

WHY VISIT

Mountain hedonists will revel in the county's 1,870 square miles, which includes the western portion of Rocky Mountain National Park, one National Recreation Area, two National Forests, and six National Wilderness Areas. A highlight for any visitor is trekking, horseback riding, or mountain biking along the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail. Plus, there is water enough to keep any river rat, kayaker, sailor, or angler busy. visitgrandcounty.com

CULTURE

It's all about an active outdoor lifestyle in Grand County. Discover a potpourri of friendly locals in towns with a pioneer western vibe. The area's offerings satisfy quite a range of outdoor personalities: from all-season sports types, extreme adventurers, ranchers, river guides, and nature lovers.

OUTDOOR SPORTS

We are pretty sure the county covers all our favorite summer sports—except for surfing, but you can always SUP on Grand Lake.

LANDSCAPE

This high altitude mountain playground boasts more bodies of water than you'd expect, plus a hot springs. The headwaters of the mighty Colorado River stem from Grand County, and Grand Lake is the deepest and largest natural lake in Colorado, setting a superb stage for water sports. It's worth mentioning the area's 1,000 miles of streams, 1,000 acres of high-mountain lakes, and 11,000 acres of reservoirs, too. Dotting the valleys, mountains, and waterways are five small towns, including one that you may have heard of—Winter Park, a ski resort in winter and Mountain Bike Capital USA in summer. The county's elevation varies from the rolling to rugged terrain and begins at 8,000 feet, capping out at 14,295 feet in Rocky Mountain National Park.

TEMPERATURE

In summer, Denver residents beat the heat and head for the mountains. Days average 70 degrees while evenings can get down to a chilly 40 degrees or lower. Summer rain and thunderstorms sweep the skies early to mid-afternoon. Expect snow anytime.

NEAREST AIRPORT

Denver International Airport, 67 miles west of Denver

By Gigi Ragland



Grand County, Colorado

HOTEL HOMEBASE

As early pioneers made their way West through the expansive glacial valleys, rugged peaks, and pristine alpine lakes, they were awestruck by the Rocky Mountain landscape, describing it as some of the grandest country they had ever seen. Majestic mountain scenery is Colorado's claim to fame. Named for its splendor, gorgeous Grand County offers a grand array of adventures for the traveler seeking high-octane summer fun in the Rockies.

Settle into One of our Grand Mountain Hideaway Choices for R&R in the Rockies.

Snow Mountain Ranch Yurt Village

GRANBY, COLORADO

A DOZEN FAMILY-SIZED YURTS

For a good stopping point between Rocky Mountain National Park and Winter Park Resort, head for Snow Mountain Ranch where thousands of acres of protected wildlife habitat and backcountry sprawl for your enjoyment. Active families will find that one of the most idyllic and unique spots to get some shut-eye after a full day adventuring is in a yurt. These round-domed lodges mimic the camping experience. A yurt is essentially a gigantic, ultra-durable tent set permanently in the woods on a wooden base and frame. Each yurt in this village includes two bunk beds and one queen-size bed, all with linens and blankets, tables and chairs, and a microwave and mini-fridge. Bring flashlights though for nighttime trips to the bathhouse and laundry facilities, about 25 feet from the yurts. Outside nearby, families will enjoy the fire ring with log seating, perfect for telling stories and counting the stars at night. There's also a picnic table, and a ground-mounted charcoal grill, great for roasting marshmallows. From \$89, pets are allowed for an extra \$10 per night. snowmountainranch.org

Activities for All, Big and Small

YMCA of the Rockies offers activities, programs, and events all within the 5,000-acre backcountry of Snow Mountain Ranch. Guests staying at the ranch properties have free access to activities like morning yoga, disc golf, sand volleyball, hiking and biking trails, fishing, swimming, and more. For a little extra: canoeing, horseback riding, mountain bike rentals, a climbing wall, a zip line, and archery. ymcarockies.org

