



ROAD SCHOLAR

OBJECTIVE:

Improve your golf game. Cook a gourmet meal. Take a Harley for a spin. We've planned 12 getaways to 12 fabulous places where you can relax, recharge, and get a little smarter in the process

EDITED BY:

CHRISTINE SPEER &
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INFORMATION AND ADDITIONAL TRIPS, PAGE 92

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“Rail meat”: the regatta term for the sailors who throw their body weight against the rails of a ship to prevent capsizing. In all my (limited) sailing experience, I've only ever been rail meat: It's the best job to give the clueless. To avoid such physical punishment again (and validate those docksiders in my closet), I headed to the Florida Keys, where sailing-world darlings Doris and Steve Colgate run an Offshore Sailing School, for an intense three-day course. After some classroom time, I stepped upon a slick sailboat with my instructor, Lori, and a group of fellow nautical novices. Turned out I was a natural at the helm, finding the balance of tension on the wind and steering into it, loving the loud crack of the sails as my classmates jibbed to my shouted “Jib ho!” Getting to give the orders—I could get used to that. —*Jessica Vermeer Hawkes*



SYLLABUS

Offshore Sailing School's three-day “Learn to Sail” package starts around \$1,235 per person and includes a textbook. (Take a look before your first class meeting.) The days are divided into classroom and on-boat teaching (above). At the end, you'll earn your Day Sailing Certification, and you'll even get a free practice sail—sans instructor. The deal also includes a room for three nights at Hawks Cay (see below).

BUNK

Hawks Cay (right) sits on a 60-acre Florida Keys island called Duck Key.

and everything on the property feels brand-new—five swimming pools, five restaurants, Playstations in the room. Rooms (right) start at \$175, and private villas at \$225.

STUDY BREAK

Hawks Cay is all about the water, and there are plenty of non-sailing activities. Board a boat of a different kind—say, a 40-foot powerboat—and head out in the Atlantic to catch tuna, yellowtail, snapper or mahi-

mahi; chartered fishing expeditions leave from the on-property marina and start at around \$600 for half a day. There's also the



more hands-on spearfishing, scuba diving, and swimming around with



dolphins in a lagoon at **Dolphin Connection** (\$155). Or, if you've got a car, Key West is a beautiful 60-mile drive south.

MEAL PLAN

Hawks Cay has five restaurants with everything from poolside chicken fingers to super-fresh seafood. Have an alfresco beachside lunch at the **Beach Grill**. (Order the local fish favorite, wahoo.) **Alma's** modern design matches its trendy global/Latin menu. With rum flights on offer, what could go wrong? At the marina, **Tom's Harbor House** is a casual restaurant that serves the freshest catches of the day—don't miss the grouper—hauled in by local fisherman.



LEARN TO SAIL

DESTINATION:
**FLORIDA
KEYS**

CLASS TIME:
3 DAYS

DIFFICULTY LEVEL:
HARD

EXTRA CREDIT

Back in Philly: Keep your sea legs steady by studying (on the Delaware!) at **Liberty Sailing School** (303 North Front Street, 215-923-7245, libertsailingschool.com). Classes—on everything from docking to foul-weather sailing—start around \$250.

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FALL
TRAVEL
2009

SKILL:

LEARN TO TAKE PHOTOS

DESTINATION:
**JACKSON
HOLE,
WYOMING**

CLASS TIME:
5-6 HOURS

DIFFICULTY LEVEL:
EASY



SYLLABUS

At Spring Creek Ranch (see below), photographer Scott McKinley (whose work has been published in *National Geographic, Audubon, Field & Stream*) leads guests on a five-to-six-hour instructional **photo safari** at \$150 a pop. You bring the manual-focus camera (digital is easier, so you can see your shots immediately), he offers patient one-on-one guidance, and Wyoming provides the scenery.

BUNK

Spring Creek Ranch (right and far right) offers a gaggle of

quaint mountain-top log cabins with fireplaces, bearskin throws and flat-screen TVs. Rooms (from \$175 a night) and villas (from \$250 to \$1,500 a night) boast postcard views of the Grand Tetons and the eponymous national park—some of the last unmarred wilderness in the



STUDY BREAK

You can grab a (free) Spring Creek shuttle downtown for restaurants and souvenirs, but the wild

A \$250 **visit with cosmic consultant** Carol Mann will offer insights as to where your soul has been. (Mine has gone about its earthly business as a court jester, a troubadour, a political cartoonist.) Admit it ... you're curious.

MEAL PLAN

The elegant (but



casual—you're in Wyoming) **Granary** is Spring Creek's lone on-site restaurant, with sophisticated iterations of hearty mountain food (Idaho trout, buffalo rib eye). Try the elk—it's better than steak—and sit by the soaring windows. Or make the 10-minute trek to town, to buzzy little **Trio** for a killer buffalo burger, or

OPPOSITE PAGE: PHOTOS COURTESY OF SPRING CREEK RANCH. GOLF COURSE: MICHAEL LEBRECHT II; ROOM: COURTESY OF SHAWNEE INN AND GOLF RESORT



BUNK

The **Shawnee Inn** is old (built in 1911), but ask for one of the more recent Legacy Collection rooms (below; under \$300 per

night, depending on the season) in the main lodge; they're totally modern. Staying longer? Book one of the on-resort condo-like Worthington suites (again, ask for a newer one), which have full kitchens, fireplaces, and plenty of areas to unwind. Prices run about \$400 a night.

