



A GLOBETROTTER'S
GUIDE TO THE
LATEST IN TRAVEL

Dare to defy gravity as you climb
above the turquoise waters of
Tonsai Beach and conquer Krabi's
legendary limestone cliffs.



DISCOVERIES

20 Epic Escapes: Thrills from Every Corner of the Earth

From high-altitude skydives to ancient archery rituals, we've rounded up 20 pulse-raising adventures that redefine what it means to play, explore, and truly feel alive. **By Punita Malhotra**



CROSS-COUNTRY SKIING IN FINLAND

Slice through powdered silence in Finland's frostbitten wonderland, where groomed trails wind through snow-laden forests and over frozen fells. The air bites, your breath fogs, and the landscape stretches into endless whiteness. Pick Ylläs to be seduced by Finland's longest ski trails—think 500 km of routes, including options for adventurous trek skiing. Levi, on the other hand, pulses with alpine energy and the après-ski charm of the lively village. And Europe's northernmost ski resort, Saariselkä, is your front-row seat to the auroras, where Arctic wilds roll on forever. Pick your place for meditation in motion. The best part? Snow is guaranteed from November to April, with long hills for beginners and off-piste challenges for pros. And the bonus? Glass igloos, the golden midnight sun, and the hush of the polar night. visitfinland.com



TREKKING IN PATAGONIA, ARGENTINA

Spanning southern Argentina and Chile, Patagonia is a vast wilderness where the Andes unravel into wind-swept steppes, thundering rivers, and crystal-clear, glacier-fed lakes. Torres del Paine and Los Glaciares National Parks win hands down as the top ports of call. First things first: get up close with the mind-blowing Perito Moreno Glacier, one of the few glaciers still advancing and producing spectacular ice-calving shows. Then crush the Laguna de los Tres trail all the way to the base of Mount Fitz Roy, and be blown away by sky-high, jagged granite peaks. Next, dive into the W Trek in Torres del Paine for insane views of craggy peaks, ancient glaciers, and turquoise lakes. It's an unforgettable adventure through some of the most breathtaking wilderness on Earth. But that's just the beginning in the ultimate outdoor arena, with over 1,600 kilometres of marked hiking trails. gadventures.com

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3 WHITE-WATER RAFTING IN KAITUNA RIVER, NEW ZEALAND

Just 20 minutes from Rotorua is a head-on encounter with nature's liquid rollercoaster on the Kaituna River—an electrifying stretch of white-water mayhem snaking through New Zealand's lush Bay of Plenty. Paddle through grade 5 rapids, navigate swirling whirlpools, and crash down Okere and Kaituna Falls. Then brace yourself for the vertical freefall over Tutea, a 7-metre (21-foot) plunge that claims the title of the tallest commercially rafted waterfall on Earth. All the action is crammed into a 1.5-kilometre stretch, exploding with gnarly rapids and jaw-clenching drops to test your grit and grip. You may not have time to admire the river's narrow volcanic gorge, cloaked in native rainforest, on this fast, furious, and absolutely unforgettable joyride. Whether you're a first-timer or a white-water veteran, Kaituna delivers a hit of adrenaline that'll stay with you long after you've dried off. rotorua-rafting.co.nz

FROM LEFT: SHUTTERSTOCK; NURPHOTO/GETTY IMAGES



4 CANYONING IN JALBIRE, NEPAL

Jalbire's canyons in the Siwalik Hills of central Nepal are raw, roaring, and ready to mess with your pulse. Just beyond Chitwan National Park, Lamo Jharana (Jalbire Canyoning) is Nepal's newest playground for thrill junkies—yet mellow enough for kids and first-timers to take that leap of faith. Just 97 kilometres from Pokhara and 117 kilometres from Kathmandu, it's close enough to reach—far enough to escape. This one's all splash and scramble at 100 metres above sea level, with a 12-metre waterfall. Rappel down vertical canyon drops, manoeuvre through narrow passages, plunge into ice-cold pools, and scramble across slippery rock faces. Water roars, mist stings, adrenaline spikes. It's a real-life adventure park out there. northnepaltrek.com