ROCKY MOUNTAIN NATIONAL PARK

Summer in RMNP is short and sweet. A kaleidoscope of colorful wildflowers pops up in the lower elevations in late June and continues to bloom, punching through the melting snow through August. It's quite the welcome mat for hikers traipsing along the park's more than 350 miles of winding trails, also open to backpackers and horseback riders. Visitors will be awed by the majesty of outdoor treasures to explore within the park. Check for special programs and ranger-led hikes. nps.gov/romo/index.htm

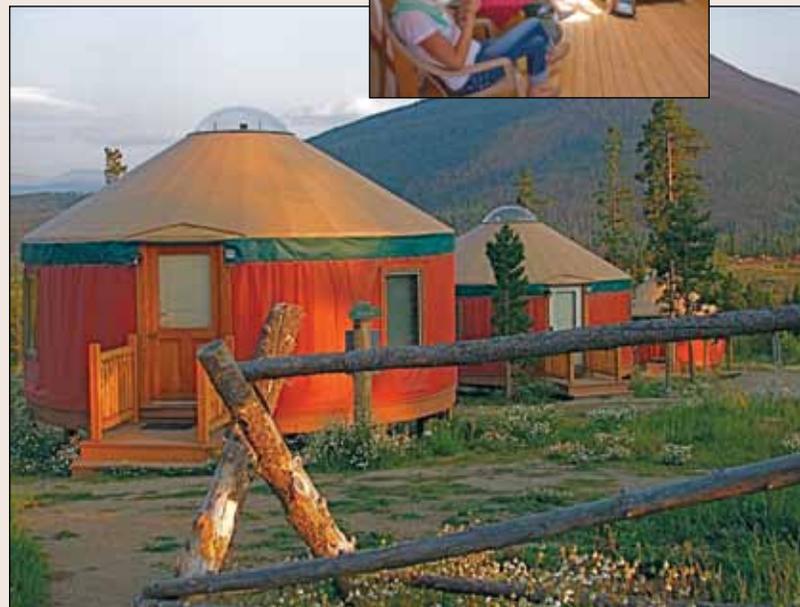
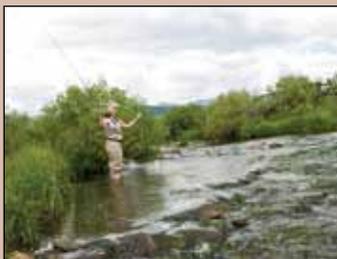
Road cyclists can test their lung-power, if they dare, by pedaling the 60 miles of road with a 5 to 7 percent grade.

Climbers and mountaineers who would like guiding services can check with the park's recommendations at nps.gov/romo/planyourvisit/goodsandservices.htm

Hiking Tip: Check with the visitor's center to find out what trails are accessible that week and which are good for acclimating to the park's higher elevations. nps.gov/romo/planyourvisit/visitor_centers

Did You Know? Volunteers give more than 100,000 hours a year to Rocky Mountain National Park. That equals approximately 48 full-time employees.

Special Event: Family Fly Fishing Families can learn fly casting and catch and release techniques together on Friday, July 19th, 2013 at the Trail River Ranch inside the park. All equipment and lunch is provided. \$100 per family of up to three people; \$25 for each additional member. Call Gayle Langley for more information at 970-627-5026.



Tikes on Trikes

New at Snow Mountain Ranch since 2012: a tricycle park with a fleet of pink and blue tricycles for little ones to learn skills and the rules of riding. The park's custom trike course was designed with roundabouts, lanes, stop signs, and curves. Future plans include trike rodeos and bike games. ymcarockies.org

WINTER PARK RESORT Mountain Biking Mecca

Winter Park-Fraser Valley's 600 miles of marked and unmarked terrain—with a variety of trails for every ability level—are why the region is dubbed Mountain Bike Capital USA. There's a lot of everything from wide dirt roads to jeep roads twisting through pines, to narrow trails with loads of singletrack. You can follow that tacky dirt up to an elevation of 10,000 feet. winterparkresort.com/events-and-activities/activities/activities/mountain-biking

Winter Park Resort's Trestle Bike Park offers fun downhill rides that take the breath away with sheer beauty and thrills. With a new expert trail named "Cruel and Unusual," this park pushes the envelope on edgy gravity trails. Our favorite is the beginner-level, top-to-bottom "Green World" trail that provides an adrenaline rush while showcasing gorgeous mountain scenery on the ride down. The park's 40 miles of trails accomo-



date a wide range of features for all skill levels. trestlebikepark.com

Ladies' Events Women's Wednesdays at Trestle

Every Wednesday (June 15–September 22) from 4–7 p.m.

