

# Don't Just Sit There... MASTER A NEW SKILL



Spearing your own dinner (in this case, tkktk) in Southern California.

## 1 Mexican Cooking Sayulita, Mexico

One of the upsides of being to Mexico is eating Mexican food. Travel to this low-key surf town near Puerto Vallarta and you'll come home knowing how to cook it, as well. You have several options:

\*Celebrity chef Ana Garcia, a Food Network regular, hosts weeklong culinary vacations in a kitchen right on the beach. On the syllabus: shrimp meatballs in a smoky chile broth; mahimahi ceviche fresh off the boat; and pork loin marinated in tequila. The trip includes four hour-long cooking classes (so you'll have plenty of time for the beach and hammock) and seven nights at a plush house a block from the beach (from \$2,350 per person).

\*Hotelito Los Sueños in Sayulita offers a three-hour evening class where you'll prepare a four-course dinner of tamales and fish tacos in a rooftop kitchen (if you want a beer, you'll have to bring your own

six-pack of Dos Equis) (\$35)

\*Truly hardcore foodies will want to head to the Four Seasons in nearby Punta Mita for a course in pre-Hispanic cuisine, where you'll cook like an ancient Aztec, using ingredients like ant eggs, crocodile, and even grasshopper. (For the record: "The most important part of cooking grasshopper is the toasting," says chef Jose Salas. "Include salt and garlic. Toast in a sauté pan until they get fragrant, firm, and dry.") You may not make it at home, but a more visceral history lesson is hard to imagine.

—MEGAN MICHELSON

## 2 Kite Surfing Baja California, Mexico

Los Barriles, an old fishing village on the Sea of Cortez is a wind-seekers mecca. From November through April, a warm breeze blows at a consistent 18-22 knots and the wide open, sandy beaches and calm turquoise water of the Bay of Palms offer safe launch-

ing and landing areas ideal for learning. Get eight hours of instruction from ExotiKite with a jet-ski assist and in-helmet radio guidance for \$625. You'll come away knowing how to edge, ride upwind, turn, and even execute basic jumps. You'll also be certified by the International Kiteboarding Organization, which enables you to rent gear and sign up for future trips. There's also great stand-up paddling here, along with scuba diving, kayaking, and the Sea of Cortez's legendary fishing. Cabo San Lucas is 45 minutes south. But chances are you'll be seduced by Los Barriles' small town charm.

—KITT DOUCETTE

## 3 Spearfishing San Diego, California

Snorkeling and scuba are all well and good, but if you want to take your underwater ocean adventure to the next level, ditch the tank, learn how to free-dive, and go spearfishing. "There's something immensely satisfying about harvesting your own seafood organically, and ethically," says Kirby Morejohn, co-founder of Gannet Dive Co. in San Diego. "It's also quite an adrenaline rush."

The beaches and coves near

the tony San Diego suburb of La Jolla is probably the best and safest place in the continental U.S. to learn. Not only is the water clear and calm, it's also (depending on the time of year) full of lobster, bass, and wahoo. The California Freedive Academy offers a 2-1/2-day introductory course (\$200) that covers basic safety protocol and breath-holding and diving techniques — first in the classroom, then the pool, before moving into ocean. By the end of the course, most people can remain underwater, at depths of up to 70 feet.

Once you're comfortable in the water, it's time to get your gun. James and Joseph Spearfishing Supplies will rent you everything you need — speargun, wetsuit, fins, weight belt, and mask and snorkel — starting at about \$65 a day. The guns are pretty basic — you're essentially launching a small harpoon using a heavy-gauge rubber band. "But it definitely takes some practice," says Garo Hachigan, an instructor at the Freedive Academy, which offers lessons (from \$TK) on loading, reloading, aiming — and getting you, and your prey, back to the beach safely. —K.D.



An afternoon session at Los Barriles.