FROM TOP: FRANK GÜNTHER/GETTYIMAGES; SHUTTERSTOCK

5 KITESURFING IN FUERTEVENTURA, SPAIN

Shallow lagoons, wave-riddled stretches, and relentless currents demand total focus along these sections of the second-largest of Spain's Canary Islands. Picture the wild winds of Fuerteventura, with fierce Atlantic gusts propelling you through the surf in an electrifying rush. Corralejo, Lajares, and El Cotillo are the island's holy trinity of wind and wave. In Corralejo, you'll find a playground of shifting dunes, turquoise lagoons, and reliable swell—perfect for beginners and freestyle pros alike. Lajares is a cool inland surfer village with hip cafés, board-shaping studios, and easy access to north shore breaks. El Cotillo, raw and rugged, offers untamed reef waves and sunset sessions on volcanic beaches. Fair warning: syncing every move with the pulse of the Atlantic Ocean can get addictive. ion-club.net

6 GOLFING IN ALGARVE, PORTUGAL

In the Algarve, golf is a game of grit and grace, set against ochre cliffs, pine-lined fairways, and endless Atlantic horizons. With over 30 courses carved into this sun-drenched coastline, each swing battles sea winds and navigates wild terrain, and every shot feels like communion with nature. Tee off at the “Grande Dame,” Dom Pedro do Lobo in Vilamoura, famed for its dramatic water hazards and tight fairways weaving through umbrella pines. Take on the 27-hole Palmares, a stunning blend of parkland and links-style holes with sweeping ocean views, or put your money into Monte Rei, Portugal's premier championship course set in a sprawling 1,000 acres between the Serra do Caldeirão mountains and the Atlantic Ocean. Sport or soul? You decide. golfbreaks.com



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7 SCUBA DIVING IN ANDAMANS, INDIA

Plunge headfirst into a diver's dreamscape where colourful coral reefs soar like ancient fortresses guarding one of the planet's last pristine marine worlds. Just off India's eastern coast, this underwater playground pulses with darting schools of neon fish, while ghostly manta rays and elusive reef sharks patrol the blue. Neil Island, dazzling with kaleidoscopic coral walls and swirling shoals, is perfect for drift dives that feel like flying through liquid colour. Head for Barren Island, India's only active volcano, to gain bragging rights at dive sites shaped by lava flows and packed with rare critters. With water visibility often over 30 metres and warm tropical temperatures year-round, the Andamans score high for every level, from beginners taking their first plunge to advanced divers chasing enigmatic wrecks. Say yes to realms untouched by human hands. diveindia.com



8 MOUNTAIN BIKING IN CRETE, GREECE

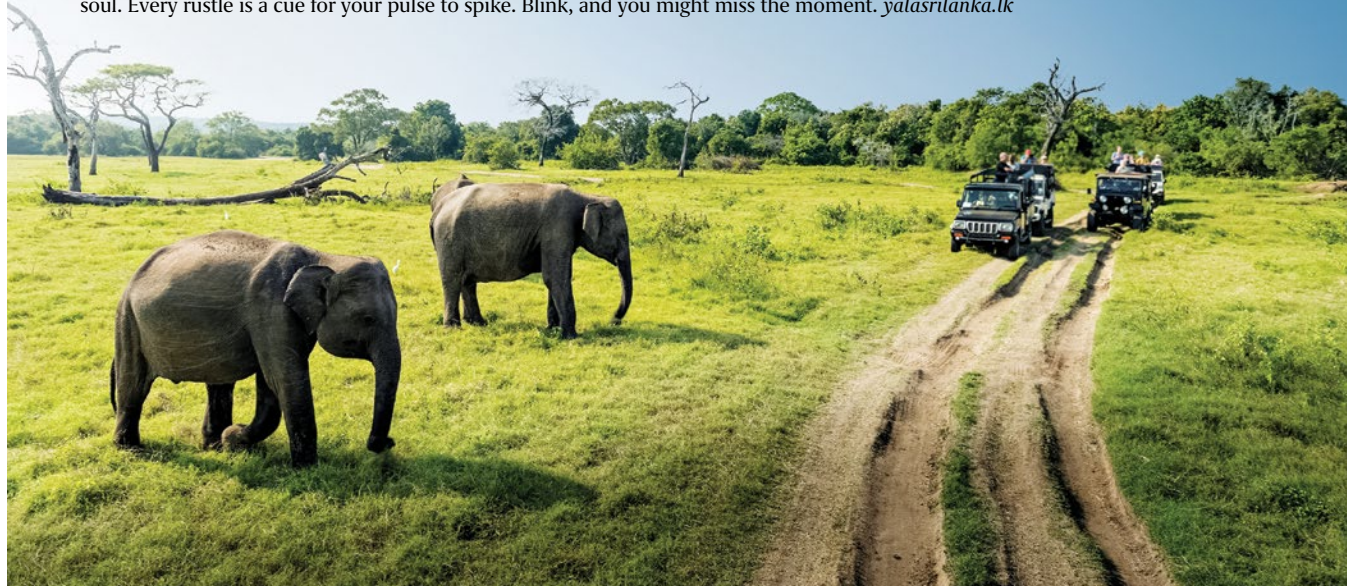
Straddle the mythical spine of the ‘Cradle of Greek Civilisation’, the rugged heartland of Crete. Exploring the beaches, mountainscapes, fertile valleys, and steep gorges of Greece's largest island on two wheels is an active adventurer's fantasy, played out in real life. As you power up the lung-burning switchbacks of Mount Psiloritis, the island's highest peak, standing tall at 2,456 metres, every pedal stroke tests your grit and rewards you with jaw-dropping views. Plunge into the rust-red fury of Samaria Gorge, Europe's longest gorge, carved over millennia with towering cliffs and wild, untamed beauty. For a twist in the tale, weave through the sun-drenched olive groves and Venetian alleys of Rethymno, where history and nature run in parallel themes. From grinding ascents to wind-whipped descents, this is a full-throttle Mediterranean adventure fuelled by ancient myths and epic landscapes. Flex those muscles, push your limits, and ride the legend until you reach your limit. cyclingcreta.gr