The Trek Dirt Series Camp
July 20 and 21; dirtseries.com

Gravity Goddess Downhill Camp

Trestle Bike Park School's freeride downhill mountain bike experience exclusively for women is open to all gals ages 13 and up. July 13 and 14; August 3 and 4

Grand Lake Lodge

GRAND LAKE, COLORADO

CLASSIC COLORADO MOUNTAIN LODGE AND CABINS

The views can't get much better than this. Atop a knoll overlooking the sapphire waters of Grand Lake, which is framed by rows and rows of emerald pines, stands one of Colorado's most iconic summer mountain lodges. To top it off, this hillside haven is embraced on three sides by the high peaks of Rocky Mountain National Park. A registered National Historic Landmark, the lodge not only boasts spectacular views but is also one of the closest full-service accommodations to the western gateway of the park. Most of the establishment's 70 rustic cabins were recently refurbished and offer many creature comforts, including your own porch to watch the sunset alpenglow. The multi-storied lodge constructed from lodge-pole pine was established in 1920 and boasts a dining room and veranda overlooking the lake, plus a heated pool and hot tub. Cabins from \$130. grandlakelodge.com



Be a Paddle Diva on the Lake
Head to the Kayak Shak at the Headwaters Marina on the lake for solo and tandem kayak rentals. Be sure to ask about the "three hours for the price of two" special. mountainpaddlers.com

Find by-the-hour SUP and canoe rentals at Grand Lake Marina. glmarina.com

Tip: The best time to paddle on the lake is early morning when the water is smooth. Winds pick up by late morning and early afternoon.

Special Event: Regatta Week
Grand Lake Yacht Club is one of North America's highest (altitude-wise) yacht clubs. The quaint town at 8,269 feet is popular among the region's alpine sailors. The private club's racing season starts in July, and Regatta Week runs August 3rd–10th, 2013. grandlakeyachtclub.com

Devil's Thumb Ranch Resort and Spa

TABERNASH, COLORADO

LUXURY RANCH RESORT WITH MULTIPLE ACCOMMODATION OPTIONS

At the edge of the Continental Divide rests the picture perfect ranch cradled in a creek-lined valley; it's the kind of scene we see in our imagination but don't really expect in real life. Devil's Thumb has more going for it than good looks though. It's a one-stop shop. Lots of adventure awaits within the 6,000 acres of ranch land. Plus, there's the chic ultra western lodge with custom-designed guest rooms and a top rated pool and spa to relax in between activities. DTR offers several lodging options. The budget-friendly Bunkhouse features 13 cozy rooms; the luxury lodge has 52 rooms; and the surrounding land boasts 16 woody cabins, some that are dog friendly. Up on a hill overlooking the ranch, the newly constructed High Lonesome Lodge will debut this fall with 31 guest rooms and four suites. From \$83 per night for a shared room in the Bunkhouse; lodge rooms start at \$260 per night. devilsthumbbranch.com

Doorway to Adventure

Besides fly fishing on the property or taking to the air via zipline, guests can try their hands at archery, geocaching, and orienteering, even taking lessons if needed. Hikers, horseback riders, and mountain bikers can explore winding trails up and down the meadows and mountains located just out the back of the lodge. And for those who want to check out Winter Park's summer activities (we recommend it), they're only a ten-minute drive from Devil's Thumb.

Women, Wheels, and Wine in July

Devil's Thumb Ranch will offer a one-day women's mountain biking camp for all abilities on July 28, 2013, that includes professional instruction from members of the Yeti Beti Team. Participants get bike fit assistance, maintenance advice, and training tips. There's also a Yoga for Athletes class, plus the steam room, sauna, pool, and hot tub are open for post-ride relaxation. The camp ends with a raffle for bike gear during a wine and cheese reception. \$110 per person. Reservations required (970-726-8231).



