

# **Twenty-five of the World's Best Sporting Havens**

**by Robbie McDonald**

**and prepared by the staff of  
InternationalLiving**

**[www.InternationalLiving.com](http://www.InternationalLiving.com)**



# Table of Contents

<b>Introduction</b> .....	1
---------------------------	---

## **World's Best Off-the-Beaten-Path Sports**

1. Austria .....	2
2. Brazil .....	2
3. Britain .....	3
4. Switzerland .....	3

## **World's Best Skiing**

5. Austria.....	4
6. Canada .....	4
7. Chile.....	5
8. Italy .....	5
9. Spain .....	5

## **World's Best Golfing**

10. America.....	7
11. Ireland .....	7
12. Portugal .....	8
13. Scotland .....	8
14. Thailand .....	8

## **World's Best Diving**

15. Belize .....	9
16. Cayman Islands .....	9
17. Guadeloupe .....	10
18. Honduras .....	10
19. Israel: Eilat .....	10
20. Israel: Koror .....	10
21. Mexico .....	11

## **World's Best Fishing**

22. Australia .....	12
23. Britain .....	12
24. Canada .....	12
25. New Zealand .....	13

# Introduction

---

Many of us have had holidays spent breathing recycled air in “luxury” coaches...watching bad television in hotel rooms...eating beyond our capacity simply because meals were included in the “package” and there was little else to do. Yawn!

We don’t mean to suggest that a bit of R&R might not be just what the doctor ordered...sometimes. But there are times when you want an active holiday. You may have little desire to scale Mt. Everest, bungee-jump off a cliff, or swim the English Channel. Perhaps a week of boat fishing is what you need to sort your head out. Thing is, you want to *do something* on your holiday this time around.

We’ve compiled this collection of sporting destinations with you, the active traveler, in mind. It’s a mixed bag, from the quirky (cheese rolling in Gloucestershire) to the extreme (ski-jumping in Thunder Bay, Ontario). We hope this collection will inspire you to plan for the most adventurous, activity-packed holiday of your life.

Happy travels!



Kathleen Peddicord  
Publisher, *International Living*

# WORLD'S BEST OFF-THE-BEATEN-PATH SPORTS

---

## *1. Austria's least-known sport that'll make you feel like a kid again*

Austria's Lake District boasts excellent ice-skating and skiing during the winter as well as water sports during the summer. The area around **Wolfgangsee** offers a little-known sport that'll take you right back to your childhood. **Mountain tobogganing** involves carting a metal saucer-of-a-thing up a hillside (we recommend the chair lift as opposed to a hike) and descending on a metal track to the bottom. It'll be the most invigorating five minutes of your life. Next step? Do it again!

## *2. Brazil's most raucous place to see a match*

**Maracana Stadium** in Rio, which boasts a capacity of 200,000, ranks as the world's largest sports arena. Rio's wild soccer matches have made international headlines and this is your chance to be where the action is. If you don't wish to pack riot gear, purchase a **Cadierra Especial ticket**, which will afford you seating in an area fenced off from the mobs of raucous fans. Most hotels offer transportation to and from the stadium and can arrange seats for the games. Also, if you're around during Carnival season, the Maracana is the place to attend festivities.

### *3. Britain's craziest, cheesiest Sport*

Part sport, part rite of midsummer ritual, cheese rolling is still practiced in two regions of Gloucestershire. On the first Sunday in May, three cheeses are taken to the village church in **Randwick** for a brief ceremony—bear with me, I know this sounds weird—after which they are rolled around the aisles a few times. One is divided among the congregation while the other two are rolled ceremoniously—after being paraded around town in a colorful procession—down a hill to mark the beginning of Wap (or Mayor's Day) celebrations on May 11th. The festivities in **Cooper's Hill** are a bit more athletic: runners pursue their respective seven(ish)-pound cheeses down a steep slope. The winner of the race gets to keep his or her cheese! An Olympic event? No. But an awful lot of fun!

### *4. Switzerland's best for cyclists who love to eat*

Whether you're a serious cyclist or gastronome, this six-day tour is sure to become one of your fondest memories. The **Gourmet Bike Tour**, *website: [www.bike-gourmet-tour.ch](http://www.bike-gourmet-tour.ch)*, which begins and ends in St. Moritz, covers 163 miles and costs \$2,100. Sound expensive? Well, keep in mind that you'll dine on the region's best—think scallops in lemon sauce and lobster mousse with white truffle cream. Because you'll be cycling from hotel to hotel (your luggage will be delivered to each locale), you may even lose a few pounds!

# WORLD'S BEST SKIING

---

## *5. Austria: skiing for dummies*

So maybe you're not the athletic type. You don't have to be to take advantage of the world's best sporting havens, particularly if you take a few professional lessons. St. Anton, in the **Arlberg region** of Austria, is *the* best place to go for ski instruction—the Arlberg School ski technique originated here and the area's 300+ instructors are all well-versed in the method. In the hands of these pros, you'll look like an expert after a few days on the slopes.