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WILDLIFE SAFARI IN YALA NATIONAL PARK, SRI LANKA

Spanning 979 square kilometres of Sri Lanka's southeast and brushing the shores of the Indian Ocean, Yala National Park is the country's fiercest stage for wildlife drama. Designated a wildlife sanctuary in 1900 and a national park in 1938, this contiguous system of nine connected areas will surprise you with its diverse ecosystems, including dry thorn forests, freshwater lagoons, sandy beaches, and marshlands. Yala's claim to fame? The highest density of leopards in the world. Prepare for glimpses of these elusive big cats as they stalk silently through the undergrowth. Plus, there are herds of wild elephants, sambar deer, sloth bears, crocodiles, and over 200 bird species—so choose your showstopper. With the best viewing season from February to July, Yala promises a heart-pounding encounter with Sri Lanka's wild soul. Every rustle is a cue for your pulse to spike. Blink, and you might miss the moment. yalasilanka.lk



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QUAD BIKING IN NAMIB DESERT, NAMIBIA



Throttle up and charge into the Earth's oldest desert and one of its most surreal natural playgrounds. Stretching over 2,000 kilometres from Namibe in Angola to the Olifants River in South Africa, this sun-scorched expanse is a mesmerising mix of emptiness and drama. Easily reached via a short flight or five-hour drive from Windhoek, Namibia's capital, the quirky coastal town of Swakopmund is the launchpad for adrenaline junkies to swap tarmac for sand tracks. Just beyond, where the Skeleton Coast collides with the Naukluft Mountains, quad biking morphs into a full-blown desert odyssey. Ride the razor edge of Sossusvlei's legendary red dunes, some towering over 300 metres high. Snake through dry riverbeds, carve up wind-sculpted ridges, and kick up clouds of ochre dust. Oscillate between thrill and transcendence as speed turns into perspective. In the stillness of nowhere, you feel both infinitesimally small and wildly, unmistakably alive. namibiadesertexplorers.com

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DOG SLEDGING IN SWEDISH LAPLAND

Two hundred kilometres north of the Arctic Circle, in the remote wilds of Jukkasjärvi near Kiruna, far north of Swedish Lapland, dog sledging is a rite of winter passage. Here, where temperatures nosedive to -30°C and daylight barely brushes the landscape, you'll be pulled by a team of eager huskies on a race through the snow-laden wilderness of icy lakes, frost-kissed forests, and powder-white tundra. The only sounds? Pounding paws of sledge runners slicing through snow, and your breath crystallising in the air. This is Sámi reindeer country, one of the last places in Europe where nature still rules. Look up, and the northern sky might crack open with the green glow of the Aurora Borealis. Decode every flake of this crystalline Arctic dreamscape as you zip through the biting chill and defrost in style at the world's largest Ice Hotel, with a cocktail glass carved from glacier. jokkmokkguiderna.com