STUDY BREAK

Reward sore muscles by tossing on a \$100 spa-enhancement option to your golf package at the Spa at Shawnee. You must ask for Igor—then let him do his thing. His mesmerizing unknotting, tension-melting 70-minute massage was one of the best I've had anywhere, ever. Or take advantage of Shawnee's on-the-Delaware location and **rent a canoe** (from \$35) or kayak

My golf lesson with Craig Anderson, one of the pros at the quaint, riverside Shawnee Inn in the Poconos, gave me confidence. (It also helps that the Tillinghast Golf Academy's short course is ideal for beginners like me.) After Anderson illustrated the basics—a good grip, proper stance, ideal posture—he handed me a sand wedge. I was shocked that my lofted balls, hit after hit, continued to float toward the practice pin. After a few gentle adjustments to my backswing (to fix that hook), I was ready for my scheduled round of nine holes. Gulp. And even though I butchered my way through every one, friendly staffers and golfers put me at ease, and the whole experience confirmed two things for me: 1) More than one lesson is very important. 2) Golf is actually fun. (Did you know there's a girl who drives around the course to bring you Combos and beer?) —Ashley Primis



three hours; a fly-fishing class starts at \$120 per person.

MEAL PLAN

Staying on the resort's grounds? Have paninis and wraps for lunch at the Bistro, the open-seasonally alfresco eatery. Or walk over to **Sam Snead's** to mingle with the locals and hear live music; definitely get the house-smoked ribs. Off-resort, take a three-minute drive to get great pad Thai at **Saen Thai Cuisine**. Warning: It's a popular spot, so if there's a wait, play a round of mini golf (finally! Dominating the links!) across the street.



DESTINATION:
POCONOS

CLASS TIME:
1 DAY

DIFFICULTY LEVEL:
MEDIUM

EXTRA CREDIT

Back in Philly: Continue honing those photography skills at **Fleisher's photography classes** (719 Catharine Street, 215-922-3456, fleisher.org), taught by professional photogs who will give you strategies for taking better pictures, Photoshopping your masterpiece, technical concepts and more. Tuition runs \$225, and class fees are \$35.

Bob Kramer at the RiverCrest Golf Club in Phoenixville (610-781-4234, kramersgolf.com) has been named the PGA Teacher of the Year twice, and offers year-round instruction.



SKILL:

LEARN TO PLAY GOLF



FALL
TRAVEL
2009

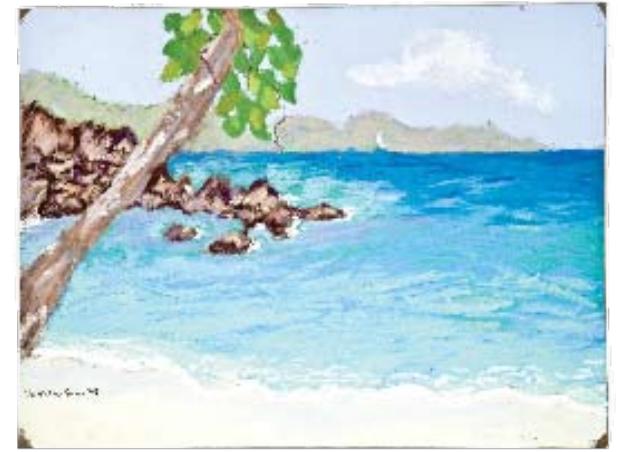
SKILL:

LEARN TO PASTEL

DESTINATION:
ST. JOHN

CLASS TIME:
3 HOURS

DIFFICULTY LEVEL:
MEDIUM



SYLLABUS

Two artists teach courses at **Caneel Bay Resort** in St. John (see below) for those inspired by the sublime setting. (Who isn't?) Pastels and watercolor courses run \$85 a lesson—fees well worth the instruction you get from Gail van de Bogart and Livy Hitchcock. (Both artists also own



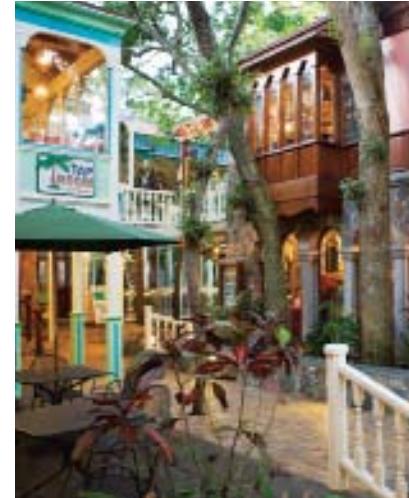
galleries in nearby Mongoose Junction.) After a single three-hour session, you'll have artwork (that's mine above) as a memento, newfound skills, and an instructor's list with tips and supplies to remember back home.

BUNK

Caneel Bay Resort is a graceful 166-room resort planted on a pristine swath of the Virgin Islands National Park. The peaceful 53-year-old luxury resort is surprisingly natural—organic, even: Airy rooms (below left) have screened windows and wide porches, but no TVs or phones. No fewer than **seven private beaches** encircle the place; the air smells (really!) of exotic blooms that dot the landscape; and deer, donkeys and iguanas wander between the clusters of villas where guests bed down. Rooms—which change rates seasonally—range between \$395 and \$1,750 a night.

STUDY BREAK

Through Caneel's activities desk, arrange to take a **guided hike** (\$26) in the lush national park. You can use any of the resort's **free kayaks** on your own, but you'll also want to book a laid-back **snorkeling outing** (\$85 per person) in the azure waters (right). Another must: a massage in the open beach cabanas (\$90 to \$240).



MEAL PLAN

Even the casual breakfast and lunch buffets in Caneel's open-air Beach Terrace dining room are affairs, with



options from a wood-burning oven and a rotisserie. The real gem, though, is the **Equator**, set atop the sugar-mill ruins that overlook the whole place. Or

PHOTOS COURTESY OF CANEEL BAY; A ROSEWOOD RESORT; OPPOSITE PAGE: COOKING, HOTEL: CHRISTIAN HORAN; CENOTE: GUILLERMO GONZALEZ

EXTRA CREDIT

Back in Philly: Drawing classes include pastel instruction at the **Fairmount Art Center** (2501 Olive Street, 215-765-ARTS, fairmountartcenter.com), so you can work on both skills in six-week sessions that run about \$145.

