

# ACTIVE

## SET YOUR HEART RACING



### 53 SERIOUS CYCLING, MALLORCA

Guido Eickelbeck was in the German Olympic cycling team before he turned pro in 1989, spending four years pumping the pedals in Team Telekom. These days he lives in Mallorca, where the heart-busting climbs and terrifying descents of the Serra de Tramuntana have become the training ground of choice for cyclists, from ambitious Mamils to Sir Bradley Wiggins, who has a house down the road. Guido's four-day Cycle Mallorca package is based at the Castell Son Claret, in Calvia, a

15th-century castle turned 38-room boutique hotel: the town is known as "the seven wonders of the roads" because of its varied routes, ranging from the painful to the satanic. The two half-days guided by Guido, on state-of-the-art BMC Granfondo bikes, are complemented by two post-ride massages in the spa. How you spend the rest of your time is up to you; some will lie by the pool, but if you're properly hardcore, you'll be right back in the saddle. The Cycle Mallorca package starts at €480, B&B ([castellsonclaret.com](http://castellsonclaret.com)). Fly Dublin to Palma with Aer Lingus.



## 54 FAMILY ACTION IN THE ARDECHE

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The Ardèche river is Europe's premier natural water park, and PGL offers a superb-value family activity holiday here, based around a 32-kilometre descent in Canadian canoes. Aimed at kids aged 7 and up, the journey starts with an easy 5k. Then there's a day of mountain-biking and ropework, followed by a full day of kayaking. You get day five off — go and see the three-tiered Roman Pont du Gard or cycle to the Friday food market in Barjac. Then comes D-Day: the descent of the Ardèche, continuing the following day through the rapids to Sauze. There are departures on August 7 and 14; prices start at €670 for adults and €555 for kids, with one child staying free (code JAN47; [pgl.co.uk](http://pgl.co.uk)). Flights are extra: head to Avignon, Montpellier or Nîmes with Aer Lingus or Ryanair.



## 55 HIGH-ALTITUDE HIKING, BALKANS

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One of the toughest postings in the Albanian army used to be patrolling the northern border with Yugoslavia, where squaddies followed centuries-old goat tracks across high-altitude terrain. It's unforgiving, yes — but also deserted and outstandingly beautiful. This spectacular wilderness can be yours for eight days as you follow in the footsteps of those conscripts, driving north from Tirana to climb the 2,750m Mount Korab on day two, the 2,655m Mount Gjeravica, in Kosovo, on day three, and the 2,533m Zla Kolata, bang on the border between Albania and Montenegro, on day five. It's hard going, through an undeveloped landscape only recently opened to trekkers, and lodgings are basic even by Albanian standards. Adventurers don't seem to care: it's selling fast. There are departures between July and September, and prices start at €1,670 ([keadventure.com](http://keadventure.com)).



## 56 WILD ATLANTIC COASTEERING

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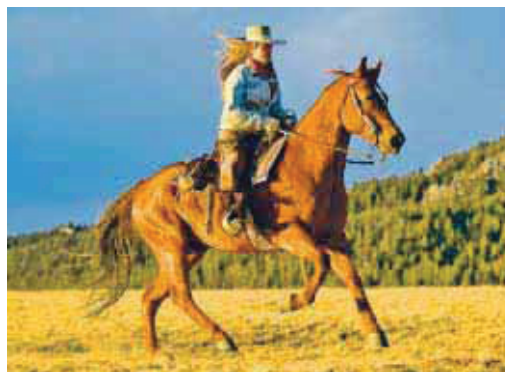
If you're going to say you've coasteered anywhere, our own Wild Atlantic Way is as good a place as any, and challenging enough to go on any intrepid adventurer's CV. Coasteering — a combination of adventure swimming and rock climbing along the base of sea cliffs — is adrenaline pumping stuff, exploring rock formations, stopping to experience the rise and fall of the ocean swell, and scrambling up sea cliffs only to jump off them again. The Delphi resort in Co Mayo organises coasteering days out, with safety equipment provided and supervised by qualified instructors, with the promise of four-star hotel accommodation and very good grub at the end of each day. The two-night Delphi Experience costs from €297pps including two evening meals, a half day adventuring, a spa treatment and a seaweed bath (delphiresort.com).





