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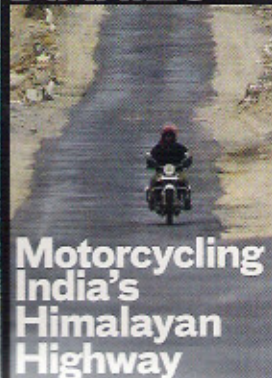
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BREAKOUT  
TREND >>>

EVEN MARLINS:  
Jim Sammons lands  
a big one off Baja.

## If Hemingway Were Alive and Fishing Today, He'd Be in a Kayak

Fueled by awesome stories of big fights with big fish from little, tippy boats and by a buzzing national network of online forums, fishing from a kayak has gone from the oddball pursuit of a few diehards to a full-fledged phenomenon on both seaboard as well as on the Gulf Coast, in Alaska, and in Baja, California—not to mention on inland rivers and lakes. Over the past five years, nearly every kayak manufacturer has come out with a sit-on-top boat built for anglers—tooled to accommodate rod holders, bait boxes, sonar fish-finders, and GPS. And Jim Sammons of La Jolla Kayak Fishing reports that when the yellowtail are running off San Diego, he might find 20 plastic boats shoving off his local beach at 4 a.m.

Kayak fishing is, in the words of Coastal Kayak Fishing Inc. owner Dennis Spike, a classic “peanut butter and chocolate” combination: It unites the challenge and adventure of sea fishing with the solitude and simplicity of paddling. The vast majority of newbies, he notes, are anglers who couldn’t afford their own powerboat, didn’t want the hassles of a dock and trailer, or got tired of bumping elbows on charter cruises. But once they went plastic, they discovered what paddlers have appreciated for decades—the freedom and connection with the water that only a muscle-powered craft allows.

“With a motor running you won’t hear the bait break the surface,” says Spike, noting that on a kayak he sees all sorts of sea life that he’d miss on a larger boat. Perhaps more important, landing a big one from a ‘yak is just so damn fun. A 20-pound yellowfin can drag a ‘yak fisherman as far as a mile in a rite of passage that Santa Maria, California, guide Gary Bulla calls the “Baja sleigh ride.” And that says nothing of the thresher sharks and white sea bass, even marlins, that have been snagged by paddlers.

“It was like I’d never caught a fish before,” says Drew Clark of landing his first yellowtail from a sit-on-top earlier this year. A lifelong boat fisherman, Clark converted a few years back to what he calls “modern-primitive adventure fishing” and has since formed the Plastic Navy, a loosely organized group of San Diego anglers who sponsor parties and tournaments. Like Clark, Sammons—who was once dragged eight miles from shore, *Old Man and the Sea* style, by a marlin he estimates weighed 200 pounds—says that the kayak makes fishing thrilling again, adding that, in the end, “it is not about catching the fish but about enjoying a day on the water.”

—Mark Sundeen

PHOTOGRAPHS, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: COURTESY OF JIM SAMMONS; COURTESY OF AROUND-Y-OVER; NORA HAMILTON



### BETHANY HAMILTON

In what could easily be described by her contemporaries as “full-on bonzer” (true grit), less than a month after losing her left arm to a 14-foot tiger shark last Halloween, Hamilton paddled out and caught a wave. The 14-year-old Hawaiian surfer finished fifth at the National Scholastic Surfing Association Championships in June; her autobiography, *Soul Surfer* (MTV Books), sold to Hollywood.



### ERDEN ERUÇ

Unlike many others, Eruc’s friend Goran Kröpp never doubted his plans to circle the globe on foot, bike, and boat. Eruc, 43, was with Kröpp when he died while rock climbing in Washington in 2002 and is now intent on completing his quest in memoriam. In 2005, Eruc will paddle from Florida to South America, putting himself in position for a January 2006 attempt of Aconcagua.

INCREDIBLES >>>