I've always enjoyed the image of myself as an artist: It's an ethereal, bohemian me, with paint-splattered clothes and a rotating gallery of my work on the walls. The real me bears no resemblance to this imaginary one—sundry sketchbooks and art supplies my parents provided into my teens never produced art worth hanging. But in the tropical paradise of St. John's, under the patient tutelage of artist-in-residence Livy Hitchcock, I sit en plein air with the Caribbean as inspiration and rainbows of chalk as my medium. Hitchcock instructs the sketching and helps choose my palette. (The ocean is eight different blues; distant islands of St. Thomas and Tortolla, layers of green, a shadowy lavender and mauve.) In the end, I am no more boho or paint-splattered than when I arrived ... just happier. My picture hangs on my wall. —C.S.

I'm in the Mexican jungle, in search of food. But this is no reality show, and I'm not headed for a plate of grubs. Instead, at the end of a twisting path, I come to a family-size table, covered in local flowers and shaded by thick palm trees. A glass of fresh, chilled watermelon juice is placed in my hand as the executive chef of the Tides Riviera Maya, Mariana Perez Niño, and her team, all clad in crisp chef's whites, greet me. They're about to let me in on the secrets to cooking authentic Mayan cuisine: During an hours-long cooking class in an ancient outdoor kitchen, I chop vividly colored produce and prep fresh fish in banana leaves to simmer in a pit oven (as shown below). We make empanadas, tamales, guacamole and a light lime soup. Then we sit down to eat—chilled white wine flowing—right next to a garden of culinary herbs. —Valerie Yeager



STUDY BREAK

Schedule a private outing with **K'ul Tours** (\$830 per person) to venture into the mystical Mayan world. In one afternoon, you can swim in a cenote (a freshwater cave, left), visit ruins, spot monkeys as you canoe and zip-line across a lagoon, and make handmade tortillas in a Mayan village.



FALL
TRAVEL
2009



LEARN TO COOK MAYAN CUISINE

DESTINATION:
MEXICO

CLASS TIME:
4-6 HOURS

DIFFICULTY LEVEL:
EASY

90-minute **temazcal** ceremony (\$92), in which your body and spirit are purified through the use of steam and healing herbs, freeing the toxins from your life. (Who doesn't need that?)

MEAL PLAN

You'll have a tough time finding better Mediterranean, Mexican and Mayan cuisine than at **La Marea at the Tides**; open for breakfast, lunch, and dinner. Get the ceviche. The black grouper was scrumptious, too. For a change, grab dinner at the **Glass Bar**, a fine-dining open-air Italian restaurant, when you visit nearby **Playa del Carmen**, with its cobblestone streets and European-inspired nightlife.

EXTRA CREDIT

Back in Philly: Sharpen your new culinary skills at the **Viking Cooking School** (1 Town Place, suite 100, Bryn Mawr, 610-526-9020, viking-cookingschool.com) with a workshop such as "Tapas and Paella." Three-hour classes begin at \$89; the 12-week Master Cooking Techniques series runs \$419.

FALL
TRAVEL
2009

SKILL:

LEARN
TO
PLAY
TENNISDESTINATION:
PALM
DESERT,
CALIFORNIACLASS TIME:
1 HOURDIFFICULTY LEVEL:
MEDIUM

SYLLABUS

There's a ton of tennis instruction at the Desert Springs resort—drill sessions, round robins, and morning and afternoon clinics on everything from ground strokes to doubles strategy—all starting around \$30. **Private lessons** start at \$40 for a half-hour.

The resort's clay, hard-surface and grass courts (right) are well-tended. Most importantly, to combat the hot desert sun, there's complimentary ice water and towels. (You'll need both.)

BUNK

The **Desert Springs JW Marriott** resort has a Vegas-Disney feel—massive size,



into Mount San Jacinto State Park (above), where the temps are some



STUDY BREAK

Palm Desert is often overshadowed by popular Palm Springs, but it has a charming downtown, with an air of Rodeo Drive mixed with a California hippie sensibility. **A free art walk** offers unexpected pop-ups of

cany and Mikado Japanese Steakhouse. At the former, you'll get VIP treatment, a hefty wine list and superb risotto. At the latter, you're in for a more rambunctious time, with the standard Japanese steakhouse tomfoolery—chefs catching seafood in their hats, patrons catching seafood in their mouths. The combo teppan-yaki dishes are all good, and filling. When you're exploring Palm Desert, stop at the **Daily Grill** for fresh sandwiches and salads.

PARK: GETTY IMAGES; TENNIS, POOL: COURTESY OF DESERT SPRINGS JW MARRIOTT RESORT & SPA

BIRD: ISTOCKPHOTO; HOTEL: COOKIE KINKEAD; WATERFALL: COURTESY OF THE JAMAICA TOURIST BOARD

dance club. Rooms start around \$350 a night in the winter, and are a bit more plush than your average Marriott; room service is exceptional. Tip: Book a treatment at the fantastic resort spa—and get all-day access to its adults-only pool (left).

a red steel horse sculpture and colorful, oversize spinning tops. To get even closer to the ethereal, ride the **Palm Springs Aerial Tramway** up 8,500 feet

30 degrees cooler (about \$23 round-trip).