Wildlife Voluntourism in Namibia

Safeguarding Big Cats, Elephants, and Other Species with Biosphere Expeditions

By Gigi Ragland

I'm like many travelers who crisscross the globe, carrying passports full of stamped pages and backpacks tattooed with stains from exotic locales. Our foreign language skills are barely passable but get us by.

But there came a point when I wanted to get deeper into the travel experience. Besides buying, eating, and lodging with local companies, I wanted to give back in other ways. Voluntourism, offering my time and skills as a contribution toward positive change, allows me to learn and give back while on a dream trip.

To figure out what type of voluntourism is best for you, find something that speaks to your interests. On challenging days, knowing that you are contributing to your favorite cause will sustain you.

If you think the "touring" part of the equation will last longer than the "volunteering" part, look elsewhere. It's not all play; it's mostly work. Wildlife voluntourism activities often involve participating in environmental surveys, behavior observation, tracking, checking and setting traps, game counts, and trail maintenance. Since I chose a voluntourism program called Safeguarding Big Cats, Elephants and Other Species with Biosphere Expeditions, my activities included checking box traps in the morning and observing wildlife behavior near waterholes in the African savannah during sunset.

It was better than a safari. We saw the same animals other tourists saw but also conducted field studies for a scientific expedition. I never

thought I would grow to love wildebeests until I saw them prance in the shrubby savannah of Namibia. They were wild, wily, and funny to watch.

WHY WILDLIFE VOLUNTOURISM?

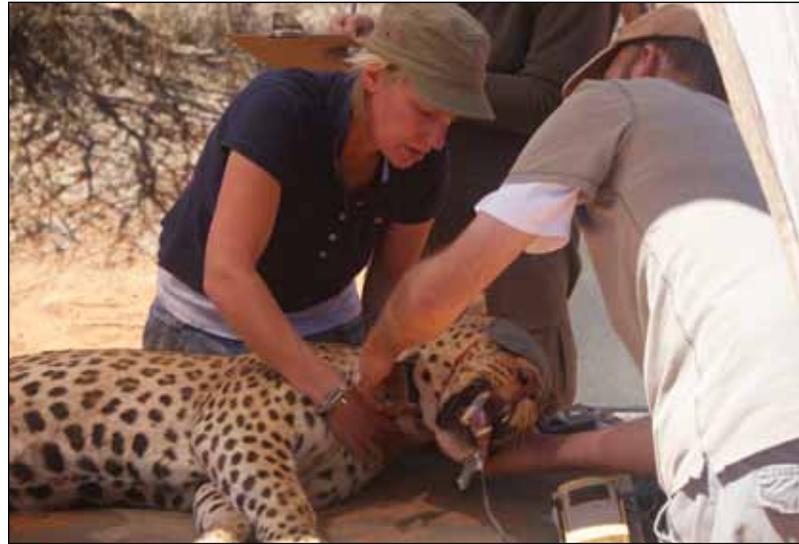
A number of organizations aim to protect and preserve endangered species in their habitats and I, like many, want to contribute. Signing up for a wildlife voluntourism trip was a no-brainer.

Africa has always been on my wish list, along with seeing the Big 5—lions, African elephants, Cape buffalos, leopards, and rhinoceros. I researched organizations that offered science-focused wildlife voluntourism trips and discovered Biosphere Expeditions (BE), an organization whose programs, value, integrity, and vision I liked. BE offers "taster days" that allow prospective participants to sample the feel of a trip before committing to a tour.

When you decide which type of voluntourism fits your criteria, do as much research as possible. Make sure you are on board with the organization's ethics and that you understand and agree with the project's goal. Know where your money goes and find out exactly what you will do during your trip. BE's website offers tons more advice. biosphere-expeditions.org/toptentips

BEFORE

The southwestern African country recognized for its natural beauty and wealth of wildlife, was the first to establish environmental protection in its constitution, and



Namibia boasts 40–50 percent of the world's total free-roaming cheetah population. It is the only country with a growing number of free-roaming lions.

a whopping 40 percent of the land is under conservation management. Also, citizens have the right to manage wildlife within their local conservancies, so more communities are encouraged to sustain wildlife as an economic opportunity.

