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8 HOT Fitness Trends & Trainers

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FITTER, FITTER, FASTER, STRONGER

With swimsuit season creeping up on us, we present our guide to San Diego's hottest fitness trends and trainers. From a yoga mat to a kickboxing ring to an endless wave, the workout venues are as varied as they are challenging. We felt the burn . . .

NOW IT'S YOUR TURN.

By Phyllis DeBlanche, Adam Elder,
Ryan Plourde and Julia B. Polloreno
PHOTOGRAPHS BY ROBERT BENSON

THE "IT" WORKOUT

Glamour declared The Bar Method workout "the Hollywood exercise trend of the moment," listing Drew Barrymore and the Olsen twins among its celebrity devotees. Judging from the popularity of Allison McCurdy's The Bar Method studio in Point Loma, this fitness trend is here to stay. The hour-long workout incorporates a ballet bar in a swift-paced series of isometric and strengthening exercises that reshape muscles and incinerate body fat.

Before she opened the San Diego outpost of the national franchise, Allison would drive up to Los Angeles just to take a class. "My husband thought I was crazy," she says. Her body was transformed—from bulky to lean and long—just six months after she began doing The Bar Method workout, she says.

Allison plays an eclectic soundtrack—from Andrea Bocelli to Britney Spears—to set the tone and pace of the class. After a brief warmup, we work the upper body with hand weights, and stretch using the ballet bar lining the sunny, upscale studio. Easy enough. Then we target the lower body with a series of squats and leg lifts while holding on to the bar. The movements are subtle and targeted—small pulses—and by the final reps, my leg muscles shake from exhaustion. Looking around the mirrored room, I'm relieved to see I'm not the only one fighting through the tremors. We then move on to seated ab work, using the bar and an exercise ball. After each muscle group is exhausted, we do some gentle stretching, which Allison says helps the muscles rebuild longer and leaner.

But you needn't look to the Olsen twins for proof—super-fit Allison is the best advertising for this fitness craze. **619-226-2301; barmethod.com/sandiego**

—JULIA B. POLLORENO

BACK TO BASICS

When's the last time your personal trainer asked you to pee into a cup? It's all in a day's work for Craig Morgan, co-owner of Tru Health & Wellness in Sorrento Valley. His unique approach to client health and fitness starts at the cellular level and honors each individual's body chemistry. When signing up a



The Bar Method



new client, trainer Craig (or co-owner/trainer David Zappasodi) performs a metabolic nutrition test—a series of assessments that reveal the client's “metabolic individuality,” which is used to determine a nutrition program that enables clients to achieve their ultimate goal, be it weight loss, sports performance, lowered cholesterol levels or revitalized overall energy.

“One’s man food can be another man’s poison,” says Craig, as he hands me cups to collect urine and saliva. Everyone processes nutrition differently, he says, and a determination of my “metabolic dominance” will tell me how to fuel my body so it can perform efficiently at optimal health. After Craig takes some base measurements and vital signs, I guzzle a glucose/potassium drink. Over the course of two hours, he analyzes my blood sugar curve (via multiple finger pricks), along with changes in my urine and saliva pH, vital signs and more-subjective measures (perceived energy, hunger and mood). I fill out a dietary record, logging information about my eating habits and patterns, and tell him about my fitness goals.

The following day, I return to review my results. Craig produces a binder with my comprehensive metabolic nutrition profile, which reveals my metabolic type as “sympathetic dominant” and lists recommended foods, organized by proteins (light meats are best), carbohydrates (easy on the artichokes) and fat (munch seeds and nuts sparingly). The guide also provides sample menus customized for my specific metabolic type.

With a totally personalized nutrition road map, I feel ready to dive into the recommended fitness regimen. As long as it doesn't require any more little plastic cups. **858-642-7522; truhealthandwellness.com** —J.B.P.

DOING THE WAVE

On the Mission Beach boardwalk, on any given day, crowds of people stand around and gaze at what appears to be an endless, man-made wave. Riders show off their skills as they surf the Wave House Athletic Club's FlowRider, sometimes joining the likes of world-champ surfer Kelly Slater and other pros. Feeling saucy one Saturday morning, I decide to be bold and step up to the wave.



