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NOVEMBER 2014

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WINTER ESCAPES

Leave the cold-weather blues behind with these seven beach hot spots. »

BY ANN WYCOFF



Paddling in Bora Bora.

WINTER CAN BE a relative term in California, but as the days get shorter and our circadian rhythms slow, something shifts inside, causing us to hibernate a bit, or pack on a few pounds despite our good intentions to not overindulge during the holidays. But then there's the soul-stirring beacon of a winter escape — that electrifying vision of soft white sand and cerulean seas, of stepping off a plane into the warm embrace of tropical air, and that devilish feeling of freedom in shedding the winter armor of fleece and Uggs and dipping your toes into gin-clear oceanic bathwater. Whether you seek an adrenaline-punched adventure or alpha-wave bliss with a splash of culture, these seven spots will recharge the spirit, and the only winter blues in sight will be an ombré of sea and sky from your room with a view.

Trips for the Adventurer

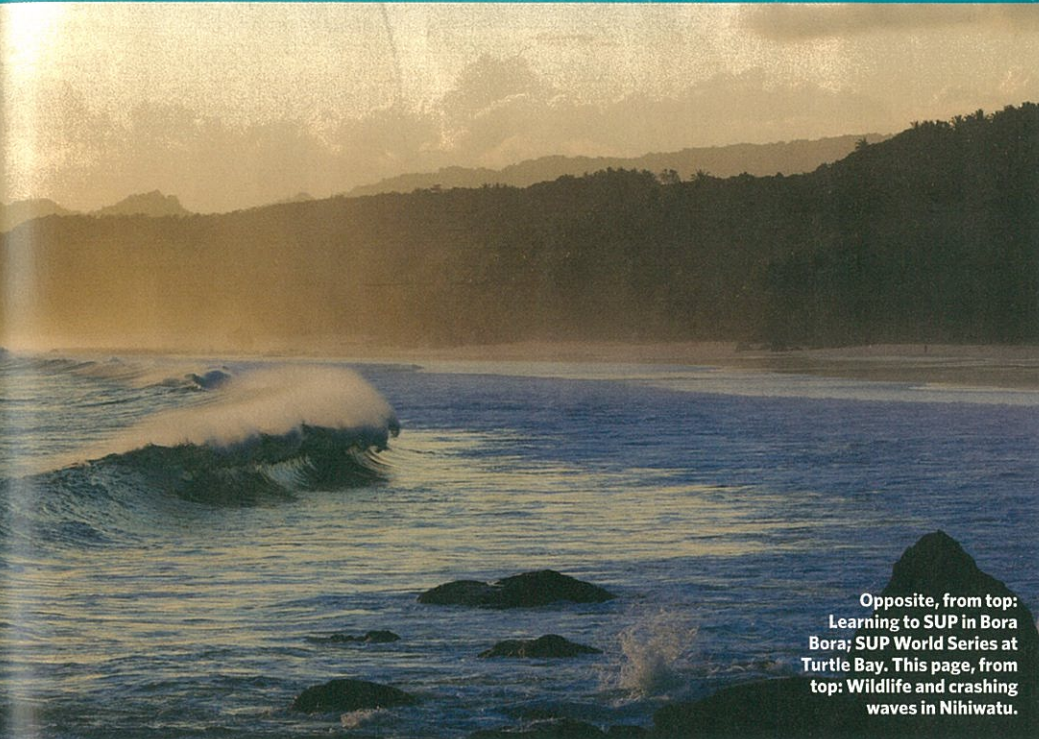
📍 Bora Bora Liquid Festival and IronMana

Each December, water sports enthusiasts outnumber the cocooned honeymoon crowd and gather in the bucket-list paradise of Bora Bora for a weeklong event that features world-class competitions such as long-distance OC-1 outrigger, stand-up paddleboard, prone paddle and swim races, along with beach parties, water-skills clinics and island adventures. Honoring Tahitian traditions, the festival kicks off with the postcard-perfect arrival of several Polynesian sailing canoes that have

traveled from Tahiti to Bora Bora via celestial navigation instead of GPS. Daily races are a mash-up of long-distance and sprint events, followed by evening dance parties, sprawling buffets and nights on the town in Vaitape. For the hard core, an IronMana elite event — a grueling 50k (34 mile) OC-1 outrigger race, 45k SUP race and 12k long-distance swim — caps the week, while anyone can enter the final 40k solo or team-relay SUP race circumnavigating the island. And everyone including

world-class athletes, amateurs and spectators mixes it up with the affable local Tahitians, while enjoying the mind-bending colorscape of the teal-and-turquoise lagoon fringed by white sand and looming jade green volcanic mountains. At base camp, Sofitel Bora Bora Marara Beach Resort, Liquid Festers can retreat to the lush garden or over-the-water bungalows where an evening swim means a dive from your private deck. December 3–6. easytahiti.com/noa/bora-bora-ironmana.html





Opposite, from top: Learning to SUP in Bora Bora; SUP World Series at Turtle Bay. This page, from top: Wildlife and crashing waves in Nihiwatu.