However, even Namibia has problems with human and wildlife conflict, identified as one of the biggest threats to biodiversity worldwide.

Biosphere Expeditions' two-week expedition focused on collecting scientific data that would inform landowners' day-to-day management decisions to reduce human-wildlife conflict. Helping to safeguard Africa's most amazing animals seemed thrilling to me.

Before the trip, BE sent out a very thorough dossier (41 pages), which covered their aims and objectives, training info, team assignments, logistics of the area, physical conditioning recommendations, medical advice, and travel documents. I felt reassured that BE was committed to its participants' wel-

fare. It reinforces BE's motto: safety, science and satisfaction.

TRAINING

Our team of nine people hailed from Germany, England, Austria, and the United States; however English was the main language spoken during the trip, as requested by BE. This made for efficient communication during training and fieldwork. It was crucial that we understood all the minutiae that go along with data surveys, like knowing the difference between a kudu and an oryx.

Identifying animals was easy, as long as they were leopards, cheetahs, zebras, giraffes, elephants, or rhinos—the kind of animals we see in movies and zoos. But countless other species required extra study time. Some I had never even heard of, like an eland, a hartebeest, or a common duiker. And some I had heard of but never seen, like the springbok, caracal, steenbok, oryx, warthog, hyena, and kudu.

In addition to animal identification, we were taught how to use a

Examples of Voluntourism

- National Park Trail Restoration
- Building homes, schools, or gardens in underprivileged or ravaged areas
- Training locals in medical treatment or providing medical assistance



Learn more about Namibia: namibiatourism.com.na
How to get there: airnamibia.com.na



What is Voluntourism?

Voluntourism is a blend of volunteer work and touring a destination. It often involves paying a fee that goes toward the project or cause, but also covers your room and board, then you work for a charitable organization for a few days or a few weeks either before or after a traditional vacation or as the main activity of the trip.

the matriarch trumpet, calling the family to her.

AFTER

Finally, after two weeks, the names of all the animals came easy to us, and we could identify them all, even from afar. BE offers trip extensions so these new skills can be of benefit for longer.

On the last evening, Jenny and Kristina drove us to the top of a mesa for the Namibian sunset. We scanned the savannah and neigh-

boring highlands for a possible last glimpse of wildlife. Perhaps our sharpened gaze would sight one of the leopards that had eluded us thus far. We never saw them, but most likely they saw us from the camouflage of their savannah hideout. Our mounted cameras revealed images of leopards during their nocturnal wanderings, so at least we knew the big cats were there, thriving.

A little bit adds up. I was glad our small, one-time contribution would make a big difference long term.

GPS and telemetry equipment, set up box traps and release animals, install camera traps and retrieve information, measure tracks and identify scat, plus survey animal behavior. As a treat, those willing learned to drive the Land Rovers on all types of terrain.

Every day, one of us slipped up and identified something incorrectly or calculated the wrong data. Then, either expedition leader Jenny Kraushaar or project scientist Kristina Killian reminded us, "You are not on safari. This is a science expedition."

After three full days of training, we were ready to apply our newfound knowledge.

DURING

Everyday as we headed out for our assignments, there were new smells, sights, and sounds. One participant reveled in the aroma of the desert flora at the cusp of budding season. Others snapped as many pictures as time would allow, capturing everything from herds of impala darting across a sandy desert wash, to giraffes spreading their long limbs while sipping at a waterhole, to the vista of mountain zebras roaming in the highlands.

The savannah fills with noise, especially at dawn and dusk. These sounds—the victory cry of a hyena after taking its prey, followed by the crescendo of high-pitched yelps from the pack descending on the fresh meal—linger with you.

Okambara Farm, the conservancy where our project was based, is one of three farms in Namibia with elephants on the property. The project's lead scientist, Jörg Melzheimer, says that more farms are looking to include elephants on their land. But first, research on elephant behavior needs to be done.