MENU PLAN

Try dinner at two on-property restaurants: **Tus-**

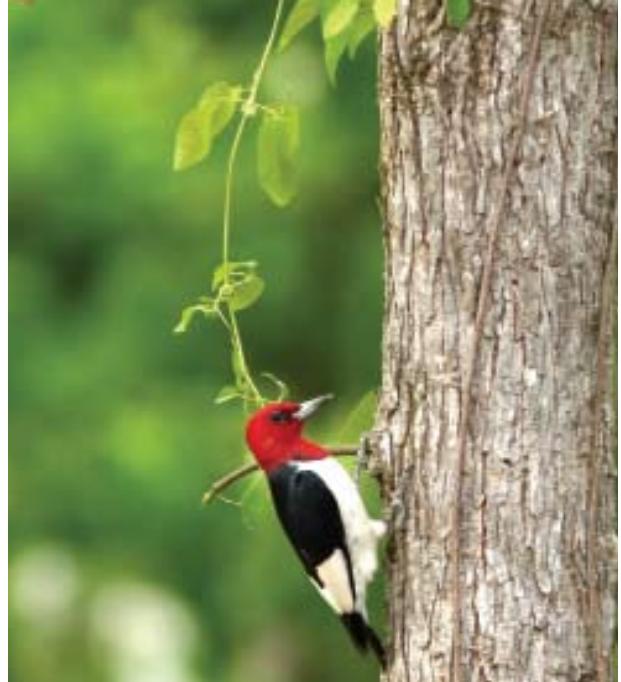
SYLLABUS

do see) and lasts anywhere from a few hours to all day. If you're not up for a solo birding adventure, arrange for a guide (average cost: \$125 per day) through nearby Hotel Mocking Bird Hill (see below).



BUNK

Fall asleep to the chirping of tree frogs and wake to the songs of birds at secluded **Hotel Mocking Bird Hill**, outside Port Antonio in northeastern Jamaica. Innkeepers Shireen Aga and Barbara Walker have earned countless awards for eco-friendly practices in the inn's 15-year history, without skimping on the luxury: 10 guest rooms (left), most with king-size beds (from \$135



per night), Walker's original artwork, gorgeous bamboo furniture, incredible views (which you can enjoy from the in-room hammock). There's also a garden where you can further hone your birding skills.

STUDY BREAK

There are, of course, the Caribbean beaches, but don't miss a **waterfall-and-caves tour** (\$10), with a swim in sparklingly clear natural pools at **Reach Falls** (below). Another day, head to Berrydale for a leisurely **ride down the Rio Grande** on a bamboo raft for two (\$73). About halfway along the eight-mile stretch of water, be sure to stop at **Belinda's**

FALL
TRAVEL
2009

SKILL:

LEARN
TO
BIRD-
WATCHDESTINATION:
JAMAICACLASS TIME:
3-8 HOURSDIFFICULTY LEVEL:
EASY

Back in Philly: More than 125 species of birds can be spotted throughout the year in **Wissahickon Valley Park**, which offers several free bird walks each month (215-247-0417, fow.org). In mid-May, Cape May plays host to the **World Series of Birding**—seriously—during spring migration (609-884-2736, birdcapemay.org/wsob.shtml).

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FALL
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SKILL:

LEARN TO RELAX

DESTINATION:
BERMUDA

CLASS TIME:
3 DAYS

DIFFICULTY LEVEL:
UM, REALLY EASY



SYLLABUS

The next **Life Balance workshop** at Cambridge Beaches Resort & Spa is January 28th-31st, 2010. The package deal costs \$229 and includes all activities, a welcome reception, a 50-minute massage, 20 percent off all additional spa treatments, wine tasting, and special exercise classes such as Pilates and yoga (above). Additional nights at the resort are half off when you stay beyond the three-night seminar.



BUNK

Any of **Cambridge Beaches Resort &**

EXTRA CREDIT

Back in Philly: Sign up at **RYAH Yoga and Health** (424 East Elm Street, Conshohocken, 610-834-1551, ryahyoga.com) for "Six Weeks to Wellness" (\$499), where you'll make life goals (and learn to keep them), get massaged, and even meet with a health coach who'll help fine-tune your diet.

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As I nestle even deeper into my white chaise lounge, my feet dusted with grains of the pinky-white sand that lines a strip of aquamarine water stretching across the horizon at Bermuda's Long Bay Beach, I know my BlackBerry is blinking somewhere, trying to suck me back into the frenzy of work. But I've spent the week with Pepper Schwartz, the totally adorable, down-to-earth, Oprah-beloved Ph.D. and master of equilibrium who has been asking me (and the rest of her harried Life Balance workshop group) how we spend our days back home: *Are you happy? Are you making time to do what you really, truly want?* And finally, the quiet part of me usually drowned out by the daily grind answered. So I ignore the BlackBerry and reach for a notebook. For the next few hours, I will do nothing but write, simply for myself, while the sun moves across the sky, turning my skin a golden brown. —*Jenna Bergen*

and include breakfast daily. A minimum three-night stay is required when you book the workshop.

STUDY BREAK

When you've had your fill of soul-searching, sign up for a private **Pilates class** beneath the cool shade of a bay grape tree. If you're looking for more activity, hop on a moped—Cambridge has rentals right on-site (\$50-\$55 per day)—or take a five-minute taxi ride to the **Royal Naval Dockyard**, where you can



MEAL PLAN

Enjoy a breakfast of scrambled eggs and grilled tomato on your own breezy patio before class. Stop in at **Breezes**, Cambridge's lunch spot, for an afternoon snack, a heady rum swizzle, and a stunningly peaceful view of Long Bay Beach. For dinner, drift over to the **Tamarisk Room**, Cambridge's award-winning restaurant—the Bermudan fish chowder is a must—as you take in the sailboats on Mangrove Bay and the soothing sounds of a local musician.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF CAMBRIDGE BEACHES RESORT & SPA

along Long Bay Beach, or palm trees swaying in the perfectly warm breeze. Resort rates start at \$255 per night, based on single occupancy,

