

Montage

LIFE, WELL LIVED

SUMMER 2016

STAND-UP ADVENTURES

DISCOVER SPECTACULAR
PADDLING DESTINATIONS

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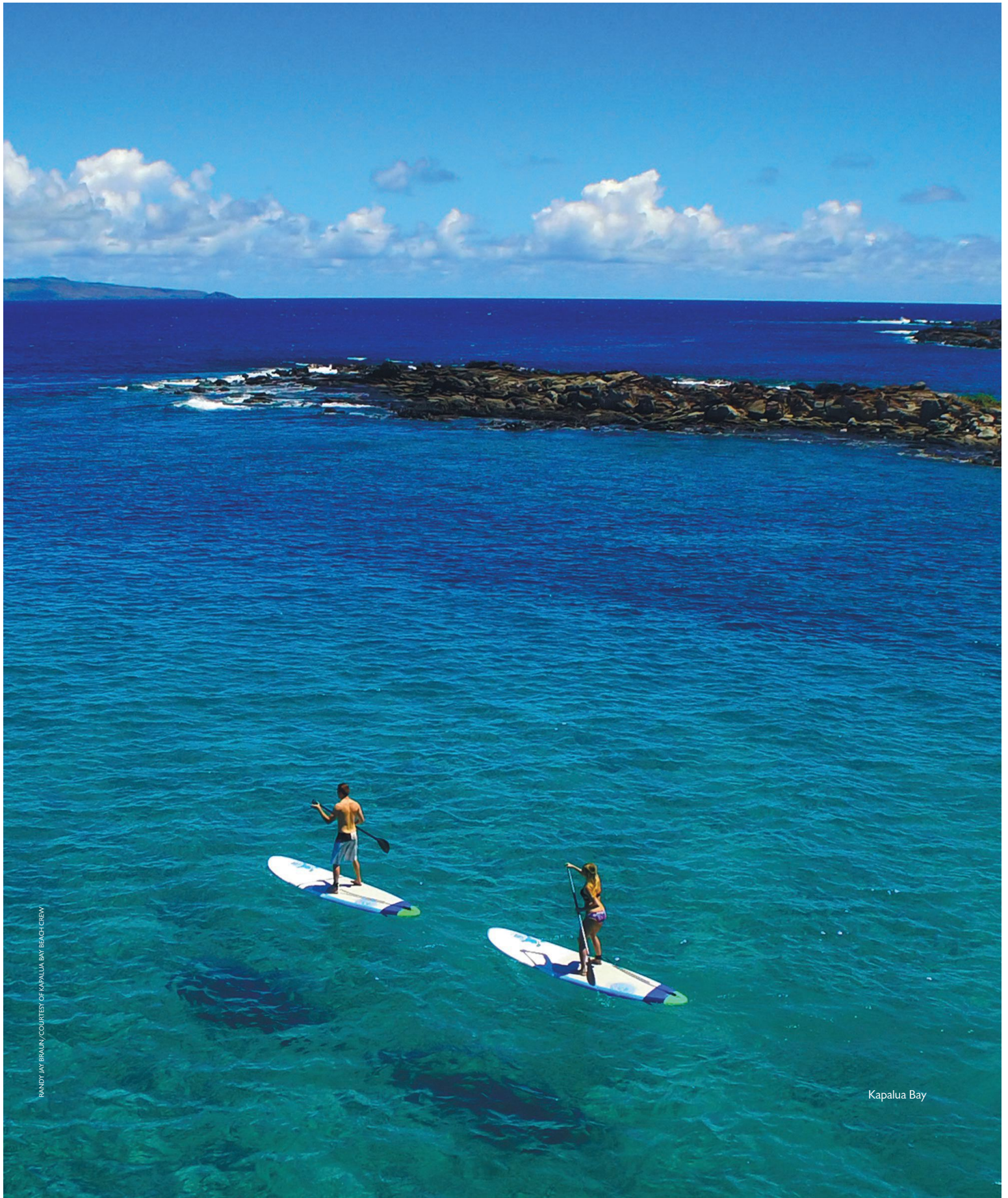
STAND-UP Adventure

Take a wide stance and keep your eyes peeled—
there's plenty to see from the deck of a paddleboard.

BY JOE RADA

Fish dart below. Shorebirds wheel overhead. The horizon teems with dramatic cliffs or grassy marshlands, rising mountains or open sea. And there you are—floating along, taking it all in. You're standing on a buoyant board, fingers gripping a long-handled paddle, propelling yourself steadily forward. Maybe you pause awhile to enjoy the view, or hop off to explore a remote sandbar perfect for building castles. All this and more is possible from the deck of a stand-up paddleboard. The relatively new sport, in which necessary equipment is simply an 11-foot-long board and a lightweight paddle, is surging in popularity and become mainstream.

