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Why not explore these new horizons?

Not all holidays involve sun, sea and sand – some offer a chance to learn

For some, a holiday is a chance to relax, put their feet up and relax. However, for others it's an opportunity to learn a new skill while meeting like-minded people and visiting new destinations. Here are some examples of what's on offer.

Salsa in Cuba

With a maximum group size of 15, what better way to learn Salsa than on a 15-night holiday in Santiago de Cuba, the home of Bacardi rum. You can perfect your salsa moves with 30 hours of tuition, partnered by your own dance tutor, plus cultural visits and nights out to dance clubs and music venues. As well as small group tuition with professional Cuban tutors there are accompanied nights out to a wide range of music clubs and dance venues to practise your moves, from the famous Casa de la Trova in the city centre to small local clubs in other neighbourhoods. *www.responsibletravel.com*

Painting in Italy

The Watermill at Posara, Tuscany, runs week-long painting courses with internationally renowned tutors, designed to help both experienced painters and beginners. Courses cover painting in watercolours, oils, pastels, acrylics and other media. Courses run from Saturday to Saturday. Sunday is usually spent painting at or nearby the Watermill and on other days there are painting trips to an ancient castle and village, a local market, a secluded convent and a thousand-year-old hilltop village. Oh, and you get one day off with an excursion by train to the walled city of Lucca or to the fishing villages of the Cinque Terre. *www.watermill.net*

Horse Riding in Patagonia

For wannabe cowboys and equestrians looking for something different, this can tick lots of boxes. Accompanied by an expert guide and local baqueano (cowboy), you'll ride across the plains, forests and lagoons of Torres del Paine National Park and stay on traditional estancias (ranches) and deluxe camps along the way. You'll pack four days of gear onto your horse and explore lakes, rivers and vast Patagonian pampas with the Paine range as a backdrop and gauchos for companions. Watch condors soaring in the skies above you, soak

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Ski

Solos has announced the addition of new ski destinations for the upcoming winter season, catering exclusively to solo skiers seeking adventure and camaraderie.

NEW: Les Deux Alpes, France
For winter 2025/26, Solos offers a brand new ski holiday in Les Deux Alpes, one of Europe's top resorts and home to a glacier at 3,600m. With snow-sure slopes and runs for all levels, beginners can build confidence on gentle nursery areas and glacier pistes, while intermediates enjoy vast terrain and advanced skiers tackle challenging reds, blacks and off-piste. Guests stay at Hotel Ibiza, a three-star base with panoramic views of the Ecrins National Park.
A seven-night Les Deux Alpes Ski, France trip, departing on January 17, costs from £2,399pp.

NEW: Meribel, French Alps
Solos has added Méribel-Mottaret to its ski programme. Set at 1,750m in the heart of Les Trois Vallées, the world's largest ski area, it offers guests direct access to 600km of pistes linking Courchevel, Val Thorens and Les Menuires. The vast ski domain caters for every level, from gentle beginner slopes to challenging high-altitude descents, with sweeping views across the French Alps. Off the slopes, Méribel offers a lively après-ski scene, perfect for solo travellers looking to ski and socialise. Guests stay at Hôtel Le Mottaret, a ski-in, ski-out property located right on the slopes beside the ESF ski school and hire shop. The hotel features comfortable rooms, a bar and restaurant, and a spa area to unwind after a day on the mountain.
A seven-night Meribel trip, departing on January 10 costs from £3,255pp, including a standard room for solo use, breakfast and a five-course dinner daily.

Arinsal Intermediate, Andorra
Following the success of last year's Beginner's Ski Week in Arinsal, Andorra, Solos is offering a Intermediate Ski Week this winter. Nestled in the Pyrenees between France and Spain, Andorra's Vallnord-Pal Arinsal ski resort offers great-value skiing, a friendly village atmosphere, and slopes that are ideal for improvers, with 63km of pistes linked by 44 lifts. Guests stay at the Yomo Patagonia Hotel, a modern property set at the foot of the resort just 50m from the main six-seat ski lift.
A seven-night Arinsal trip, departing on March 1, costs from £2,099pp. This includes return flights and transfers.

Contact Solos on 020 8951 2900, www.solosholidays.com

TRAVEL

Learning holidays with Mike Pickup





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in the views of waterfalls, lagoons and forests and see the majestic Balmaceda and Serrano glaciers up close from a scenic boat trip on the Serrano River. This is what lifetime memories are made of.

www.swoop-patagonia.com

Cooking in Spain

If you're looking to take your cooking skills to the next level then look no further than the long-established Annie B's Spanish Kitchen. Based in Vejer de la Frontera, the holidays on offer are not just about food. Spend your days cooking up a storm, whilst at night you can explore Vejer's tapas bars and restaurants before returning to a beautiful boutique hotel. Your free time can be spent exploring beautiful Vejer, having lunch in Tangiers or simply stretched out on one of the stunning nearby beaches. From visits to Sherry wine bodegas and vineyards to tapas tours, you can embrace the local food and culture whilst learning to create memorable dishes.