Don't tell my boss, but I secretly want to become a chef. Alas, I'll never be able to, because my sense of smell is *terrible* (which is like being color-blind if you want to be an astronaut). That doesn't stop me from fantasizing about dicing onions at the speed of light. Nor does it stop me from a one-day course in the art of fine cuisine with chef Claudio Schmitz at Zurich's Dolder Grand hotel, home to a Michelin-starred restaurant. Our class starts early at the local vegetable market, where Schmitz shows us how to pick the best produce; he then whisks us back to the kitchen to prepare duck carpaccio with melon compote and lentils for the day's menu. Patiently, he offers tips and tricks on everything my *Top Chef* heart desires—from basic knife skills to assembling the perfect marinade. Sure, I probably shouldn't quit my day job, but that doesn't stop me from trying my new recipes at home. I'm told they smell divine. —*Michael McCormick*

SYLLABUS

The eight-hour **cooking class** with Claudio Schmitz is open to guests of the Dolder Grand (bottom); to participate, book the **"Cuisine at the Dolder Grand"** accommodations package for around \$690 per person, per night. Besides a firsthand look at the inner work-



only guests staying at the 173-room Dolder Grand. Everything about this eco-friendly resort is über-modern and designed with absolute comfort in mind. Floor-to-ceiling windows perfectly frame the beautiful city and the Swiss Alps beyond. Heated floors, a cavernously deep bathtub and the practically-a-religious-



ings of a top-notch kitchen, you'll get recipes to take home.

BUNK

Ensconced in a soundproof suite (above right; the staff performed tests during the recent four-year renovation), you'll swear you're the

room that produces 12 inches of real snow per day. In quaint, walkable Zurich, you won't need anything more than a map and comfy shoes for a day of strolling. Book a leisurely steamboat ride on **Lake Zurich** with Lake Zurich Cruise. Or make a quick stop at the famous **chocolate shop Sprüngli** to



at **The Restaurant** (far left). The Sunday showstopper brunch, a lavish buffet of Swiss foods like müesli and rösti—a potato dish served everywhere—is a huge draw for guests and locals alike. While out in Zurich, make sure to stop at the hip **Restaurant Terrasse** for an aperitif.



FALL
TRAVEL
2009



LEARN TO COOK HAUTE CUISINE

DESTINATION:
**ZURICH,
SWITZERLAND**

CLASS TIME:
8 HOURS

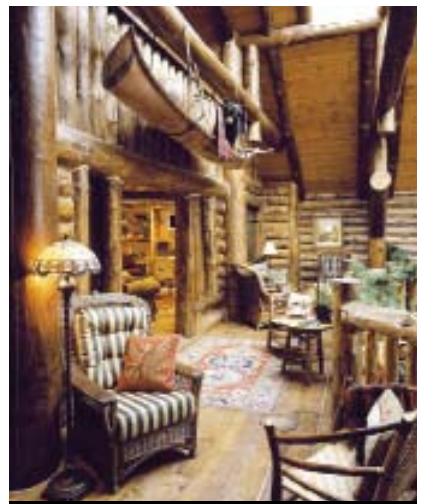
DIFFICULTY LEVEL:
EASY

EXTRA CREDIT

Back in Philly: Take an evening or weekend class at the **Restaurant School at Walnut Hill College** (4207 Walnut Street, 215-222-4200, walnuthillcollege.com), where more than 50 hands-on workshops offer kitchen secrets to everything from French pastries (\$125) to cooking with beer (\$65).

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LEARN TO SAVOR A GOOD CIGAR

LAKE PLACID, NY

CLASS TIME: AN EVENING

DIFFICULTY LEVEL: EASY

I'd heard there were two keys to enjoying a good cigar: Give yourself enough time, and setting is everything. I clearly see the wisdom of both as I sit in front of a fire pit in the Adirondacks with Scott Waller, the sommelier at the Whiteface Lodge in Lake Placid (above and right). We're tucked away in what the Lodge calls a private "lean-to" but is really more of an early-1900s hunting camp, with one side completely open to give window to a beautiful mountain view. I confidently order a nice, peaty glass of scotch to start, but for my next move, I must defer to the pro who's there to show me the ropes of pairing a good cigar with a fine sip. Waller recommends a heavy, full-bodied cigar that takes over nicely where the scotch leaves off. I sip, puff and repeat, the burning end of my cigar twinkling along with the stars in a wide-open sky. —Jesse Southerland

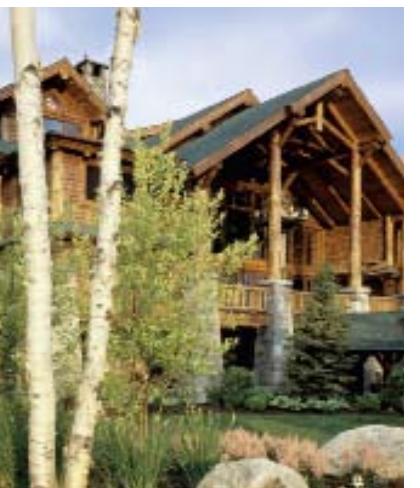
SYLLABUS Allow at least an hour to enjoy a good cigar (think one puff per minute); with the right view, that hour can easily turn into three or four. At the **Whiteface Lodge**'s "lean-tos," cigars range from \$8 to \$45, and more than 25 single-malt scotches are available, in addition to a full bar.

BUNK Inspired by the "Great Camps" of the surrounding Adirondacks, Whiteface Lodge mixes woodsy traditional with modern luxe. Suites (starting at about \$400 a night) have an upscale-cabin aesthetic—timber A-frame ceilings, cast-iron fireplaces—that gives you the feel of being one with nature without the hassle of tents or bugs. The whole resort has a small-village aura, with a spa, a year-round indoor-outdoor heated pool, a movie theater and a bowling alley right on the property.

STUDY BREAK The Winter Olympics are still alive and well in Lake Placid. You can actually take a bobsled joyride (with a pro, of course) at the **Olympic Sports Complex**; tour the Olympic Center, the site of the "Miracle on Ice" in the 1980 games; and visit the **1932 and 1980 Lake Placid Winter Olympics Museum**. Or just enjoy a stroll along Lake Placid's quaint **Main Street**.