FROM LEFT: SHUTTERSTOCK; WOLFGANG KAEHLER/GETTY IMAGES

12

KAYAKING IN GLACIER BAY, ALASKA, USA

Paddle through prehistoric silence in Alaska's Glacier Bay National Park, a 3.3-million-acre wilderness where ice, ocean, and time collide. This UNESCO World Heritage Site, tucked into the southeast corner of Alaska, is home to over 1,000 glaciers, some plunging straight into the sea in thunderous calving displays. Launch your sea kayak from Bartlett Cove, the headquarters of Glacier Bay National Park, and slip into a stillness broken only by the rhythmic splash of your paddle. Drifting past towering ice cliffs, emerald fjords, and ancient tidewater glaciers, keep your eyes peeled for humpback whales breaching, sea otters floating like fuzzy buoys, and sea lions basking on rock outcrops. When the ice cliffs fall into the sea in thunderous crashes, you'll want to seal the spectacle in your mind's eye forever. glacierbayseakayaks.com





13 BOULDERING IN HAMPI, INDIA

Hampi's ancient stone jungle is a battleground for the bold. Scaling granite monoliths billions of years old demands as much muscle as nerve. These aren't just climbs; they're confrontations with gravity and time. Kick off at Matanga Hill, the highest peak in Hampi, where challenging highball problems and sharp granite edges push even seasoned climbers to their limits. Reach the summit and soak in jaw-dropping views of sprawling ruins and the Tungabhadra River snaking through the valley below. For a gentler, equally magical experience, head to Hemakuta Hill, where boulders rub shoulders with ancient temples, promising smooth traverses and perfect sunset climbs. But the real heartbeat of Hampi bouldering pulses in the Cosmic Boulder and Ganesh Boulder, lying on the Tungabhadra riverside. Packed with crimps, overhangs, and dynamic moves, every ascent is electrifying. So, which will be your arena in this bedrock of history? goldenboulders.com

14 ARCHERY IN BHUTAN



In the Land of the Thunder Dragon, archery isn't just Bhutan's national sport; it's a spirited cultural celebration. Across the kingdom, from sacred monasteries to remote village courtyards, the twang of bowstrings echoes as arrows slice through mountain air, targeting hand-carved wooden boards 145 metres away—nearly twice the Olympic standard. Crafted from bamboo and iron, the traditional bows demand finesse and fortitude. It's part precision, part pageantry, complete with song, dance, and good-natured mockery. Step onto the field during a local *tsechu* (festival) or weekend match in Paro or Thimphu, and you'll be swept into a whirl of camaraderie, storytelling, and ritual. Expect to be offered *ara* (local spirit), grilled yak skewers, and a front-row seat to Bhutanese joy in full flight. Drawing a bow in Bhutan involves participating in a living tradition where sport meets spirituality and community takes centre stage. Come for the fun, stay for the bullseye. breathebhutan.com

15 VOLCANO HIKE IN BALI, INDONESIA

Set your alarm for 3 a.m. and lace up for a spiritual ascent to Mount Batur, a still-active stratovolcano standing at 1,717 metres, just in time to catch the first light of day. Located in the Kintamani district of central Bali, it is a sacred site for the Balinese, revered in mythology and rituals as the abode of deities and ancestral spirits. As you climb under starlit skies, your torchlight dances on narrow switchbacks and volcanic gravel. Is that the soft hiss of a sulphur vent? The reward is a celestial spectacle that could widen even the most jaded eye—Lake Batur, a crescent-shaped volcanic lake nestled in the caldera, glowing ethereally below with mist curling on its surface like breath. Across the horizon rises Mount Agung, Bali's tallest and most sacred volcano, standing in quiet reverence beneath a sky streaked with orange and gold. bagusbalisunrise.com



