

## Taking the Plunge

*High-end hotels are investing in watersports, making it easier to learn scuba diving, sailing, windsurfing, and more.* By Nora Walsh

ONE OF THE greatest thrills of a beach vacation is that first moment you dive in. Now, hotels and resorts are taking fun on the water one step further, turning coastlines into classrooms.

These new offerings are part of a broader movement across the travel industry, says Jess Pettitt, a senior executive at Hilton. “People aren’t just looking to get away; they’re thinking about what they want to learn when they’re there,” she explains. “These trips are about coming home feeling like you’ve grown in a meaningful way.”

And while all sorts of sport-specific programs are out there, the summer season is particularly well suited to trip-worthy spots like these, where the focus is being on—or in—the water.



ABOVE Sailing in Montenegro.  
LEFT E-foiling in Mexico.



### E-FOILING

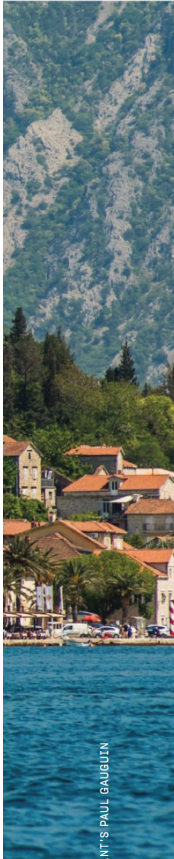
**Montage Los Cabos** (doubles from \$700), in Mexico’s Baja California, is a prime place to try this rapidly growing sport that involves riding an electric-powered board above the waves. The resort offers a range of gear, including Flitescooters with handlebars that are perfect for beginners. Experienced foilers can cruise the Sea of Cortés, zipping past dramatic rock formations and watching for sea life.

### KITEBOARDING

The only hotel on a tiny cay in the British Virgin Islands, **Saba Rock** (doubles from \$540) is an ideal setting for this thrilling pursuit, thanks to steady trade winds and calm seas. A 10-hour “zero to hero” course starts with onshore lessons in kite control and wind theory before taking to the water, where instructors coach boarders via radio-equipped helmets.

RIGHT Scuba diving in Tahiti.

FROM LEFT: COURTESY OF MONTAGE LOS CABOS; COURTESY OF PORTO MONTENEGRO



## SAILING

Overlooking the Bay of Kotor, **Regent Porto Montenegro** (*doubles from \$254*) is part of a larger complex of hotels with a superyacht marina. Regent guests can take lessons at the Porto Montenegro Yacht Club, which has a fleet of 170 keelboats and instructors who can teach sail trim and boat handling as participants cruise past limestone cliffs, centuries-old monasteries, and chic coastal villages.



FROM TOP: COURTESY OF WALDORF ASTORIA, COSTA RICA; PUNTA CACIQUE; COURTESY OF POINTANT'S PAUL GAUGUIN

## WINDSURFING

On Saint Lucia, **BodyHoliday** (*doubles from \$500 per person, all-inclusive*) overlooks Caribblue Beach, where steady breezes create ideal conditions for introductory lessons or more intensive instruction for those looking to fully commit. Though windsurfing is challenging, many guests get the hang of it quickly. "It's not about how skilled you are," says Andrew Barnard, the CEO of Sunswapt Resorts, BodyHoliday's parent company. "It's about being out in nature and challenging yourself."



ABOVE Paddleboarding in Costa Rica.

## PADDLEBOARDING

**Waldorf Astoria Costa Rica Punta Cacique** (*doubles from \$1,050*) sits on Playa Pencia, fronting a sheltered cove that's ideal for novices. Instructors cover safety, balance, posture, and paddling technique against a backdrop of volcanic headlands carpeted in tropical forest. Guests can spot tropical fish, rays, sea turtles, and, in season, migrating whales.

## SCUBA DIVING

**Paul Gauguin Cruises** is equipped to offer PADI Scuba Diver certification during seven- and 14-night itineraries (*from \$4,730 per person for weeklong trips*) in Tahiti and the Society Islands, aboard the *Paul Gauguin*. Divers can explore Moorea and Bora-Bora, where they can see blacktip and lemon sharks, eagle rays, and sea turtles. There's also the UNESCO Biosphere Reserve of Fakarava, in the Tuamotu Archipelago, which is home to plentiful corals as well as gray reef sharks, dolphins, turtles, and schools of barracuda.

## FREEDIVING

In the Maldives, **One&Only Reethi Rah** (*doubles from \$2,260*) is surrounded by crystal-clear lagoons near the Rasfari Marine Protected Area, with abundant reefs and frequent sightings of turtles and manta rays. Instructors offer introductory programs and full certifications in breathwork, fin technique, and safety. Once classwork is complete, divers can seek out colorful reef fish, sea turtles, and eagle rays.