

7 Resorts Where You Can Take a ‘Skill-cation’

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Forget the typical beach chair and frozen drink combo—today’s travelers are trading in passive relaxation for immersive learning experiences that enrich mind and spirit. Welcome to the world of “skill-cations,” where your getaway doubles as a hands-on workshop in something new, inspiring and [a little bit adventurous](#). Whether you’re mastering the potter’s wheel in a private Panamanian paradise or bonding with llamas on a New England farm, these vacations offer more than just a tan—you’ll bring home stories, [skills and crafts made with your own two hands](#).

Master the potter’s wheel at Selva Terra Island Resort, Panama

Head to your private island paradise for six days of [pottery workshops](#), where you’ll learn how to work with clay on the potter’s wheel. Start your day with morning yoga, and then head off to the pottery studio to learn the four stages of working with clay on the pottery wheel to make a cup and then add a handle. Afternoons are spent snorkeling with sea turtles, hiking through the jungle to spot howler monkeys or learning to surf. Not only will you go home with your own pottery creations, but you’ll have the skills to continue your craft on your own.

Swing from the trapeze at Club Med Punta Cana, Dominican Republic

If you've always dreamt of running off to join the circus, you can do just that at [Club Med](#). Aspiring acrobats from age 4 and up can learn the circus arts, starting with clowning and juggling and progressing to aerial skills and tightrope.

Circus classes are taught by Cirque du Soleil-trained staff, so you know you're learning from the experts. After you've spent the morning swinging from the trapeze, you can head to one of the resort's many pools or go for a swim in the ocean. Adults who are feeling those sore muscles can pop over to the property's expansive spa, where a massage with the sound of waves crashing can cure all that ails you. Many of the Club Med resorts offer circus programs and include aerial performances in their nighttime programs.

Care for farm animals at Mountain View Grand Resort & Spa, New Hampshire

When you arrive at [this stunning property](#) in New Hampshire's White Mountains, you'll be surprised to learn that there's a working farm just beyond the delightfully yellow main building and golf course. Fiber-producing animals are the focus, from sheep to llamas to angora rabbits.

You can visit the animals throughout your stay, but those looking to get some hands-on farming experience can sign up for one or more of the many farm classes. Start off with the "Meet the Farmer" experience, where farmer Henry Bogdanowicz shares his background raising animals and introduces you to the goats, chickens, alpacas, llamas, ducks and donkeys. Then take the guided farm animal care class, where you learn about feeding and caring for these animals, as well as how their fiber is harvested for crafting. Once you have built up your confidence, guide a goat or llama along the property's trails and end the experience with a picnic breakfast. It's the ultimate activity for animal lovers of all ages.

Learn to scuba dive at Jean-Michel Cousteau Resort, Fiji

This eco-luxury resort on the Fijian island of Vanua Levu is where you can [learn the basics of scuba diving](#) and increase your diving skills while exploring the Namena Marine Reserve, one of the world's top dive spots. With two dedicated marine biologists on staff, you can expect plenty of time in the water, learning about sea creatures and exploring the underwater world. Guests as young as 10 can participate in scuba-diving excursions with the onsite dive center, and those who prefer to view the fish from above can enjoy daily snorkeling trips to spots just a few minutes from the resort. Conservation efforts are featured prominently throughout the resort's programming, from kids club activities to coral farming and mangrove restoration projects that guests can participate in.

Experience the ancient sport of falconry at The Broadmoor, Colorado

Your [falconry class at The Broadmoor](#) begins with a visit to the “mews,” the special building designed to hold half a dozen birds of prey, such as falcons, barn owls and hawks. You’ll learn from the resort’s master falconer all that goes into feeding and caring for these amazing creatures, before heading outdoors to see a falcon fly silently through the air. The beginners’ class ends with participants holding a falcon on their own (gloved) hand, learning how light these birds actually are. Level up your falconry experience by adding on the intermediate class, where you’ll have the opportunity to fly one of the birds of prey under the master falconer’s supervision.

Learn traditional tribal arts at Coeur d’Alene Casino Resort Hotel, Idaho

Experience the welcoming nature and explore the beautiful lands of the Coeur d’Alene Tribe while visiting the Coeur d’Alene Casino Resort Hotel. Many [cultural tours](#) are available for guests, including a Native American cultural experience and dinner that features storytelling and dance performances. Those who want to learn how to make traditional tribal art can participate in classes led by Coeur d’Alene Tribal members that include making your own dentalium shell earrings, baskets, moccasins, rope and fedoras. You will learn the cultural significance of these items and have a unique souvenir to bring home and [remember your stay](#).

Practice your pole bending and barrel racing at Brush Creek Ranch, Wyoming

A dude ranch vacation is a level of rustic luxury you likely haven’t experienced before, and [Brush Creek Ranch](#) does it well. Relax under starlit skies and fill your days with as much activity as you’d like, from rock climbing to float fishing. The ranch’s robust equestrian offerings are the perfect way to learn new horseback riding skills, such as barrel racing and pole bending. Join the wranglers on a cattle drive where you can take in the stunning Wyoming landscape on the back of your trusty steed. End your day with a relaxing forest bathing session or s’mores around the firepit.

Photo courtesy of Jean-Michel Cousteau Resort, Fiji



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Kate Loweth is a writer and editor based in the San Francisco Bay Area with over a decade of experience covering travel, parenting, business and culture. Her work has appeared in outlets including USA Today, Business Insider, AARP, AAA and Thrillist. Kate is happiest when she's traveling with her three teenagers and exploring a new city or national park.

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