But while many of the riders I had seen on the FlowRider in the past made it look easy, I learn—the hard way—that it's not. The lifeguard tries his best to help: “Get low, lean back, use your hands to balance.” And indeed he did help as, by the end of my hour-long session, I was riding back and forth, to the amusement of onlookers.

Thinking I had just participated in one of Mission Beach's finest amusement rides, I was surprised to learn I had taken part in the Wave House's FlowRiding class, one of the newer and more innovative fitness classes at the beachside athletic club. Feeling a familiar burn in my calves, thighs and abs the next morning left no doubt I'd had a workout. I had indeed exercised for an hour and didn't even know it. Only in San Diego can an “endless wave” be one of the best workouts in town. **858-228-9300; wavehouseathleticclub.com**

—RYAN PLOURDE

CROSS-PURPOSES

Does the idea of approaching your workout in a radically different way each day sound tempting? Founded when Santa Cruz instructor Greg Glassman started posting daily routines online, CrossFit—with its egalitarian, open-source appeal—has skyrocketed in popularity. Participants have even been known to form kindred bonds outside the gym. But

rather than promising me a six-pack by summertime, instructor Rory McKernan and US CrossFit aim for total-body conditioning—speed, stamina, strength, balance, flexibility, agility and coordination.

Rory puts me through a dizzying array of workouts. Gym toys I hadn't seen in years—rowing machines, gymnastics rings, climbing ropes, plyometrics boxes, kettlebells, barbells, pull-up bars and medicine balls—all feature prominently. I perform a veritable greatest-hits-of-the-gym in lifting, running, climbing, calisthenics, squatting, throwing and rowing hard and fast, often with almost no rest.

However, CrossFit's beauty lies in the fact that whether you're working alongside an ex-Navy SEAL or a grandma, you're competing neither against them nor some arbitrary number. You're only trying to beat your own previous best. For example: With 10 minutes to perform 15 box jumps, 10 kettlebell swings and five medicine-ball squat tosses, Rory challenges me to complete as many circuits as I can. Resting anytime is an option, although rebuffing his genuine, enthusiastic attempts to get me moving again isn't easy. Covered in sweat and feeling the burn of more squats than I've attempted in years, the thrill of pushing myself just a bit further than I thought possible brings a tired smile to my face. **760-634-3825; uscrossfit.com** —ADAM ELDER

PUSHING FOR 10

If your goals are more modest than training for triathlons, marathons or bouts in the ring, San Diegan Jorge Cruise's latest workout may be just the program for you. This month, the trainer to TV personalities and stars releases his latest book and DVD, *Body at Home: A Simple Plan to Drop 10 Pounds*. Jorge is a big (although slender and toned) proponent of working out at home.

"The myth that you can't get a good workout at home is a mindset we need to let go of. It's not that hard!" he insists. To that end, *Body at Home* is a distillation of the best of his 10 years of books and fitness programs. All you need is an exercise ball, dumbbells (and a barbell for the guys), a resistance band and a medicine ball. And for the cost of a month of gym dues—never mind the initiation fees—you can lose weight and gain lean muscle in only 20 minutes, two days a week.

Sure, it sounds a bit too good to be true. But try Jorge's exercises and you'll quickly understand why the plan works. There're no gains without pain in exercise, and his use of controlled tension, which he calls "The 12-

Second Method," proves that. Four normal pushups isn't much challenge for most people, but four pushups alongside Jorge, in which I lowered for 10 seconds, held, quivering, for 2, and raised back up for 10 more seconds each time, is a workout in itself, leaving me shaking and sweating copiously even after such a short time of exertion. Add to this other male- and female-specific exercises—such as incline dumbbell presses, leg lifts, bicycle crunches, lunges and more—and you'll understand his massive popularity within the image-conscious entertainment industry as you see the results. jorgecruise.com —A.E.

HAUTE AND HOTTER

One hundred and four degrees? A humidity level in the high 30s? In Solana Beach? You betcha. At Haute Yoga, a hot breeze is pumped into the studio while yogis perform a set routine, or flow, in the hatha style. The heat confers a number of benefits on one's yoga practice, says instructor Roxanne DePalma. The most obvious is the deep, sopping sweat. "It is incredibly purifying," she says.