## 57 LESSON-FREE SAILING IN THE IONIAN

When Barrie Neilson set up Sailing Holidays in 1987, he had 11 yachts. Three decades later, he runs a fleet of 178 — to put it in perspective, that's 101 more ships than the British Royal Navy. His success is down to keeping it simple. You turn up, join your flotilla, then head off, following a lead boat crewed by people who know what they're doing. You will, too, after a few hours: the lead boat crew will give you a briefing on how to go, turn and stop, and will keep a discreet eye on you throughout the week (though if that makes you nervous, you can pay for "an extra pair of hands" to come aboard). By the time you've spent the first day pootling along, stopping for a lazy lunch and the odd swim before putting in to some gorgeous harbour for dinner, you'll be on the crest of a wave. A summer-holiday week exploring Greece's Ionian Islands starts at €1,195, based on four sharing ([sailingholidays.com](http://sailingholidays.com)).



## YEE-HA!, ARIZONA

There's a posse of ranch holidays out there, but this one has real cowboy credentials. It's set in the heart of the Old West — the place where the Apache chief Cochise fought the US army at the Battle of Apache Pass, where Geronimo ended after his murderous 10-year rampage and where the High Five Gang took on Sheriff Bob Leatherwood's men in one of the Wild West's greatest ever shootouts. You can visit these locations and more on a series of desert and canyon rides from the Hideout Ranch, three hours east of Tucson. This atmospheric bunch of shacks and corrals is one of the last bastions of cowboy culture in America: a place where strength, stillness, independence and resilience are cultivated. It sells itself as a hard ride into the romanticised past, but it has comfortable rooms and a bar called the Red Dog Saloon. A week starts at €2,075, including all meals, but not flights ([ranchrider.com](http://ranchrider.com)). Fly from Dublin to Tucson with BA or Virgin Atlantic from London.



## 59<sup>€</sup> SURF DUDES OF DONEGAL



Donegal wasn't voted one of the world's coolest holiday spots last year for its homespun tweed and Daniel O'Donnell records: it has a burgeoning surf culture and some of the best breaks in Europe. Bundoran is surf central: its reef break, the Peak, regularly appears in lists of the world's great waves, but the resort isn't only for pros. Just over the headland is Tullan Strand, a natural academy with consistent and easy-to-ride beach breaks. The Bundoran Surf Company offers a great-value seven-night package for novices, including accommodation and seven intense three-hour lessons. If you're really talented, you could be paddling out to the Peak by the end of the week. Prices start at €400pp, B&B, including use of a surfboard, a wetsuit and lessons ([bundoransurfco.com](http://bundoransurfco.com)).



**60 GOLF AROUND THE CAPE, SOUTH AFRICA**

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With at least a dozen world-class courses and all those excellent wines, South Africa is a smart choice for a golfing road trip. The first four nights of this tee tour are spent at the Commodore, on the V&A waterfront, perfectly positioned for a game at the Clovelly Country Club. Compare and contrast with a round at Pearl Valley, in the winelands of Drakenstein, before moving to the Arabella Hotel & Spa, near Hermanus, for three nights and two rounds on the shores of the Bot River lagoon. You might even find time for a game drive at Botlierskop Game Reserve (€30pp; botlierskop.co.za). Priced from €1,895, B&B, including car hire (yourgolftravel.com).

