

SUCCESS

Unplugged

Learning Vacations

From survival skills to photography to studying Spanish at sea, there's a lot you can learn on vacation.

by Maryann Hammers



Why do you travel? Some people want to kick back on the sand or by the pool, decompress and de-stress, with a great new restaurant being the biggest discovery of the day. And there's nothing wrong with that.

But why not continue your self-improvement quest, even while getting some R&R? Vacations can be a prime time to learn a new skill, immerse yourself in interesting experiences and take home memories of something more substantial than frothy poolside cocktails.

"Travel today is not only about embracing new cultures and destinations. It's about taking time to learn, discover and rejuvenate," says Kristin Turner, manager of entertainment for Crystal Cruises, which offers an array of onboard classes. "Travelers want to tailor their activities to suit individual interests, making vacations become personal journeys."

Seminars at Sea

For the lifelong student, there's much more to do on cruises than stand in buffet lines and watch the world float by. Crystal Cruises' Creative Learning Institute offers a staggering variety of onboard classes. You can participate in sushi-making demos, get creative at a stone-sculpting workshop, take Yamaha keyboard lessons, attend an estate-planning workshop, join a world-affairs lecture or practice putting at a TaylorMade golf clinic. And that's just one morning's offerings.



If you're a business owner, your vacation can produce some revenue-increasing results. Take a Berlitz language class to bring that international expansion you've been dreaming about to reality. New classes in social networking teach you how to navigate sites like Facebook and MySpace, walking you through creating a profile and safely posting information. And since Crystal partners with organizations such as the Smithsonian, Berlitz, Pepperdine University and the Cleveland Clinic, you know the instruction is top-notch.

But if you'd prefer to use your time to enrich your social skills or hone your creative instinct, Crystal's themed cruises immerse you in a topic such as health, wine and food, photography or golf. For example, the Wine & Food Festival cruises feature seminars and tastings led by Society of Wine Educators instructors, wine-paired dinners and a dining room with a 25,000-bottle wine list representing every grape-growing region in the world.

Price: From \$2,170 per person for a seven-day sailing, including meals (alcohol excepted), classes and most onboard activities. Airfare extra.

Contact: (888) 799-4625

Immerse Yourself in the Environment

Learning about the natural world is a great way to relax and still feel like you're doing something to enrich yourself. For the eco-conscious or scientific-minded traveler, Maui offers a paradise-like world of powdery beaches, tropical flowers, plumeria-

scented breezes and sunset-over-sea views. Now you can enjoy it all—while learning more about Hawaii's natural wonders.

The Jean-Michel Cousteau Ambassadors of the Environment program recently opened at the Ritz-Carlton Kapalua through an innovative partnership with the nonprofit organization Ocean Futures Society. Under the guidance of naturalists, hotel guests participate in hands-on eco-activities, including coral-reef snorkeling, underwater photography, rain forest hikes and whale-watching excursions. Classes are available for adults, families and groups, as well as separate age-specific programs for children, ages 5 and up.

Price: Classes from \$99 (\$69 for children/youth); accommodations from \$400 (fifth night free).

Contact: Ambassadors of the Environment, (808) 663-7292; Ritz-Carlton Kapalua reservations or information, (808) 669-6200

Dates: Year-round

Go Back to Summer Camp

Some of the most successful people have learned to maintain an almost childlike view of life. Their enthusiasm is catching. To catch up with your childlike wonder, try heading back to camp.

Camp Lake Hubert, a 280-acre summer camp in Minnesota's Great Northwoods, closes for the season in August. Then it reopens—as Family Camp. Campers of all ages and generations learn (or relearn) outdoor skills—canoeing, archery, horse-back riding, sailing, windsurfing and ropes courses. There are arts and crafts, free time for lake play and, when the sun sets, campfire singalongs, talent shows, treasure hunts, bingo games and beach barbecues.

It's an authentic, early-to-bed, early-to-rise summer camp, with rustic, three-bedroom cabins. Each family stays in a large, private bedroom furnished with bunks and camp cots, and meals are shared in a timber-lodge dining room. The idea is to bond with family, remember skills you forgot, and recapture a childlike appreciation of life's simple—and best—things.

Price: Adults, \$850 per person for six days, all-inclusive of meals, activities and accommodations (\$650 for children; under 3, free)

Dates: Aug. 13-19, 2009

Contact: (800) 242-1909

Take Charge of Your Life

Try taking a learning vacation that lines up with your goals and helps you achieve them. For example, if you've decided to eat

PURSUE YOUR PASSIONS

PHOTOGRAPHY



The Boulders Resort and Golden Door Spa in Colorado offers sunset and sunrise desert-photo safaris led by a professional photographer. You'll learn about the flora and fauna of the Sonoran Desert and techniques such as composition and lighting. September-May. Price: \$45, includes Sonoran Desert guidebook. Accommodations from \$397.6520

Spring Creek Ranch in Jackson, Wyo., offers five-hour wilderness workshops in the Grand Teton and Yellowstone national parks. round. Accommodations from \$150. Info: (800) 443-6139

RACE-CAR / OFF-ROAD DRIVING



The race-car package of The Fairmont Sonoma Northern California Wine Country includes two days at the ESPN Russell Racing School at Infineon I racetrack, dinner for two, two 50-minute tastings at a local winery. From \$5,391. Info: (800) 443-6139

The Greenbrier in West Virginia offers off-road driving in SUVs. From \$220. Accommodations from \$275. Info: (800) 443-6139

GREAT OUTDOORS



Could you survive for a week in the wilderness? Inside Out Experience's Wilderness Survival Course offers a spectacular mountain scenery, you'll learn to build shelter, find and purify food and water, and more. Call for dates. From \$60 (includes lunch). Accommodations not included.

Adventure Connection offers a seven-day white-water rafting on the South Fork of the American River. April 4-11, 2009. Info: (800) 443-6139

healthier, exercise more and stress out less, let you kick-start a new regimen and positive outlook. The California Health & Longevity Institute Westlake Village offers classes in stress management, fitness training, body-composition demo hinders for healthy-cooking classes and more. The pros will customize your stay based on one-day, three-day and five-day programs are your age, gender, family history and personal by top internists, dermatologists, dentists, and registered dietitians, it's a one-stop, high-quality healthy living was never so posh.

Price: Half-day, \$375; full day, \$650; three-toe, one-on-one customized program, \$4,200 from \$195.

Dates: Year-round, prices valid through June 2009. Contact: California Health and Longevity Inst; Four Seasons Hotel Westlake Village, (818) 573-1111