The heat allows the connective tissue—

which encases muscles, bones, ligaments, tendons and organs—to loosen up, creating added mobility and ease in the body, says Roxanne. The result is a stronger, better-toned, leaner and more flexible body. "Practicing yoga in a heated environment is a very safe, fast and effective way to shed some unwanted pounds," she says.

The moment I step through the studio door, I'm met by a wall of heat. Beads of sweat instantly form on my upper lip, and I have to concentrate on drawing in the first few breaths of thick air. Finding a spot to lay out my mat, I notice everyone else has a large beach towel draped over the mat. I'm clearly unprepared for the sweat session in store.

Roxanne leads us into the series of poses, offering precise instructions, gentle encouragement and slight adjustments. The hour-long class, Hot 60, is a strengthening flow for the seasoned practitioner, yet safe enough for beginners, she says. Anyone remotely familiar with hatha yoga will recognize certain poses—Downward Dog, Warrior, Tree, Eagle. The class concludes with pranayama, or breathing exercises.

By the end, my clothes are heavy with sweat, but I feel a mental buoyancy that wasn't there before. Think of it as a quick detox for body and mind. **858-345-1810**; hauteyoga.com —J.B.P.

KICK IT UP A NOTCH

Gladiators in the square ring boast exceptional strength and endurance; after a few sessions of power kickboxing at Lava Fitness, you too will feel either chiseled and fit enough to compete or as tired and beaten as a real kickboxer following a tough bout. While I got the opportunity to cathartically punch, knee and kick until my arms and legs resembled cookie dough, it's the combination of conditioning that really sculpts the physique of a fighter. To achieve this, trainers subjected my classmates and me to constant jump-roping, push-ups, squats, more ab exercises than an underwear model, crab walks and light running, with no rest between activities, save for a short water break halfway through.

Trainer and former competitive kickboxer Jason Stockdale eases our pain with energetic, enthusiastic, helpful—but firm—encouragement. Even with calves still burning from their reintroduction in adult life to jump ropes,

it's all worth it for the thrill of delivering satisfying punch-feint-block-kick-knee combinations on the helpless punching bags—and later, Jason, all padded up.

If you're thirsting for more, hit the new, sophisticated weight machines, run it off on the treadmills, or feel the glide in Lava's gravity class. Gravity machines employ a sliding, inclined seat that pits the user against his or her body weight—a personalized yet totally adjustable workout. Boxing, Pilates and cycling are offered too. If jujitsu is your thing, Lava's list of personal trainers has more Brazilians than a Vegas pool party. The gym also hosts fights every several months. **800-269-4642**; lavafitness.com —A.E.

WALK IT OUT

"Are you sweating yet?" Elle sings out to the 10 of us toiling up the slope in Old Town. The few who say no are quickly shushed by the rest, who know that if we don't answer in the affirmative, our leader will pick up the pace till we are *all* damp of brow.

How on Earth did I get here, being prodded up a hill and pushed into perspiring? Well, I walked. First my fingers did the walking, finding a Meetup.com group that fit my requirements: I wanted to walk someplace with sidewalks, for an hour or more at least once a week after work. Elle's Urban Walkers Adventure was just the ticket, and I soon embarked on my first expedition. In the six months since, I've ambled and rambled around the county, from Coronado to Kensington to Del Mar, with anywhere from two to 16 others sharing the journey. And I always sweat at some point—and no, I'm not just saying that, Elle—though as I build endurance, that time comes ever later.

At the outset I knew this would be good for me physically. I looked forward to seeing San Diego from a walker's vantage. And I thought I might make friends along the way, as indeed has happened. But I never expected the simple act of walking to be such *fun*. We laugh, we chat, we groan up the hills, and we part a bit tired, yet happy. Is it the endorphins? The fresh air? The fellowship? Doesn't matter. Especially in times of stress, these walks have become the dessert to my day. And they're not only free, they're free of calories. meetup.com

—PHYLLIS DEBLANCHE



Jorge Cruise



Haute Yoga



Lava Fitness