So, BE includes the elephant observation survey in the roster of daily project work. "After three months of research, we know ten times as much as we knew before, because we have a strict research routine which gives us a huge pile of data," said Melzheimer. "We learned which areas of the farm the elephants really like, because now we have people [voluntourists] who check twice a day, note where the elephants are and whether they are feeding, and notice the landscape and vegetation."

Surveying the elephant's behavior became my favorite assignment. It felt like detective work as we drove the dusty routes, spotting the elephants' dinner plate-sized tracks in the sand. Other times it seemed like hide and seek, only the elephants were better at it. How could nine elephants be so hard to find?

When conducting wildlife surveys, patience is key. While waiting, we saw elephants nibbling on shrubs, pawing at trees, flipping red dirt with their trunks onto their backs to keep cool, and crossing the road in front of us with babies close on the heels of their mothers' trunks. We even heard

HIKING TO MACHU PICHU?

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Cooking for a Cause A Volunteer Heats Things Up in the Backcountry

By Gigi Ragland

There are all sorts of ways to volunteer in the great outdoors. Barbara Nye got her first taste of volunteering as a backcountry camp cook for the Continental Divide Trail program in Montana (cdtmontana.org). “Cooking on the trail is always a challenge,” says Barbara. “I learned new and inventive ways to fix fun food on a fire or a tiny stove.” The program, being conveniently near her home, provided a perfect opportunity for her. Barbara was able to up her skills as a camp cook and aid a good cause as well.

CDT Montana, a volunteer trail stewardship program, seeks to complete the unfinished part of the Northern Rockies section (980 miles in Idaho and Montana) of the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail. The organization relies heavily on summer volunteers to assist them in this task. In addition to camp cooks, CDT Montana needs volunteer trail crewmembers. Sound like your kind of thing? Learn more at cdtmontana.org.



Why did you volunteer with CDT Montana?

The lookout tower I volunteered to work on is practically in my backyard. (I live on Marsh Creek Road, about 8 miles from the tower.) For years, I expressed my interest to anyone who would listen that I hoped to somehow resurrect the tower and see new life breathed into it, as it was starting to show signs of neglect.

Where else do you volunteer?

Two friends and I are all volunteers at our local fire department so we know the value of volunteerism. It was just so much fun to be a part of the group that worked on the fire tower because we all shared a passion for the outdoors.

Describe how volunteering has made a difference in your life.

I loved meeting everyone else who volunteered with CDT Montana! They were all about my age or older, so it's encouraging to know I am welcome to keep doing this well

into my retirement because I have no desire to ever stop hiking and exploring the backcountry. I will definitely keep volunteering my help on similar projects when opportunity arises.

How has backpacking changed for you since being in your 50s?

In my 20s and 30s, I was an avid backpacker and saw many Montana mountain peaks and high mountain lakes. Hiking is truly the love of my life! Now I do more and more Forest Service cabin rentals because they require less packing in of supplies. I've been to most of the cabins at one time or another over the years, and they're great resources for those of us who can't carry a heavy pack anymore.

CDT Montana needs volunteers on the following trail projects, too.

CDT #2 Shineberger Creek, June 14-21
 CDT #6 Bison Mountain, July 19-21
 CDT #12 Shoshone Lake, Yellowstone NP, September 5-10
 CDT #13 Rainbow Pass, Anaconda Pintler Wilderness, September 7-14

Three Summer Travel Pieces

By Gigi Ragland



PROSPECTS Power 4 Sports Walking Shoes

The Possibilities: Some of us walk and some of us run. As sports walking gains in popularity, more athletes are aware of the need for a shoe designed to address their needs. So, fast walkers like me will appreciate this race-worthy shoe made to support feet destined to rocket across the pavement at a fast, “heel first” pace.

The Goods: PROSPECTS researched the bio-mechanical differences between walking and running. The result is a technical shoe created specifically for maximum stability, comfort, and support for the athletic walker. \$149; prospecs-usa.com

Camsafe Anti-Theft Camera Sling Bag

The Possibilities: Petty thieves and pickpockets beware! PacSafe just debuted a Camera Sling Bag that is secure and specialized for photographers with lots of gear. Featuring a DSLR camera and lens compartment, a tablet pouch, a nifty RFID blocking Passport Pocket, a mobile phone pocket, and an easily accessible water bottle holder, the bag is also expandable, so you can tuck in a few souvenirs for safe keeping.