📍 Healey Water Ops (HWO) Nihiwatu Resort

Charismatic big-wave surfer and professional waterman Mark Healey is offering ocean-centric “trips of a lifetime” on the pristine island of Sumba, east of Bali. At Nihiwatu Resort, guests find compelling extremes like luxe seaside villas and an intact authentic indigenous culture. Nihiwatu’s one-and-a-half-mile stretch of beach hosts more water buffaloes and wild horses than people, not to

mention an epic wave out front deemed “God’s Left” that fills the daydreams of the world’s best surfers. Healey and his highly trained team guide guests through this untouched aquatic paradise whether they want to snorkel its reefs, scuba around massive boulders and pinnacles, free-dive into the depths, spearfish for bigeye tuna and mahimahi, line-fish with the locals, swim under 100-foot waterfalls, or charge off-the-charts empty waves. “There’s no other place like this on



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Clockwise from top left: FieldSpa at GoldenEye; kayaking to FieldSpa; enjoying the porch at a GoldenEye lagoon cottage; Lumeria's hidden hammocks.



the planet," says Healey, who's trodden the planet the better part of the last 15 years chasing swells and adventures. "You come for the perfect wave, fall in love with the raw beauty, and return for the local people and culture. The indigenous Sumbanese are one of the last remaining intact animistic societies on the planet. It's definitely one of the most unique places I have ever been." Niihiwatu is the initial stepping-stone of HWO's plans for global one-of-a-kind ocean adventures. niihiwatu.com/the-experience/by-sea

📍 Turtle Bay Resort

Ah, the North Shore of Oahu, home to 26

miles of golden sand and thundering waves, surf shacks, Matsumoto Shave Ice, shrimp trucks and hula pie at Ted's Bakery. And yes, that was crooner Jack Johnson you just saw in the Sunset Market talking to shredder Kelly Slater. It's a world away from Waikiki, and a bubble of bohemian surf culture. Down the Kam Highway, Turtle Bay Resort awaits with 880 acres of prime beachfront splendor and amenities: 36 holes of shoreline golf, a stable full of horses, 12 miles of oceanfront trails, a sweet surf break and the Hans Hedemann Surf Center for barrel lessons or SUP rentals. Kuilima Cove calls for snorkeling with the hotel's aumakua or spirit animal:

the sea turtle, tai chi master of the ocean. While the guest rooms and suites in the main hotel have been renovated and deliver a luxe landing spot with ocean views, it's the 40-plus private cottages with butler-style service, lanais, hammocks and sunken tubs that pique the senses. Turtle Bay is home to the Stand Up World Series finals and will host the Sunset Beach Pro and Turtle Bay Women's Pro SUP competitions in February 2015. Women interested in the sport can sign up for SUP clinics, then witness some of the world's best in action either from a board or on land with a mai tai in hand. Alohaaaaaa. turtlebayresort.com

Realign and Recharge

➔ GoldenEye

The former private residence of Ian Fleming and the setting where he penned all 14 James Bond novels, GoldenEye is Jamaica's raddest resort, owned by arbiter of cool Chris Blackwell — the Island Records legend who launched Bob Marley, U2 and Zero 7, just to name a few. Whether you wish to luxuriate in Fleming's Villa with a dedicated staff or check into a beachfront cottage, GoldenEye provides a halcyon gated oasis in Oracabessa (near Ocho Rios), where the fresh-lime juice mai tais come spiked with Blackwell's own line of dark rum and the greens on your plate are plucked at his local farm. An international crowd enjoys snorkeling the reefs out front or stand-up-paddling the emerald green lagoon out back. Guests can swim or kayak over to the FieldSpa on the edge of the lagoon — one of the

prettiest in the world — and enjoy salt scrubs, massages and facials in the open-air treatment rooms. The more spiritual set can do sound meditation and sunset yoga on the deck. Full moon parties include jerk barbecues, James Bond flicks under the stars and bonfires on the beach. The main bar and dining area's walls and ceiling are plastered with rock 'n' roll memorabilia and often Mr. Blackwell himself can be spotted mingling with guests in his Jamaican paradise. goldeneye.com

➔ Lumeria Maui

If your iPhone is attached to your ear and you spend more time with your laptop than your mate, this stylin' hideaway on Maui is the place to unplug. Lumeria's elegantly restored sugarcane plantation with wraparound porch sits high on the hill above bohemian-chic Paia and the cresting waves of the Hookipa Beach. Yoga on the lawn starts the

day, followed by time floating in the infinity pool, lomilomi massage in an outdoor hale tucked into the Whispering Pine Forest, a walk through the labyrinth, aromatherapy and essential oil classes, meditation and chill time in the hidden hammocks scattered throughout the impressive gardens. After getting your om on, head to Paia for boutique shopping, cafe hopping, sashimi at Mama's Fish House and live music at Charley's Restaurant & Saloon, where big names often drop in to jam. When it's time to get wet, Lumeria will arrange for private surf, SUP or windsurfing lessons with elite trainer and badass waterwoman Suzie Cooney. Back at the estate, founder Xorin Balbes is an architectural conservator with an eye for beauty and a heart for preservation, so high design abounds, with four-poster beds, river rock showers, and giant Buddhas and antique urns dotting the Eden-like garden that honors the

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