MEAL PLAN Join the locals at the **Lake Placid Pub & Brewery**, where the burger is a must and washing it down with one of the Pub's own brews, like the signature Ubu Ale, is even more mandatory. At Whiteface Lodge, there's fine dining at **Kanu**—try the Yukon Gold gnocchi, cowboy steak or barbecued salmon.

EXTRA CREDIT Back in Philly: Head for the **Mahogany on Walnut** (1524 Walnut Street, second floor, 215-732-3982, phillycigarbar.com), a cigar bar that looks like



an English library. Or check out the **Philly Cigar Club** (phillycigarclub.wordpress.com), which organizes "cigar nights" at area restaurants.

GETTING THERE Just over an hour by plane to Albany and 2.5 hours by car from Albany to Lake Placid; seven-hour drive; almost eight hours via Amtrak (under \$200 round-trip; amtrak.com). **PACKING:** Dress is resort/casual at the Whiteface Lodge. Pack appropriately for cold weather, as plenty of outdoor activities are available.

SYLLABUS & BUNK: The Whiteface Lodge, 800-903-4045, thewhitefacelodge.com. **STUDY BREAK:** Olympic Regional Development Authority, 518-523-4436, orda.org; Main Street, 800-447-5224, lakeplacid.com. **MEAL PLAN:** Lake Placid Pub & Brewery, 518-523-3813, ubuale.com; Kanu, 518-523-0510, thewhitefacelodge.com.



LEARN TO SURF

THE HAMPTONS

CLASS TIME: 1 HOUR

DIFFICULTY LEVEL: HARD

"Dude, we're gonna find you a mellow wave, 'cause you're kind of new at this." This was Jesse, my instructor, talking as we floated on our boards off the coast of Montauk, known for the best waves on the East Coast. Jesse was straight out of central casting: curly blond hair, totally calm vibe. Me? Well, as surfers go, I was anything but typical, seeing as I'm 45 and have acid reflux and my body no longer bends in ways it once did. But surfing isn't one of those things you do to act your age; surfing is one of those things you do to get the caffeine hit

of feeling 18. My wife, however, didn't see the appeal. ("I'm bringing a neck brace," she mocked.) Yet not once did my board bop me on the head; not once did anyone need to call a medevac. Which is not to say I was any good at this. No, Jesse found me mellow wave after mellow wave, and pretty much every time, I splashed face-first into the Atlantic. But, look, as the dude said, I'm new at this. —Tom McGrath



SYLLABUS Get surfing lessons from **Air & Speed Surf Shop** in Montauk (a pristine beach town on the tip of Long Island that has, no exaggeration, the best surfing on the East Coast). Cost for a one-hour private lesson (board and wetsuit included): \$100.

BUNK **Gurney's Inn** (above) is a family-run resort on the bluffs overlooking the Atlantic, with terrific ocean views and a nice mix of single rooms and larger cottages that can sleep up to eight. Weekend rates in September start at \$275.

STUDY BREAK Make an appointment at Gurney's **Sea Water Spa**, where they offer a full range of treatments that utilize seawater and seaweed (perfect for your aching, post-surfing muscles). Or check out the **Montauk Point Lighthouse Museum**, on the very tip of Long Island; it's 137 steps to the top, but worth it for the incredible view of the water.

MEAL PLAN You can't beat the simply prepared fresh seafood at no-frills **Lobster Roll** in neighboring Amagansett. The menu is classic fish-house fare (fish and chips, steamed lobster, crabcakes), and the restaurant caters to an intriguing mix of locals, big-money Hamptonsites, and occasional

LAKE PLACID: HOTEL AND EXTERIOR: THE WHITEFACE LODGE. THE HAMPTONS: SURFER: CHRISTINE McDONALD; AERIAL PHOTO: RACHAEL FARRONE

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celebs like Woody Allen and Brooke Shields. For breakfast or lunch, try the homey **MTK Café** on Main Street, with great omelets, sandwiches and Greek specialties.

EXTRA CREDIT Back in Philly: Hone your surfing skills down the Shore. Check out the **7th Street Surf Shop** in Ocean City (609-391-1700), where group lessons run \$35 per person.

GETTING THERE Drive, but keep in mind that it might not be a quick trip. Without traffic, Montauk takes about four hours and 15 minutes from Philly. With traffic? Well, think about it this way: You're going surfing. You'll get there. Just relax. **PACKING:** Just wear your swimsuit for your surfing lesson; Air & Speed will provide a wetsuit if the water is icy. **SYLLABUS:** Air & Speed Surf, 631-668-0356, airandspeed-surf.com. **BUNK & STUDY BREAK:** Gurney's Inn, 631-668-2345, gurneysinn.com. Montauk Point Lighthouse and Museum, 888-685-7646, montauklighthouse.com. **MEAL PLAN:** Lobster Roll, Amagansett, 631-267-3740; MTK Café, Montauk, 631-668-6852.



LEARN TO RIDE A HARLEY

MILWAUKEE, WI

CLASS TIME: 25 HOURS

DIFFICULTY LEVEL: MEDIUM

Ah, motorcycles: the wind in your hair, the sun on your face, the thrill of the open road. All of that has always piqued my sense of adventure. The problem is the small detail of actually learning how to ride, which is why I set out to Harley Davidson HQ in Milwaukee, where some of the country's most devoted hog enthusiasts hold court. I was a little



disappointed when I heard that I wouldn't get my own Harley; instead, rookies learn on plasticky, lower-powered Buells. (Picture some kid on Oregon Avenue zipping around your car.) But once I felt the seat rumbling beneath me, grasped the throttle in my sweaty palm, and surged forward with reckless abandon, I decided the Buell was just enough excitement for me. Now all I need is a bike, a badass leather jacket, a tattoo ... Midlife crisis, here I come! —Victor Fiorillo

SYLLABUS At Harley's \$350 **Rider's Edge course** (left), beginners learn the ropes through a combination of classroom and on-the-road (well, parking lot) training. Once back in Pennsylvania, you can schedule a road test to get licensed.