The Goods: Anti-theft technology, a stainless steel-reinforced shoulder strap, and stainless steel mesh outer panels prevent thieves from downloading and stealing personal information from credit cards and passports. \$139.99; pacsafe.com



Sexy Back Dress

The Possibilities: It's a dress, it's a cover-up, and it's high-performance athletic wear all in this one essential for your summer travels. Skirt Sports designed the perfect all-day cycling dress that can take you from enjoying a long ride in the saddle to sashaying into a city cafe for lunch or shopping at a farmers' market. It's the Little Black Dress of the athletic world.

The Goods: The hourglass-fitted racer-back top boasts a built-in bra that supports A-C cups and includes a handy Cleavage Alley Pocket for little necessities like lip balm or GU. A reflective zip pocket positioned at the lower back securely holds valuables, a mesh panel keeps you cool, and side slits add to ease of movement in the flared skirt. Choose from two fun prints: the dialed-back Black/Oasis Print or the sassy Sunset Punch/Fiesta Print. \$80; skirtsports.com



5 Ways to Surf 'n' SUP Hawaii

By Gigi Ragland



1. Explore Secret Surf Spots

Hanalei Bay's beauty will tempt you to flop on the beach and just take in the views of Kauai's Na Pali Coast. That's okay. But first, surf a set and wait till sunset to relax and watch

that big orange sun over the ocean. Hanalei Bay, one of the best surfing spots in Hawaii, has waves that are gentle and liting or hellishly high. Native Hawaiian Mitchell Alapa grew up surfing here and started Hanalei-based Hawaiian Surfing Adventures with his wife and family. They offer surfing and SUP lessons from beginner to advanced levels. More experienced surfers should try the Surf Safari to explore top secret surf spots at the best times. It's a great way to experience local waves with a local guide. hawaiiansurfingadventures.com

2) SUP at "the end of the road" in Heavenly Hana

Touted as one of the top scenic (and adventurous) drives in the world, "The Road to Hana" on Maui follows the rugged eastern coast. Venture along the 52-mile Hana Highway from Kahului to the end of the road; you'll go through an estimated 600 turns and over 54 mostly one-lane bridges to be rewarded with dramatic ocean vistas, tropical forests, and waterfalls.

At the "end of the road" it's time to relax and revive at Travaasa Hana Experiential Resort and enjoy the Aloha spirit with a customized program of adventure, culinary experiences, spa/wellness treatments, and culture. Standup paddleboarding, known as "Hoe he'e nalu" among Hawaiians, is a native heritage sport. Lessons and workouts are held on beautiful Hana Bay. travaasa.com/hana

3) Tackle your Technique in Waikiki

The "sport of kings" began on the fabled shores of Oahu and continues with a wealth of paddling pageantry today. Surf and SUP lessons and board rentals abound on the island, where you might bump boards with *Hawaii Five-O* stars while sliding across a wave.

Looking for private instruction or maybe a custom surfing tour here? Jo Jo Howard started Gone Surfing Hawaii, her own surf school, in Waikiki. She offers personalized surfing and SUP instruction. goesurfinghawaii.com

4) Get Schooled in Surf from a North Shore Pro

Surfer Hans Hedemann opened his surf school on Oahu after retiring from the pro circuit. Now he has some of the best pro instructors offered anywhere on the islands with skill sets that work with nervous beginners and advanced athletes. If you are looking to step it up a notch try the Hans Hedemann Surf School Pro-Series Surf Lesson in either the Waikiki or North Shore location. hbsurf.com

5) Carve Your Own Surfboard Workshop

Learn from a native Hawaiian craftsman who descends from a long 'ohana line of traditional surfboard carvers. Turtle Bay Resort on Oahu's North Shore is the only place you can partake in this ancient craft. Upon completion, initiate your board and catch a wave or, as the ancient Hawaiians said, *papabe'enalu* "Hawaiian Wave Slide." Get more info about Pohaku Board Carving Workshops at Turtle Bay Resort at turtlebaysurf.com.

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