

# live & learn

Bring a sense of adventure to your next vacation with workshops that unleash your skills.

by [Amanda Castleman](#)



## Horse Whispering

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TANQUE VERDE RANCH, TUCSON, AZ

Brush up your cowpoke skills on the edge of Saguaro National Park, where America's largest cacti can grow 60 feet tall and weigh 4,800 pounds. Wranglers encourage guests to get dusty in the desert while grooming horses, mastering rodeo-riding basics and even rounding up cattle. Cowboy cookouts, outdoor yoga and wine tasting provide the perfect relaxation at the trail's end. (From \$450 per day, including room and board.)

[tanqueverderanch.com](http://tanqueverderanch.com)



## Scuba Certification

HOMESTEAD CRATER, MIDWAY, UT

Learn to scuba dive in the beehive-shaped Homestead Crater. Clear kingfisher-blue water fills half of this hollow limestone formation and sunshine streams through a hole in its 55-foot-high dome. At 90°–96°F, the geothermal spring runs hotter than the Caribbean’s 81°F average, helping simmer away any exam nerves during the two-day courses (from \$350). But visitors don’t have to descend deep to enjoy this natural wonder: other activities include swimming, snorkeling and paddleboard yoga.

[homesteadresort.com](http://homesteadresort.com)



## National Geographic Photography Workshop

PARIS, FRANCE

Capture the splendor of the Eiffel Tower at sunrise or the Panthéon at twilight under the guidance of world-class photographers Sisse Brimberg and Cotton Coulson (next offered April 9–15 and October 1–7, 2014). The program mixes fieldwork with classroom time for editing and critiquing images and takes students as far afield as Versailles, Louis XIV’s immense, sumptuous palace (40 minutes west of the city). Other highlights include the Latin Quarter, the striking Centre Pompidou and Montparnasse, the bohemian neighborhood where Hemingway and Picasso once mingled (7 days, \$3,995 including accommodation).

[nationalgeographicexpeditions.com](http://nationalgeographicexpeditions.com)

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## Paddle Through History

LAKE LOUISE, ALBERTA, CANADA

Cross the emerald waters of Lake Louise in a canvas-and-cedar-strip canoe as a historian shares tales of the natives, explorers and fur trappers of the Canadian Rockies (\$20 child, \$39 adult). Set in the heart of Banff National Park—part of a UNESCO World Heritage site—this glacier-fed expanse recently hosted the sixth episode of the popular reality TV series *The Bachelor*. To get there, take the luxurious Rocky Mountaineer train from Seattle and savor the stunning rugged landscape.

[fairmont.com/lake-louise](http://fairmont.com/lake-louise)

Photography: Courtesy of Tanque Verde Ranch; (opposite page), courtesy of Homestead Crater; National Geographic Creative; Fairmont Hotels & Resorts



## Ship-Building

WOODENBOAT SCHOOL, BROOKLIN, ME

In a time-capsule coastal town, artisans can hone their woodworking expertise by constructing kayaks, nutshell dinghies and northeaster dories. After a six-day course, participants get to paddle home in seaworthy sassafras canoes. The school, set amid the pines of the Blue Hill Peninsula, invites budding shipwrights to camp, rent simple rooms or live aboard moored vessels while they learn this traditional trade (\$800 plus meals, materials and accommodation).

[thewoodenboatschool.com](http://thewoodenboatschool.com)

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## FAMILY FUN

### Sleep in the 17th Century at Plimoth Plantation (Plymouth, Mass.)

Be an early settler for a weekend. This living-history museum invites families to don pilgrim attire and cook over open hearths before snuggling into bed (\$600 for up to six people). [plimoth.org](http://plimoth.org)

### Space Out at NASA

(Kennedy Space Center, Fla.) For the first time, visitors can touch down on one of the pads that launched the space shuttles and Apollo moon missions (\$19 child, \$25 adult). [kennedyspacecenter.com](http://kennedyspacecenter.com)

### Cook at Chopping Block

(Chicago, Ill.) This school starts prepping chefs as young as 3 with classes on pizza and carrot cupcakes, then moves on to sushi, ravioli and chicken empanadas (\$20–35). [thechoppingblock.net](http://thechoppingblock.net)

### Camping 101 at Texas State Parks

(various locations, Texas) Outdoor family workshops teach tenting basics each spring through fall, as well as geocaching, kayaking and wildlife watching (from \$65 per family). [tpwd.state.tx.us](http://tpwd.state.tx.us)

### Family Circus Classes at FOCUSfish

(Topanga, Calif.) This fitness nonprofit encourages parents and kids to swing, spin and fly through the air. “At \$10 per family member, it’s cheaper than going to the movies and much more rewarding,” says Executive Director Kristy Beauvais. [focusfish.com](http://focusfish.com)

### Rock Climbing at the Sierra Mountain Center

(Bishop, Calif.) Learn to scale crags with one-day courses in the Sierra Nevada Range (\$130 per person, including all gear). [sierramountaincenter.com](http://sierramountaincenter.com)

## Culinary Boot Camp

SANTA FE SCHOOL OF COOKING, NM

An intensive three-day program immerses chefs in the history and techniques of Southwestern cuisine (\$1,250). Recipes stress the traditional “three sisters”—corn, beans and squash—and another spicy local favorite, red chili peppers. This internationally acclaimed school also dishes up shorter hands-on classes on tamales, salsas and hot sauces—great cultural diversions between tours of historic downtown Santa Fe.

[santafeschoolofcooking.com](http://santafeschoolofcooking.com)

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Round up the kids for these great learning getaways near you.

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