**61 THE CAMINO EXPERIENCE, VIA FRANCE**

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If you'd rather experience your solo walking epiphany in a French accent, Camino Ways, the Irish walking/cycling specialist, has an ideal itinerary for first-time pilgrims, taking in the last section of the French Way. On this six-night trip, you'll walk all 112 kilometres from Sarria to Santiago (you must walk at least 100 kilometres of the Camino to get your "pilgrim certificate") but the gorgeous Galician countryside you'll pass through makes it all worth it. The cost is €560 per person, half-board based on two sharing, but several optional upgrades are available. Flights are extra; fly to Santiago with Aer Lingus and take the bus to Sarria (caminoways.com).

**62 EASY WALKING, PORTUGAL**

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There's an equation with walking holidays: you put the foot-slogging effort in, you get the scenic rewards out. On that basis, the Rota Vicentina offers the best deal around. It's relatively benign — any weekend walker can handle it — but outstandingly beautiful, combining sun-dappled forest, sparkling rivers, ancient villages, fabulous birdlife and spectacular beaches. The 400-kilometre route through the Alentejo isn't a single trail, but a typically Portuguese confection of converging paths and wonderful little circular

diversions. See it for yourself on Celtic Trails' new hike from Almogrove to Sagres, an eight-day holiday best taken in early summer or early autumn, and covering a maximum of 21 kilometres a day. Staying at hotels en route for two nights at a time, you'll have the opportunity each day not only to stand and stare, but to have a decent lunch in a wayside *pousada* and end the day loafing on the beach or by the pool. It's cheap, too: prices start at €695pp, B&B, including three dinners and luggage transfers, but not including flights (celtictrailswalkingholidays.co.uk). Fly Dublin to Faro with Ryanair.







## 63 RUN WITH THE LIONS IN TANZANIA

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The presence of elephants (top speed 40kph), lions (80kph) and buffalo (56kph) may help you improve your personal best over the 21 kilometres of the Serengeti half-marathon this autumn, especially since you'll be trying to keep up with fleet-footed Masai running mates. New from G Adventures, this eight-day experience in the Serengeti National Park mixes endurance and safari. Arriving in Arusha, you'll head west to Mto wa Mbu village for a Masai lunch before joining locals on a five-kilometre training run. It's a long drive the next day through the Ngorongoro to the Serengeti, with a couple of game drives scheduled for day four. Day five is run day. Good luck — but at least there'll be dancing at the end. You can fit in a couple more morning game drives afterwards, before returning to Arusha and flying home. You sleep in tents, so you'll need a sleeping bag. The trip departs on November 21 and costs from €2,660, full-board, excluding flights (gadventures.com). Fly to Arusha with Kenya Airways via London.



## 64 EASY CYCLING, TUSCANY

What we like most about Cycling for Softies is that its itineraries are merely gentle pootles around pretty parts of Europe to fill the time between gourmet lunches and boozy dinners. It even supplies electric bikes, so you don't have to sweat the hills. That's particularly handy in the rolling landscape of Tuscany, and new for 2017 is a seven-night self-guided tour that starts in the hill town of Cortona and wobbles down into Chianti. The rides last for about three hours a day and lead you through a



painter's paradise of cypress groves, vineyards and exquisite villages such as Castelnuovo dell'Abate and medieval Asciano, where you could easily stay put for ever. Don't miss the chance to soak your not-very-sore muscles in the hot springs at Bagno

Vignoni. Accommodation is in some rather lovely inns, designer properties and working farms, and prices start at €1,700pp, B&B, including bikes and luggage transfers, but not flights (cycling-for-softies.co.uk). Fly to Perugia with Ryanair, via London.



## 65 BURN OFF ENERGY IN CORNWALL

Opening in August, but taking bookings now, the 40-room Another Place isn't somewhere for reading the Sunday papers in front of a roaring fire. Instead, guests are expected to be outdoors all day, only returning to this cosy base in the evening to refuel for the next day's activities with a damn good feed. Activities include sailing, kayaking and paddleboarding on the lake, as well as gentle walking on the fells. Stiffer hikes lie further west, while sore muscles will be dealt with at the Swim Club, which is what the owner, Will Ashworth, is calling the spa. A week in a family cottage sleeping four starts at €3,195, half-board (another.place).

