



Unusual Vacation Ideas

Looking for something different for this year's vacation? Tired of visiting the same, tired old places, always filled with the growing throngs of tourists, all jostling each other for the best spot to camp, rest, shop, and just plain be a tourist? Well, maybe you've not looked hard enough, or far enough, to find the less-traveled places or adventures. Why not try something different and slightly off the beaten track?

For starters:

- ◆ **Go to a coast and swim with dolphins, whales or even sharks.** If you're looking for a memory that will last a lifetime, this is it (especially if you decide to swim with the sharks!)
- ◆ **Take a backpacking trip up into the mountains.** There are some pretty intense mountains in the United States. Make sure you're up for the trip, however. You don't want to get out in the middle of a deserted and isolated place, only to discover that this might not have been the best choice for you.
- ◆ **Mix-up a backpack or hiking trip by throwing in some horseback riding.** Ride for awhile, then make camp and explore your surroundings. There are some outfitters who will equip you with your every need, even providing a guide to safely steer you through unfamiliar territory.
- ◆ **Take a guided expedition or exploration outing.** There are scientific outings that welcome guest participants. Perhaps you would like to study whales or wolves. Maybe you'd like to sail the oceans and study various ocean life. How about an archaeological dig? You could be in on the next find of the century.
- ◆ **Take a cross-country trip, biking or skiing your way across the miles.** It helps, of course, to be experienced at either of these before undertaking such an adventure. Don't bite off more than you can chew.
- ◆ **Take a combination boating and scuba adventure.** Travel the great reefs and underwater treasures and see the world from a fish's point of view.
- ◆ **Take a class offered by the U.S. National Park Service.** There are several interesting classes you can take at federal parks, learning wildlife conservation, surviving in the wilds, etc. You can even take some interesting classes at tourist places like Disney World, like mountain repelling, learning to cook like a chef. You name it, and you can probably find a class for it.
- ◆ **Go hang gliding or do something else risky.** There are many places, especially in tourist areas, where you can try these things in a safe setting. Don't be afraid. Go for it. But don't get too crazy, either.

- ◆ **Go river rafting (or kayaking).** You'll probably need a guide for this one. Just scope out the different rivers, and see what rafting adventures are available.
- ◆ **Take a food tour and enjoy the tasteful cuisine to be found in different regions.** You might learn how to prepare such delicacies when you have returned home. Or, you might prefer to sit back and let other great chefs prepare your food..
- ◆ **Follow the route that was paved by someone else (real or imaginary).** Would you like to see, firsthand, where Lewis and Clark traveled across North America? Perhaps you'd like to travel down the Mississippi River like Huckleberry Finn. Or follow the Underground Railroad used during the Civil War.
- ◆ **Visit historic battlegrounds and watch carefully planned reenactments.** Past battles can really come alive, making them more than dry historical facts, as you watch from the sidelines.
- ◆ **Take a mystery weekend trip, trying your hand as an active participant in a carefully planned mock mystery.** Yes, there are companies that offer these. Do you have what it takes to solve a Sherlock Holmes kind of mystery?
- ◆ **Take a covered wagon tour of the U.S. and old west.** Explore the ghost towns filled with memories of long ago gold rush days and settlers traveling in search of new lands and homes.
- ◆ **For a true adventure, go to the extreme areas of the country.** How about Maine during the winter? Or Arizona in the middle of the summer?

There are so many opportunities to try, you have only to use your imagination and scout out some books, magazines and web sites. This laundry list above can get you started, and maybe help cultivate that adventurous spirit you so desire.

So, what do you need? A willing spirit of adventure is paramount, but you also should be willing to use your creativity and imagination, and plan that truly once-in-a-lifetime travel adventure that you will never forget. It's all out there, just waiting for you to set sail or trek out on your own.

Happy Trails!