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Destinations
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WINTER ESCAPES
Leave the cold-weather blues behind with these seven beach hot spots. »
BY ANN WYCOFF
Wintertime 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 delirious feeling of freedom in shedding the winter armor of fleece and UGGS and dipping your toes into gin-clear oceanic saltwater. Whether you seek an adrenaline-pumped adventure or a laid-back 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 IronMan**

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-skis 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 IronMan elite event—a grueling 50k (34 mi) OC-1 outrigger race, 46k 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 Festivals can retreat to the lush garden or over-the-water bungalows where an evening swims means a dive from your private deck. December 3-6, eurestilis.com/noe/bora-bora-ironman.html

**🛷 Healey Water Ops (HWO) Nihiwatu Resort**

Charismatic big-wave surfer and professional waterman Mark Healey is offering oceanic-tastic “trips of a lifetime” on the pristine island of Sumba, east of Bali. At Nihiwatu Resort, guests find compelling extremes like bommie-seafront 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 where 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...”
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 hiberate a bit, or pack on a few pounds despite our good intentions to overindulge during the holidays. But then there’s the soul-stirring beacon of a winter escape — that electrifying vision of soft white snow and cedar-scented air, of stepping off a plane into the warm embrace of tropical air, and that feeling of freedom in shedding the wintry layers of fleece and Uggs and dipping your toes into gin-clear ocean bathwater. Whether you seek an adrenaline-pumping adventure or a serene bliss with a splash of culture, these tips will recharge your spirit, and the yin/yang of blue sky and snow from your room with a view.

**Tips for the Adventurer**

**Bora Bora Liquid Festival d’Iron Mana**

In December, water sports enthusiasts gather in the secluded honeymoon resort of Bora Bora on the island of Moorea for the world-class Liquid Festival d’Iron Mana, a weeklong event that features world-class competitions such as long-distance OC-1 outrigger canoe racing, stand-up paddleboarding, prone paddle swim races, and beach parties. The festival kicks off with a postcard-perfect arrival of 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 Iron Mana 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 landscape of the true-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 awaits after their adventures. December 3-6, tony@tahititours.com, host@bora-bora-ironmana.com

**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 excursions like lute seaside villas and an authentic authentic indigenous culture, Nihiwatu’s one-of-a-kind half-mile stretch of beach hosts more water buffaloes and wild horses than people, not to mention an epic wave 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 buoyant paradise whether they want to snorkel its reefs, scuba around massive boulders and pineapples, 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
the planet," says Healey, who's trodden the planet the better part of the last 15 years chasing waves and adventures. "You come for the perfect wave, fall in love with the raw beauty, and return for the local people and culture. The villagers at Sumbawah 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." Ninhvatu is the initial step-stone of IWOO's plans for global one-of-a-kind ocean adventures. Ninhvatu.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 Walllki, and a bubble of bohemian surf culture. Down the Kam Highway, Turtle Bay Resort awaits with 860 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. Kulima 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 butter-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 mat in hand. Alohaaaaahh...

turtlebayresort.com

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**Realign and Recharge**

**GoldenEye**

The former private residence of Ian Fleming and the setting where he penned all 14 James Bond novels, GoldenEye in Jamaica's raddest resort, owned by the architect of cool Chris Blackwell — the Island Records legend who launched Bob Marley, U2 and Zorro 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, light juice mai tai crème spiked with Blackwell's own line of dark rum and the greens on your plate are placed at his local farm. An international crowd enjoys snorkeling the rocks out front or stand-up-paddling the emerald green lagoon out back. Guests can swim or kayak over to the Fielding 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 namaste yoga on the deck. Pool 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 sugar cane 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, lomi lomi massage in an outdoor hale tucked into the Whispering Pine forest, a walk through the lobster, aromatherapy and essential oil classes, meditation and chill time in the hidden hammocks scattered throughout the impressive gardens. After getting your on, head to Paia for boutique shopping, caffeine hopping, sushi at Mama's Fish House and live music at Charlie'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 Becca Crossen. Back at the estate, founder Xorin Baile 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 urn dotting the Eden-like garden that honors the...
the planet," says Healey, who's trodden the lanet the better part of the last 15 years hasting awks and adventures. "You come at the perfect wave, fall in love with the raw beauty, and return for the local people and culture. The indigenous Samoans are one of the last remaining intact animistic societies on the planet. It's definitely one of the most niche places I have ever been." Nihiwatu is the initial stepped up-stone of HW's plans at global one-of-a-kind ocean adventures. nihiwatu.com/the-experience/tp-sea

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