Playing Bridge, UK and overseas

If you are a Bridge enthusiast then what better way to enjoy a holiday in a great destination, interspersed with Bridge games and the change to meet the experts and many like-minded players. Fred. Holidays offers a range of Bridge holidays in places such as Madeira, Portugal, Malta, Tunisia and more. For those not wanting to travel too far there are also holidays closer to home in Glasgow, Guildford, the English Riviera and other UK destinations. Combine great activities, sight-seeing and the company of fellow enthusiasts.

www.fredbridgeholidays.co.uk

Sailing in the Adriatic

Ever fancied the idea of sailing a yacht round the Greek Islands? Well, you can and you don't need to be wealthy or even an experienced sailor. Flotilla sailing is lots of fun, your own yacht, sailing with a number of others, from port to port and spending each evening with the other crews in delightful destinations. Based in Agana, Croatia and Lefkas, Greece, the Sunsail Flotilla Starter course is designed to get your sailing skills up to speed while you enjoy a flotilla holiday. Devised for complete beginners, Flotilla Starter lets you learn to sail under an RYA-accredited instructor while enjoying an exciting flotilla holiday so you can enjoy all the fun of sailing and learn as you go along.

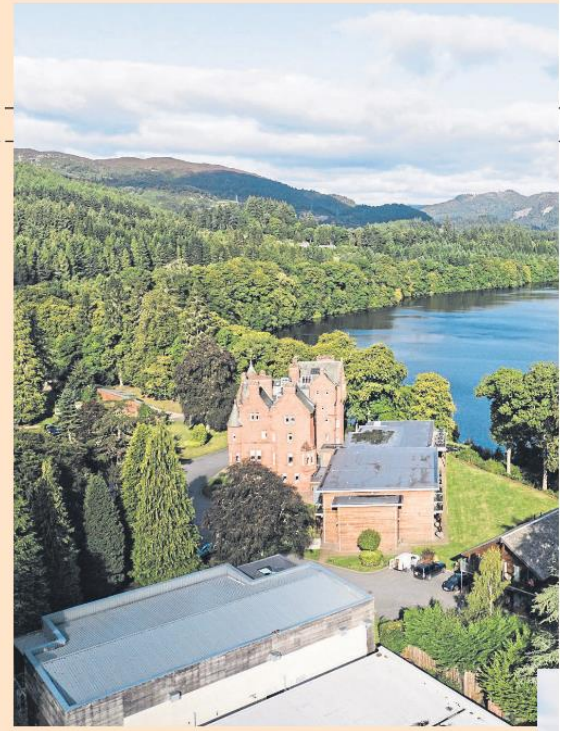
www.sunsail.com/uk

Scuba Diving in Indonesia

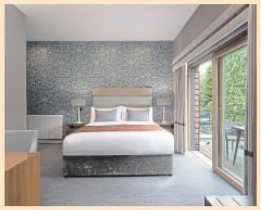
Whether sailing through the coral-rich reefs of Raja Ampat, drifting alongside manta rays in Komodo, or exploring the lesser-known atolls of eastern Indonesia, Rascal Voyages makes it possible to learn to dive on any itinerary. Onboard instructors guide guests through tailored courses and introductory dives, meaning even complete beginners can safely discover the underwater world, while seasoned divers can further their skills amidst some of the planet's most pristine marine environments. It's a rare chance to pair the indulgence of a private yacht with the thrill of mastering a new adventure at sea. Experience Travel Group offers holidays to Indonesia on board Rascal Voyages.

www.experiencetravelgroup.com

Whatever you choose you will come home with a new set of skills, new friends and a lifetime of memories.







Pitlochry with Lauren Robertson

Castle serves up best plates and palettes of the season

Even as someone who proudly lives in the Highlands, I would consider abandoning my pride to say Perthshire is the place to be in autumn.

It is hard to beat its vast forests peppered with reds, ambers and yellows, its lochs that look deeper and darker than at any other time of year and the rolling hills that tease white tops. Those were the views that surrounded us at we approached Fonab Castle, setting us up for the ultimate autumn staycation.

We had driven past the hotel many times on the A9, but it is so cleverly concealed from the road that we hadn't seen its true majesty until we pulled in for