16 DEEP WATER SOLOING IN RAILAY, THAILAND

In the turquoise embrace of the Andaman Sea, the towering limestone karsts of Railay rise like jagged crowns, a vertical playground sculpted by time and tide. This is Deep Water Soloing (DWS) paradise: no ropes, no harness, just chalked hands, sheer cliffs, and the sea below to catch your fall. Accessible only by boat, Railay's Ton Sai and Phra Nang peninsulas, near Krabi, are world-famous for their dramatic overhangs and stalactite-covered walls. Start by clambering off a longtail boat onto a rock face, your fingers searching for holds on sun-warmed stone as the swell surges below. With every bare-handed grip and heart-thumping reach, defy gravity and flirt with freefall. Whether you're tackling beginner-friendly traverses a few metres above the water or pushing limits on 20-metre high overhangs like Escher World or Humanity, the game is the same: climb until you slip, then plunge with a splash into jade-green waters. krabirockclimbing.com



17 CENOTE DIVING IN MEXICO

Sink beneath the depths of Mexico's Yucatán Peninsula in search of cenotes. These natural limestone sinkholes, formed millions of years ago by the collapse of cave ceilings, are believed to be sacred portals to the underworld in ancient Maya cosmology. From the sun-drenched shores of Playa del Carmen, Tulum, or Puerto Aventuras, it's a short inland journey into the jungle's secret underworld, where hundreds of cenotes dot the landscape like hidden blue eyes. Bookmark Dos Ojos, a vast twin-cavern system spanning over 80 kilometres of explored passageways; The Pit, one of the region's deepest cenotes, plunging to over 120 feet; and Tajma Ha, known for its dazzling light effects and fossil-studded ceilings. Navigate tunnels lined with cathedral-like stalactites and stalagmites, encounter fossilised coral and marine life embedded in the rock. It's a journey through the Earth's veins and into the heart of Mayan myth. prodivinternational.com





18 SKYDIVING IN EVEREST REGION, NEPAL

At 23,000 feet, above the stark majesty of the Great Himalayas, leap from a plane into the razor-thin air above the world's tallest peak. One of the highest commercial skydives on the planet, launched from Syangboche, is a feat of both adrenaline and altitude. Below, Everest Base Camp looks like a tiny speck. No engine roar, no distractions—just the wind howling in your ears and the Himalayan giants closing in. For a fleeting moment, time forgets to move. And then, the moment the ripcord pulls—pure silence. As your parachute blooms above the ice kingdom and your descent softens, the surreal spectacle below reveals itself in high definition: glacial rivers etched into valleys, prayer flags fluttering in the wind, and yak trails winding through ancient mountain passes. You'll need acclimatisation, courage, and a love of extremes—because falling through the sky above Everest is no ordinary bucket-list tick. It's transcendence. everestskydive.com



19 SURFING IN ARUGAM BAY, SRI LANKA

Reef breaks roar and salt air stings as you face down the Indian Ocean's pulse on Sri Lanka's untamed east coast, where each wave is a trial of torque, timing, and tenacity. Once a sleepy fishing village, the crescent-shaped Arugam Bay transforms with the season into Asia's ultimate right-hand surf mecca, drawing boardriders from across the globe. Paddle through lucid flow, carving the line like your soul depends on it. From beginner beach breaks at Baby Point to the fast, hollow runs at Main Point and the long, peeling perfection of Peanut Farm, each wave is a blank canvas and your board the brush. Feel the drop, commit to the carve, and let the undercurrents take over. With salt in your eyes and rhythm in your blood, even the wipeouts feel like flight. Here, you don't just ride waves—you become one. arugambaysurfcenter.com



20 POLAR BEAR EXPEDITION IN MANITOBA, CANADA

Out on the frozen tundra of northern Manitoba, winter brings with it the monarchs of the North. From the tiny frontier town of Churchill, perched on the edge of Hudson Bay, fly into an icy outpost where the wild reigns supreme. Aboard a specially designed tundra vehicle, venture deep into bear country, trundling across permafrost plains and frozen willow groves. Peek through the windows to catch them lounging, pacing, approaching your vehicle, even locking their black eyes with yours through frosted glass. Mothers with cubs, young males play-fighting, or a lone bear silhouetted against the lavender dusk—what will luck bring your way? With expert naturalists decoding every paw print and snowdrift, it's a dive deep into survival, climate, and ecology. Who knows, even the northern lights may decide to show, choreographing their rainbow dance across the polar night sky. Stay hooked on paradise. nathab.com 🌐