Cruising along on a stand-up paddleboard can be a leisurely way to see the sights, or it can be a strenuous workout factoring in stiff winds, strong currents and competitive instincts. For beginners, a brief lesson conducted partially on beach and on water can cover basics such as launching, standing, paddling, steering, falling off, climbing back on and landing. Then, learn a few safety tips before striking out on your own or joining a guided tour. Next thing you know, you're marveling at underwater canyons and kelp forests, and having encounters with nature unlike those found on solid ground. From the cliffside waters in Laguna Beach, Calif., to the meandering creeks of Palmetto Bluff, S.C., and protected reefs in Kapalua Bay, Hawaii, Montage Hotels & Resorts' waterside properties offer a diverse array of outings for both amateur and experienced paddleboarders.



RANDY JAY THALUN, COURTESY OF KAPALUA BAY BEACH CREW

Kapalua Bay



Laguna Beach's waters provide spectacular clarity (top and left) and an opportunity to see whales (right).

WELCOMED BY WILDLIFE IN LAGUNA BEACH

Guests of Montage Laguna Beach can head out on excursions with La Vida Laguna, a local outfitter that launches from a reef-protected cove, which is nearly always calm. This is ideal for beginners, who take lessons on sand and practice on flat water before plying the sea in more complex conditions.

From standing position, paddleboarders can look west to the silhouette of Catalina Island and east to a series of public and private beaches, tide-splashed rock and sea caves, and amber-gold cliffs topped by tall palms. They can also look down into the crystal clear water they're gliding over.

"The water clarity in Laguna Beach State Marine Reserve is spectacular, and standing on a paddleboard you really see down deep," says La Vida Laguna founder Billy Fried. "We paddle over deep canyons, huge kelp beds and bright red-orange garibaldi (California's state fish) swimming along rock reefs. We see dolphins and blue

whales that live here year-round, and migrating gray whales moving south in fall and north in spring. They often come close to check us out. Above water, we see colonies of big California sea lions gathered on exposed rocks, and cormorants and pelicans and all kinds of other birds. Wildlife here is abundant."

Outings led by experienced guides—one for every four guests for safety—last about two hours. Throughout, La Vida Laguna staff coach paddlers on technique and can also explain the surrounding ecosystems.

"Round trip, we go about 4 miles, depending on the current and guests' strength and determination," Fried says of his local excursions across nearby waters. "Heading north from Fisherman's Cove and hugging the coast, we pass Shaws Cove, Crescent Bay, Emerald Bay and Irvine Cove. At Irvine, there's a rookery of harbor seals. They're smaller and shier than the California sea lions. The nice thing about approaching by paddleboard is we're so quiet we get incredibly close to them."



Palmetto Bluff is a jigsaw puzzle of marsh grass (top), saltwater estuaries (left) and maritime forest (right).

TRAVERSING TERRAIN IN PALMETTO BLUFF

In South Carolina, Montage Palmetto Bluff guests push off from the resort's Wilson Landing, glide along the tidal but slow-moving May River and are quickly immersed in nature. This area, slightly inland from the Atlantic Coast, is a sprawling jigsaw puzzle of saltwater estuaries, maritime forest, meandering creeks and vast expanses of marsh grass rising from nutrient-rich "pluff" mud that attracts all manner of critters.

"That grass, called spartina, and that dark mud are why wildlife abounds here," says Outside Palmetto Bluff Capt. Boo Harrell. "Shrimp thrive there, fish eat shrimp, other fish eat those fish, and birds eat both," he says.

Paddleboarders often head to a long sandbar near Wilson Landing, paddling among schools of menhaden and mullet, or beaching their vessels to build elaborate sandcastles. "Thousands of

birds feed on that sandbar," Harrell says. "Egrets and herons all the time, ospreys that have built huge nests nearby and, occasionally, bald eagles." For many participants, the highlight of a trip is seeing dolphins.

"There's a healthy population of Atlantic bottlenose dolphins here," Harrell explains. "The mamas calve in spring, so in summer and fall, there's a good chance to see babies and mamas cruising along together."

Being on a paddleboard is "like taking a nature hike on the water," he says. You can go on your own or join tours led by guides who know the area well. Outside Palmetto Bluff also offers stand-up paddleboard yoga trips, typically in the morning when the wind and water are calm.

