being held close to shore to allow spectators a really good view as participants execute jumps, inverted loops, spins and other freestyle moves; and the Freeride Slalom for the amateur and possible beginners to have fun. Folks,

there are competitors of all ages out there riding the wild. Come witness generations of experience in this world class event.



Photo by Doris Noriega

Look for this year's Rio Vista Grand Slam in mid-June at the Sherman Island County Park, 5147 Sherman Island Road, Rio Vista, CA 94571 (at the western tip of Sherman Island). There is no admission fee to come and watch the event, and parking is ample and free. Tickets for the Friday and Saturday night dinners can be purchased at Delta Windsurf and Watersports, located on Sherman Island Road just off Hwy. 160, and at the event headquarters in the county park. Dinners feature live music, a raffle and silent auction with great prizes. Event sponsors demonstrate select boards, sails and other items for your interests. Come on out and enjoy some outstanding professional level competition right here on the Delta where people come from near and far to enjoy this great summer event. It offers you an opportunity to experience, firsthand, the sport of Windsurfing.

The schedule of events change each year based on weather conditions and the number of participants. Check the website for updates and more details at: riovistagrandslam.com.