



NYC

TO ROCKAWAY AND THE THRILL OF HAMBOARDING

Dominique (Nico) Klimek explains the freedom of hitting the streets of New York and beyond on her hamboard.

photos DOMINIQUE (NICO) KLIMEK

I walked into the office with blood smeared across my knees and a smile stamped across my face. My lunch break was spent 'hamming' the streets of Greenpoint, Brooklyn; riding past apartments, coffee shops, parks and graffiti-covered walls. Carving and gilding across a river of black, I coasted down the streets with nowhere I needed to go. I just wanted to ride. My ham-time ended with a wipeout in the middle of the street, but I had enough adrenaline pumping to mask the scrapes and bruises. Proud of my newly earned battle scars, I looked down at my bloody knees and only felt an even greater pull towards hamboarding.

When I moved to Brooklyn I knew that getting to the water or mountains on weekdays wasn't going to be possible. I also knew that being a boarder, I'd need something to feed my hunger. When I stumbled across the hamboard website I knew I needed to get one of these boards. They looked like surfboards, and in the videos I watched over and over again, the riders even looked like they were surfing.

I'd caught the feeling I was chasing: the hair down, sun-stained skin, sand-embedded-in-our-scalp

approach to life. That feeling that frees and empowers us. It's so much more than cruising down the street – it's riding to the rhythm of a culture. The culture of waking up hungry for the sunrise. Paddling out while everyone else is asleep, knowing that there are choices we can make. And now, even when water isn't available, the mornings can still be ours on the streets. We are constantly stoking our internal fire by getting new toys, exploring unfamiliar streets, and embracing new opportunities.

On summer weekends I always head out to Rockaway, to spend my time surfing and soaking up the sun on the beach. In Rockaway the surf and urban cultures merge together. The main street, set a couple blocks back from the water, has walls painted with colourful murals sprinkled between buildings. Planes dot the sky as they shuttle people around the world, and the train drags itself along elevated tracks, marking the horizon. Surfers weave between the delis and cafés, making their way to the beach.

Hamboards are still fairly new to the board world. With their buttery turns and surfboard shape, they evoke a lot of curiosity from boarders and non-boarders alike. I always

find myself meeting people and chatting with strangers when I'm out hamming. They want to know what I'm riding, and are in awe of the trucks and the massive wheels.

At the end of the day I head to Rockaway Beach Surf Club – a feeding ground for taco-loving, margarita-drinking beach goers. There is always a migration that takes place around lunchtime and happy hour, as the hungry and thirsty drag themselves off the beach to the local watering hole. Here, any dress code goes – wetsuit, bathing suit, t-shirt – whatever. There's sand between our toes, hip-hop, R&B and reggae playing, and the smell of tropical sunscreen hangs in the air.

When summer comes around, I'm the first one to kick off my shoes. Sand is held hostage in our cars and our sheets, and sunbeams leaking through the windows are our alarm clocks. And when night falls the stars twinkle overhead and everyone is silently wishing that time could stop. We know that it won't and so we push onward, boards in hand, making the most of each day, and embracing every earned set of blisters and bloody knees.

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