"This can be a lifelong sport," Harrell says. "Once you learn the basics, which aren't hard to master, you can do this the rest of your life and explore a lot of great places."

TIPS & TRICKS

STICK TO THESE SUGGESTIONS WHEN HEADING OUT ON YOUR OWN STAND-UP PADDLEBOARD ADVENTURES.

APPAREL: In most conditions, a swimsuit or shorts and a T-shirt are adequate. Choose clothing that moves with you while you paddle without bunching or binding.

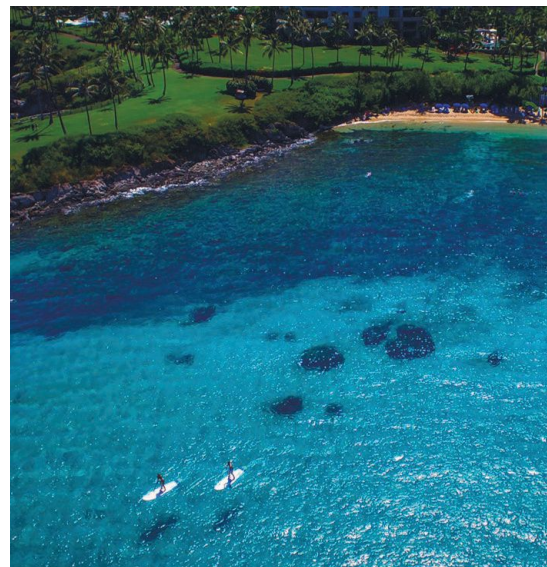
SUN PROTECTION: Apply sunscreen. If you're accustomed to wearing a wide-brimmed hat for face shade, do so; otherwise don't as they're prone to blowing off or blocking your view.

SUNGLASSES: These can be useful, but they're the item that paddleboarders lose most often. Reduce that risk by attaching a safety strap, or invest in sunglasses that float so if they fall off, they won't sink.

PHOTOGRAPHY: To take pictures of your paddleboard trip, bring a waterproof case for your smartphone or a camera designed to get wet.

WET SUITS: Most of the time, you'll be high and dry on your paddleboard, where wet suits quickly become uncomfortable and hot. Stick with a swimsuit or shorts.

SAFETY: The U.S. Coast Guard classifies stand-up paddleboards as vessels when they are not in areas used for swimming, surfing or bathing; participants are required to have a personal flotation device as a safety precaution.



Scan the waters for a variety of fish (left) in the shallow, clear Kapalua Bay (top right and bottom right).

KEEPING UP WITH MARINE LIFE IN KAPALUA BAY

The “hoe he’e nalu” (stand-up paddleboard in Hawaiian) is incredibly popular at Montage Kapalua Bay. At this resort overlooking the horseshoe-shaped, reef-protected Kapalua Bay on the northwestern tip of Maui, guests rent boards or take lessons by the hour; however, Bryan Angel, director of operations for Kapalua Bay Beach Crew, says a “Hawaiian hour” typically stretches to an hour and 20 minutes.

“The bay is teeming with marine life,” Angel says. “From a paddleboard, you look down at butterfly fish, Moorish idol, parrotfish, unicorn fish and the Hawaiian state fish, ‘humuhumunukunukuapua’a’ (reef triggerfish), seen against the sand and a lava-and-coral shelf. Vibrantly colorful brain coral and purple coral lay just below the water’s surface. At least nine endangered Hawaiian green sea turtles live in the bay, seemingly playing hide and seek with us.”

Mornings, when the wind is light or

nonexistent, are the best time for paddling Kapalua. Guests are asked to stay in the shallow, almost lake-like bay. Beyond it lies a strong current and unpredictable breaking waves in the deep channel separating Maui from neighboring islands Lanai and Molokai, visible to the west. Peering toward that channel, boarders often glimpse enormous humpback whales that linger from December through May, birthing their young and occasionally leaping from the sea.

A few experienced boarders, led by Kapalua Bay Beach Crew guides, venture to nearby Namalu Bay to see the historic Cliff House, nestled on the cliffs and available for private dining for Montage Kapalua Bay guests.

“One thing I like best about this place is there are rainbows nearly every day,” Angel says. “Cool mists drop from Maui’s mountains to the bay, catch the sunlight and form brilliant rainbows. That and the tranquil, crystal clear, blue-and-turquoise water of Kapalua make it just about perfect, especially seen from a paddleboard.” **M**

LEFT: KASEY LOPEZ/COURTESY OF KAPALUA BAY BEACH CREW;
RIGHT PHOTOS: RANDY JAY BRAUN/COURTESY OF KAPALUA BAY BEACH CREW