BUNK All the cool people—that's you, since you're learning to ride a Harley—stay at the fabulous new, vaguely biker-themed **Iron Horse Hotel** (above), one of Condé Nast's Hot Hotels for 2009, a luxurious boutique property in a 100-year-old warehouse. Don't miss brunch in the sun-drenched library, or the soon-to-open 20-person (yes, 20!) indoor hot tub in the former boiler room. From \$125 per night (ah, Midwest prices).

STUDY BREAK Milwaukee is a cool, throwback kind of town with lots of gritty, non-ironic, kitschy character. Think Bob & Barbara's, not El Vez. Bowl a game at the country's oldest alley, **Holler House**, where cute young men manually reset your pins. Sip a Pink Squirrel where they were

invented: at **Bryant's**, the city's oldest cocktail lounge. Or sing along with 73-year-old **Angelo** at his eponymous piano bar.

MEAL PLAN Whatever you do, don't miss the citywide **Friday-night fish fry**, which is exactly what it sounds like. One of the best is at German stronghold **Kegel's Inn**. For brunch with a view, visit relative newcomer **Roots**, overlooking the city from its hilltop perch.

EXTRA CREDIT Back in Philly: Get your license, then take Harley's Skilled Rider course at **Barb's Harley Davidson** (926 Black Horse Pike, Collingswood, 856-456-4141, barbshd.com). After that, hit the road and revel in how cool you've become.

GETTING THERE Fly nonstop on Midwest—they give you warm chocolate chip cookies. Once on the ground, you'll need to rent a car. People in Milwaukee don't walk anywhere. **PACKING:** To get on the bike, you'll need a driver's license, long-sleeve shirt or leather jacket, jeans, over-the-ankle shoes, gloves and protective eyewear. They provide the helmet. **SYLLABUS & BUNK:** Harley Davidson Rider's Edge, ridersedge.com; Iron Horse Hotel, 888-543-4766, theironhorsehotel.com. **STUDY BREAK:** Holler House, 414-647-9284; Bryant's, 414-383-2620, bryantscocktail-lounge.com; Angelo's, 414-347-4144. **MEAL PLAN:** Kegel's Inn, 414-257-9999; Roots, 414-374-8480, rootsmilwaukee.com.

LEARN TO SAIL (FLORIDA)

GETTING THERE After the three-hour flight from PHL to Miami, enjoy the beautiful 95-mile drive to Hawks Cay in a rented convertible. If you don't want to rent a car (you really don't need one once you're at Hawks Cay), the resort runs an airport shuttle (reservations required, 888-765-9997).

PACKING: Comfort rules—you won't see high heels poolside at Hawks Cay, even at the finer-dining spots. For sailing, you'll need non-slip white-soled shoes, comfortable but not baggy clothes, gloves and Croakies. If you go in late summer, don't forget the bug spray. **SYLLABUS:** Offshore Sailing School, 800-221-4326, offshoresailing.com/florida-keys.asp. **BUNK & MEAL PLAN:** Hawks Cay, 305-743-7000, hawkscay.com. **STUDY BREAK:** Dolphin Connection, 888-814-9154, dolphinconnection.com.

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LEARN TO TAKE PHOTOS (JACKSON HOLE)

GETTING THERE No nonstop flights, but a number of airlines will take you to Jackson Hole via one layover. Bring an extra book—weather out West and cross-country flights are sometimes less than reliable. **PACKING:** You're in cowboy country, so go ahead and bring the denim—just be sure you also bring layers and a warm jacket, as the mountains can be quite cool in the mornings and evenings. Good hiking shoes, pants that can take a little dirt, a good hat and bug spray are absolutes. **SYLLABUS, BUNK & STUDY BREAK:** Scott McKinley, 307-690-4885, wildexposuresgallery.com; Spring Creek Ranch, 307-733-8833, springcreekranch.com. **MEAL PLAN:** The Granary, 307-732-8112, springcreekranch.com. In Jackson: Trio, 307-734-8038, bistrotrio.com; Rendezvous Bistro, 307-739-1100, rendezvousbistro.net; Snake River Grill, 307-733-0557, snakerivergrill.com.

LEARN TO PLAY GOLF (POCONOS)

GETTING THERE The drive is under two hours from Center City, and even closer if you live near the PA Turnpike. Don't use GPS or Google maps; follow the hotel's online directions. **PACKING:** The whole resort is casual, although the inn requests that you don't wear denim. Khakis and layers—the mountains can get chilly at night—plus golf attire are ideal. **SYLLABUS & BUNK:** The Shawnee Inn and Golf Resort, 570-424-4000, shawneeinn.com. **STUDY BREAK:** Spa at Shawnee, spashawnee.com; Shawnee River Trips, shawneerivertrips.com. **MEAL PLAN:** The Bistro, 570-424-4000; Sam Snead's, 570-424-0990, samsneads-pa.com; Saen Thai Cuisine, 570-476-4911.

LEARN TO PASTEL (ST. JOHN)

GETTING THERE Such glorious seclusion takes a bit of effort: You'll fly into St. Thomas—no passport necessary—which means a layover (though we've still seen total flight time under six hours, starting at just under \$500, round-trip). At the St. Thomas airport, Caneel guests use a voucher you buy upon booking to take the resort's bus 15 minutes to the ferry, which goes to Caneel Bay (35 minutes). **PACKING:** No need to bring your art supplies—Caneel has everything. You will, however, want to remember your wide-brimmed hat, sunglasses, more than

one bathing suit and cover-up, and loads of sunscreen for all your time at the resort. Pack a few dressier duds as well: No jeans, shorts, swimwear or tennis shoes are allowed in public spots after sunset. Also, if you don't like OFFbug repellent, which the resort provides, be sure to bring something of your own—the semi-tropical climate means lots of biting.

