



Wildfitness yoga in a boat

For most people, vacations are a time of complete relaxation, which often equates to indulgence and inactivity, and after a sedentary week filled with decadent food and drink, people return home feeling more lethargic and run-down than when they left. For those seeking a more active and engaging getaway, all-inclusive programs in the U.S. and abroad offer exceptional trips that not only focus on physical and mental wellbeing, but also expose guests to new cultures, all while ensuring comfort and luxury. From boot camp-style programs to bicycling tours to wellness travel, there are trips for every fitness level and goal, from losing weight to toning up to experiencing a new culture in an active environment.

THE BOOT CAMP

At The Ranch At Live Oak/Malibu guests are up at 5:30 a.m. to begin their day with light stretching followed by four to five hours of guided hiking in California's Santa Monica Mountains. In the afternoon, the activities continue with core and ab work, weight training and group yoga sessions. Founder and owner of The Ranch, Alex Glasscock, says the idea to start the program came from the "desire of my wife and I to

find a place where we could go to mentally unplug and physically be challenged and have no options."

This no-options philosophy may be strict, but it gets results. The intention of the program is for guests to lose fat and gain muscle, explains Glasscock. "By Thursday they can notice how their bodies are starting to lean up. If they put on the same clothes that they arrived in, they fit really differently, and they have a lot more energy." Besides the

Vacations should provide a much-needed break from the pressures and trials of the everyday, but that doesn't mean they also should be a break from a healthy lifestyle. These fitness vacations combine challenging activities with awe-inspiring locales and luxury amenities to create memorable and rewarding trips that leave guests energized and refreshed.

Vacation the Healthy Way

By Christine Aebischer



A Wildfitness class prepares for exercise on the beach. Wildfitness, which offers fitness holidays in Zanzibar, Andalucia, Crete and the Isle of Wight, believes that looking to nature and our evolutionary origins provides the most useful guide for how to be fit and healthy today. Guests go back to nature to develop lean, strong, flexible and injury-free bodies.

eight to 10 hours of physical activity per day, guests undergo a detoxifying diet devoid of alcohol, caffeine, processed sugars and meat. There are no choices in the organic vegetarian menu, with the exception of food allergies, but the 1,400-calorie-per-day diet includes seasonal and local ingredients (about half of the food comes from The Ranch's on-site garden) that are rich in color, flavor and texture and provide guests with balanced nutrition to satisfy and sustain them throughout the day.

While most guests choose The Ranch with the express purpose of improving their health and fitness, the picturesque Malibu backdrop and comfortable Mediterranean climate provide an ideal vacation setting. And the many luxurious elements, such as daily massages, acupuncture treatments, a tranquil pool and Jacuzzi and calming private rooms (described by Glasscock as "monastery chic"), ensure that guests receive much-needed relaxation. Personal phone and computer use is

Cyclists tour scenic American landscapes with TerraVelo Tours.



Escape to Shape guests relax with yoga among sea lions in the Galapagos.

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together they provide one-of-a-kind tours that combine cycling and other activities with luxurious amenities and five-star accommodations.

“When people think of luxury travel, they think of leaving the states, but the U.S. has some of the most gorgeous states and landscapes,” says Martin. Another thing people don’t usually associate with luxury travel: camping. But TerraVelo Tours is changing perceptions with their luxury camping, or glamping, amenities. The private 12-by-14-foot canvas sleeping tents are outfitted with memory-foam queen-size beds, Frette linens, carpeting, a dresser and lighting. “You have the luxuries of being in a hotel room, but you walk outside and you’re under a million stars,” shares Martin. “A lot of bike tours go to a restaurant and then a hotel, and that’s fine, but here you’re going to find a community, and experience things you wouldn’t otherwise. Sleeping outdoors is a whole different feel.”

Like most fitness vacations, each tour is kept to a small group, and with 10 to 12 on-site staff members per trip, TerraVelo is able to cater to all ability levels and individual needs throughout the trip. “We split up to make sure each group has a leader and a support van, and that each group is riding at its own pace,” explains Levine. The seven-day, six-night tours, which cost \$5,990, lead guests through the national parks of Southern Utah, past arches, canyons and hoodoos; around Yellowstone and Teton national parks for hot spring, geyser and bison sightings; or along the California coast through wineries and redwood forests. “They’re three really distinct but beautiful locations,” says Martin. “They each have their own challenges and their own rewards.”

After sunrise yoga and cycling in the morning, the group enjoys a gourmet lunch prepared by TerraVelo’s personal chef and then continues to explore the area through other activities, including hiking, water rafting, swim-

ming, surfing or horseback riding, depending on the location. To unwind after a challenging day, guests gather around a cozy campfire and enjoy special guests and presentations, including live music, an astronomer and a geologist. An in-camp masseuse is also on hand to relieve sore muscles. “This is the only vacation where you can do glamping, where you’re catered to, you’re never sacrificing any luxury, and you’re able to have an active vacation,” states Levine.

THE INTERNATIONAL ESCAPE

To satisfy the wanderlust of those who want to want to explore a new culture outside of the U.S., Escape to Shape boasts getaways to Chile, Germany, Morocco, Sicily and the Galapagos, to name a few. The goal of founders Erica Gragg and Francesco Anchisi was to combine their love of travel with their love of fitness to create once-in-a-lifetime experiences where guests are immersed in the country’s culture through athletic excursions, food and tours. “No other holiday provides traveling to unique and beautiful destinations with fitness in a way that allows you to connect with yourself and others and the culture,” shares Gragg.

