

ADVENTURE & TRAVEL

By MARGOT DOUGHERTY

Find Balance Costa Rica

Ever wondered if yoga expertise might help you surf more adeptly? Or dreamed of sliding down a wave face in half-moon pose? (Careful!) Pura Vida Adventures indulges both fantasies with surf-yoga getaways on Costa Rica's Nicoya Peninsula on the Pacific Coast. The weeklong retreats are for everyone, even nonswimmers, but tend to draw women in their 30s, 40s and 50s, says founder Tierza Eichner. "We take care of everything and that helps guests let go." Surf and yoga classes are held daily, and the ratio of students to surf coach is never more than 3 to 1. Included: video analysis of your board form. Serving as HQ is the beachside Hotel Trópico Latino, equipped with a spa, yoga deck, hammock-slung beach lounge and an organic-minded restaurant. *Weeklong all-inclusive retreats from \$2,695 a person, puravidadventures.com*

Take a Whack at Polo Barbados

"Our island has a long history of polo, beginning with the British military stationed here in the 19th century," said Michelle Mackie, activities director of Port Ferdinand Yacht and Beach Club in Barbados. Guests staying in the resort's one-, two- and three-bedroom villas can immerse themselves in the sport of kings to whatever degree feels right—intro riding-courses for beginners, stick-and-ball exercises with a coach for those who've found their seat and casual chukkas (or even entry into a match) for unquestionably able equestrians. "It's a fast, exciting game," says Ms. Mackie. "Dangerous, but fun." Overseen by Argentina-born polo master Salvador Sanchez Duggan, the program is held at Buttals Farm Polo Club. Provided: top-tier horses, helmets, chaps and sticks. *Accommodations from about \$735 a night, polo lessons, \$265 an hour; portferdinand.com*

Marshal the Art of Capoeira Brazil

Karate and taekwondo? You can probably find a dojo for either in your hood. But capoeira? That's a martial art worth traveling for. Developed in Brazil by African slaves in the 16th century, capoeira combines dance, music and gravity-defying gymnastics. Guests at UXUA Casa Resort and Spa in the northern state of Bahia can explore the powerful moves and philosophy through private lessons on the premises. Or they can take classes at the nearby academy, which the resort underwrites—or even on a moonlit beach. The boho-luxe beachside

Studious Spring Flings

Warm-weather getaways that let you pick up a few new skills



LEARN BY HEART Clockwise from top: Buttals Farm Polo Club in Barbados; a photo safari at Tengile River Lodge; Pura Vida Adventures's surf-yoga getaway; a capoeira lesson at Brazil's UXUA Casa Resort and Spa.

getaway, in the tony town of Trancoso, is the brainchild of Dutch-born UXUA founder Wilbert Das, formerly the creative head of Italian fashion company Diesel, who employed local artisans to restore a series of the town's old fishermen's houses. A capoeira aficionado, Mr. Das participates in the academy classes alongside guests and locals. Showboats can demonstrate their gift for the *ai* (cartwheel) at rodas (public demos) in Trancoso's Unesco-heritage *quadrado* (town square). Good luck with that. *Three-night capoeira packages from \$1,765 a person, uxua.com*

Chop to It Mexico

La Villa Bonita—home to chef Ana Garcia and husband Rob Anderson's acclaimed cooking school—is set high enough on a mountainside to command pause-and-wonder views of the pre-Colonial town of Tepoztlán, yet is still an easy walk to the centro. Given that only six rooms (and a pool) comprise the accommodations, guests can count on personalized attention during two-, five- or seven-night stays. Guests learn to confidently approximate traditional Mexican cuisine and the curriculum includes trips to the farmers market followed by daily hands-on instruction in the villa's open-air kitchen. About 90 minutes south of Mexico City, the villa offers guests airport pickup and return. It's also just 20 minutes from Cuernavaca, where Ms. Garcia grew up, so all sorts of day trips and cultural events can be accessed without undue fuss. *Five-night package, \$1,550; lavillabonita.com*

Join a Focus Group South Africa

For anyone eager to sharpen their photo-snapping skills, few classrooms beat South Africa's Sabi Sands Game Reserve. Among the potential subjects: a leopard with her cubs, a dazzle of grazing zebra, a pod of hippos sinking and rising in a waterhole like enormous bath toys. At safari operator and-Beyond's new Tengile River Lodge, wildlife photographer Andrew Schoeman helps guests with everything from lens choice and exposure settings to framing and editing shots. The 26,000-acre resort's specially equipped safari vehicle has camera mounts and other tech-y toys, lest the excitement of it all should make a snapper unsteady. Back at camp, meaning the sustainably stylish thatch-roofed suites with AC, lap pools, gym, massage area and decks overlooking the Tengile River, you can edit your work. *Accommodations from about \$1,400 a person based on two, with two game-drives a day, andbeyond.com*

POP THE QUESTION

Shutter the Thought

We asked pro photographers what irks them most about travel pics—and how to step up your own snaps



Michael Yamashita

National Geographic photographer and documentary filmmaker

"The selfie has become such a phenomenon. When people put themselves in front of a landmark or landscape, they're making a picture of what they're looking at—what's supposedly important—but they aren't really looking at it: The focus is on themselves. I teach a lot of workshops and my first piece of advice is to turn off the preview button that lets you see if you got the picture. It's called peeping, and for a professional, that's totally missing the point. Your time should be spent looking at your subject and looking at the light, waiting for the right moment to press the shutter. Photographers wait for moments, and you don't want to miss it. There's a time to be looking at pictures, and it's generally not in the field."



Gail Albert Halaban

Fine-art photographer whose most recent book, 'Italian Views,' was published in April (Aperture)

"So many people take photos of someone 'holding' a building, like the Leaning Tower of Pisa or the Eiffel Tower. This is fun to do with kids, but it won't provide any lasting memory of the place, and you bore your friends when sharing it. If I can buy a postcard of it, I don't want to spend time photographing it. I would rather take candid pictures of the local life than cliché photos of buildings. Once I was in Rome's Piazza Navona, and instead of focusing on the statues, I photographed into the window of a small toy store, where the reflections created a surreal and magical image—the statues and people in the plaza looked like toys on the shelves. When you go to a new place, look at it; don't just let the guidebook tell you what to see."



Taylor Peden and Jen Munkvold

Directors of Peden + Munk, who shot pics for this fall's 'Cooking for Good Times' (Lorena Jones Books)

"One pet peeve is the impersonal photo that people take to document they've been somewhere, then they add 20 million hashtags—that kind of takes the spirit away. Even great photographers don't always add a little life or personality to a travel photo. So often, every picture you can possibly imagine has been taken of a place. Sometimes we'll create a scenario or a still life: After a trip to Japan, for instance, we took an overhead shot of all the trinkets we'd bought and had fun fitting them together like puzzle pieces. When we have time, we make Blurb books [the online service Blurb lets users self-publish photo books] to share with friends. We're trying to keep the idea of the photo album alive."

—Edited from interviews by Donna Bulseco



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