SYLLABUS, BUNK & STUDY BREAK: Caneel Bay Resort, 340-776-3111, caneelbay.com.

MEAL PLAN: Paradiso, Mongoose Junction, 340-693-8899.

LEARN TO COOK MAYAN CUISINE (MEXICO)

GETTING THERE Fly nonstop from Philly to Cancun. Book a Royal Villa, and the Tides will reimburse you for your airplane ticket upon arrival (two round-trip tickets at up to \$500 per ticket). Once you land in Cancun, the resort can arrange for a personal chauffeur to swoop you up in a luxury vehicle for the 45-minute drive to the Tides.

PACKING: Bring your classic resort wear: Sundresses for ladies and slacks and a breezy button-down for men are perfect for pool- and beach-side dinners. Add sneakers for

exploring Mayan ruins. **SYLLABUS & BUNK:** The Tides, 866-332-1672, tidesrivieramaya.com. **STUDY BREAK:** K'ul Tours, kultours.com.mx. **MEAL PLAN:** La Marea at the Tides, tidesrivieramaya.com; the Glass Bar, Playa del Carmen, theglassbar.com.mx.

LEARN TO PLAY TENNIS (PALM DESERT)

GETTING THERE There are no nonstop flights from Philadelphia, so plan to stay for a few days. You'll have to fly to a major city out west, like Phoenix, L.A. or Salt Lake, depending on the airline, and then connect to Palm Springs airport. (From there, the drive to the Desert Springs resort is only about 30 minutes. Taxis aren't plentiful, so rent a car; the major rental companies are on-site at the airport. **PACKING:** Desert Springs is SoCal casual, even at the finer restaurants. The tennis clubhouse rents out rackets, so unless you're particular, you don't need to bring your own. Remember hiking shoes and warmer clothes if you want to visit higher-altitude Mount San Jacinto. **SYLLABUS & BUNK:** Desert Springs JW Marriott, 760-341-2211, desertsprings-

resort.com. **STUDY BREAK:** El Paseo Art Walk, palm-desert.org; Palm Springs Aerial Tramway, 760-325-1391, pstramway.com. **MEAL PLAN:** Tuscany and Mikado Japanese Steakhouse, at Desert Springs JW Marriott, 760-341-2211, desertspringsresort.com; Daily Grill, 760-779-9911, dailygrill.com.

LEARN TO BIRD-WATCH (JAMAICA)

GETTING THERE From PHL, it's a three-and-a-half-hour flight on Air Jamaica to Montego Bay, then a 40-minute connecting flight to Kingston (airjamaica.com). From there, the drive to Port Antonio (portantoniojamaica.com) takes about two to three hours by car; with advance notice, Mocking Bird Hill can arrange for a pickup, or you can rent a car right at the airport—keep in mind that Jamaicans drive on the left, and the winding, narrow roads aren't well-lit at night. **PACKING:** For daytime activities, remember sunscreen, binoculars for bird-watching, bug spray, and comfortable walking shoes. Dinner attire is sundresses for ladies; guys can leave the jacket and tie at home. Don't forget your

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passport. **SYLLABUS & BUNK:** Hotel Mocking Bird Hill, 876-993-7267, hotelmockingbirdhill.com. **STUDY BREAK:** Reach Falls, 876-993-6606, reachfalls.com; Rio Grande rafting, 876-913-5434. **MEAL PLAN:** Norma's at the Marina, 876-993-9510, normasatthemarina.com; Woody's, 876-993-7888.

LEARN TO RELAX (BERMUDA)

GETTING THERE US Airways (usairways.com) offers a nonstop two-hour flight from PHL to Hamilton. On-island, hop in a taxi for the 45-minute drive to the resort, or ask Cambridge to arrange for a driver to meet you. **PACKING:** Winter in Bermuda hovers around a perfectly pleasant 66 degrees, so bring light, comfortable resort-casual clothes for daytime. Thanks to its British influence, Bermuda is a bit more upscale than the average island, and guys are discouraged from wearing shorts other than classic Bermudas, paired with long socks. Bring dressier pieces for dinner. If you're sporting, pack tennis and golf gear, and don't forget your sneakers if you'll be hopping a moped—the main form of transportation here—to scout the island. **SYLLABUS, BUNK & MEAL PLAN:** Cambridge Beaches, Bermuda, 441-234-0331, cambridgebeaches.com. **STUDY BREAK:** Experiencebermuda.com/dockyard.

LEARN TO COOK HAUTE CUISINE (ZURICH)

GETTING THERE From PHL, it's a nine-hour overnight flight on US Airways, plus a 30-minute car ride to the Dolder Grand. **PACKING:** Parts of the spa may be clothing-optional, but all common areas require bathing suits. Definitely bring the gym clothes—you'll want to hit the state-of-the-art fitness center, if only to offset the calorie-packed meals you're taking in. For the cooking class, bring closed-toe shoes for the kitchen. They'll provide you with an apron, but wear clothes you don't mind spilling sauce on. Dinner attire is fun-dressy—guys need a jacket but not a tie. **SYLLABUS & BUNK:** Dolder Grand, 41-044-456-60-00, thedoldergrand.com/en. **STUDY BREAK:** Lake Zurich cruise, 41-044-487-13-33, zsg.ch; Confiserie Sprüngli, 41-044-224-46-46, confiserie-spruengli.ch. **MEAL PLAN:** Restaurant Terrasse, 41-044-251-10-74, cafe-terrasse.ch; Dolder Grand, thedoldergrand.com/en. 

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