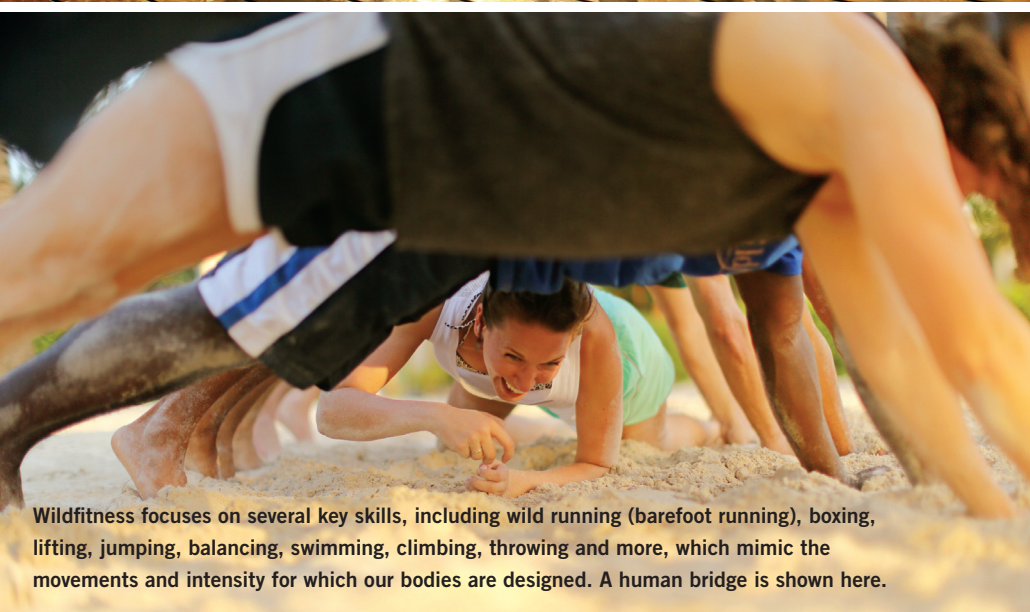
Gragg and her partner choose the locations well in advance after personally making sure they fit their requirements of culture, luxury and safety. Each year new locations are added — this year offers Sri Lanka, Berlin and Ecuador — but they do repeat trips, as well. Each night, guests receive a schedule for the next day detailing the events offered. No activities overlap, explains Gragg, so that guests can choose to do every activity, but they do not have to partake in all activities if they don’t



Guests at The Ranch at Live Oak/Malibu enjoy a meal as they reflect on the day’s activities.



Wildfitness kickboxing



Wildfitness focuses on several key skills, including wild running (barefoot running), boxing, lifting, jumping, balancing, swimming, climbing, throwing and more, which mimic the movements and intensity for which our bodies are designed. A human bridge is shown here.

not permitted on The Ranch, although they do have two phones and two computers on the premises for those who need it. “Our design was done for complete immersive reset,” shares Glasscock. “We’ve found that when people are highly connected, they may get physical results, but they’re not getting the mental results. We’ve found that people can really relax and let go when temptation is taken away.”

Education is also an important component to The Ranch’s program, with different staff members presenting on topics that are important to the guests each night. Guests also can partake in a garden tour and a cooking demonstration to learn more about food and nutrition. Even after the program ends, The Ranch follows up with its guests through newsletters to help them stick with the healthy habits they developed during their stay. The minimum stay at The Ranch is one week, with

a rate of \$6,500; although they now offer a four-day program in conjunction with the Four Seasons Hotel Westlake Village for \$3,800 for people who can’t get away for an entire week.

THE CYCLING TOUR

For those who want to explore some of the most breathtaking landscapes in the U.S. from a unique perspective, TerraVelo Tours offers week-long cycling trips through Southern Utah, Yellowstone and Teton national parks, and Northern California. “I feel very strongly that biking is the best way to experience a place,” says TerraVelo’s co-founder David Levine. “You feel every hill, feel the breeze, feel the day going from morning to afternoon to evening. You get the outdoor experience and you cover a lot of ground.” Levine, an avid cyclist who has been on bike tours through 20 countries, partnered with Rebecca Martin, an event producer, and

want to. No matter the location, three types of fitness elements are always offered: hiking/walking, yoga and boot camp-style classes, and then additional elements are added depending on the landscape, including kayaking, Pilates, cycling, surfing and horseback riding.

In the week-long Quito and Galapagos, Ecuador, trip, which is \$7,350, guests split their time between land and sea. A morning at sea starts with 7:00 a.m. yoga on the deck of a luxury yacht, followed by hiking through one of the islands, snorkeling, kayaking, more hiking and an afternoon stretching or Pilates class. “People are leaner and fit when they leave and they didn’t have to suffer in order to accomplish that,” says Gragg. “We find interesting ways to get exercise in without feeling like you’re exercising.”

Another way Escape to Shape immerses guests in the culture is through food. While

overall the menu is healthy and organic, whenever possible, Gragg does not believe in deprivation. “Food is such an important part of a culture, you want to experience the food,” she says. While a personal chef prepares most meals, travelers also have the added experience of eating at a few hand-picked restaurants, where the menus have been pre-selected to remove temptation.

Besides the obvious attractions of a fitness vacation, another reason more and more travelers are choosing these regimented trips is because of the planned curriculum they offer. Rather than depending on their own motivation to exercise while on holiday, fitness vacations make the decisions for the guests. “We get a lot of Type A personalities,” says Gragg. “They love how they can come on our trip and completely surrender because everything is the level and quality they expect.”