## *6. And after lots of lessons and a stiff drink... Canadian daredevil's dream*

Canada's ski-jump champs practice in **Thunder Bay, Ontario**, regarded as the world's biggest jump. You've seen the Bond films—now it's your turn. Mind you, there are also cross-country trails for beginners if you need to get up your confidence. The area includes four major Alpine areas. Daily flight service can be arranged from Toronto, Winnipeg, Sault Ste. Marie, and Minneapolis. This place can be crowded during peak season—who knew there were so many daredevils around?

### *7. Chile's best skiing for mamas' boys (sorry... we mean "cautious athletic types")*

If you've got nothing to prove and just want some sane, safe skiing, La Parva, located just minutes from Santiago, allows you to ski from your lodge to the lifts. If you're afraid of getting hurled into a tree, there's no need to worry here: the mountains are treeless. The slopes also have wind-curlled cornices, so snowboarders can afford to try out a few new stunts. This is also a perfect spot to try heli-skiing in a friendly, nurturing environment.

### *8. World-class skiing for coupon clippers... in the Italian Alps*

Sure, you'd love to go on a ritzy ski holiday but you're—well, how can we put this?...broke. No worries. We appreciate a good bargain ourselves and have found that the deals in life are often a mere stone's throw away from the pricey stuff. Such is the case in the Italian Alps: **Mount Livata and Pescasseroli** are located very near Cortina d'Ampezzo, Italy's most popular resort, but offer affordable accommodation and similar access to facilities. Same goes for **Val d'Ayas**, which is located near pricey Courmayeur and Cervinia and offers lower lift prices, more challenging runs, and fewer crowds.

### *9. And if that's not cheap enough... there's skiing in Spain*

You can ski in Spain on a busker's budget. While there is a certain aura about the Alps resorts in France, Austria, Italy, and Switzerland, the Spanish Pyrenees area keeps up with the best of them (and certainly surpasses them with respect to value.) **Baquiera-Beret**, in Lerida, boasts a lengthy ski season (November through April), numerous slopes

of varying difficulty, plenty of chair lifts, professional ski instruction, and—this is the best part—far fewer crowds than the pricier resorts. A good place to stay is **Hotel Montarto**, *tel. (34) 73-64-50-75*, which offers spectacular views and easy access to lifts.

# WORLD'S BEST GOLF COURSES

---

## *10. America's best golf (and, boy, what a sunset!)*

Pebble Beach, located about 100 miles south of San Francisco, boasts America's best golf course. Over 6,000 yards long, narrow, and set amidst a magnificent landscape, **Pebble Beach Golf Links** has hosted three U.S. Opens, two U.S. Amateur Golf Championships, as well as the annual Pro-Am. If you can score an invitation, you may even get to play at the **Cypress Point Club**, the most exclusive golf course in the world. After you play, wherever you play (or even if you *don't* play), head over to nearby Carmel to see the sun set over the Pacific Ocean—it borders on the spiritual.

## *11. Ireland's best links courses*

Quick history lesson: Because no crops would grow on the sandy soil between the sea and farmable land—known as links land—the Scots developed the game of golf in the 19th century. Cool, huh? The other thing that's cool is that Ireland has a lot of this type of land (40% of the world's links courses, in fact) and it's perfect for golf: sandy, treeless, and windy. The best links courses are in the west, particularly in Sligo and Donegal. Ireland has recently hosted the Ryder Cup and the American Express World Championships and is now internationally recognized as a major golfing destination. If you're a serious golfer, you'll want to check out the Emerald Isle. Plus, there's nothing like a cold Guinness after a tough day on the course.

## *12. Europe's best: would you guess...Portugal?*

The Algarve region of Portugal has picture perfect weather, year-round, lush green terrain, and perhaps the best golfing in Europe. **Quinta do Lago**, tel. (351) 89-394-271, is the most popular course and boasts a clubhouse and pool. **Dona Filipa**, tel. (351) 89-394-141, caters to you, the serious golfer, but offers luxurious distractions for your non-golfing companions. Plus, should you tire of golfing, you may want to work up a sweat on the tennis court or laze around by the pool.

## *13. Scotland: The world's oldest golf course (and a tough one at that)*

If you're a history buff—and like a challenging course, with unpredictable winds and sandy greens—it will interest you to know that the aptly named **Old Course** in St. Andrews, Scotland is the oldest in the world. Dating back to the 15th century, this venerable place has been the site of more than twenty British Opens. Don't expect a come-as-you-are vibe here: you'll need a letter of introduction from your club or a certificate of handicap to gain access. For more details, contact the **Links Management Committee of St. Andrews**, tel. (44) 1334-475-757.

## *14. Thailand takes a medal*

Thailand has been making strides toward becoming the foremost destination for international golfers. Boasting some 50 courses and exceptional terrain, this beautiful country is a must for the adventure-golfer. The **Rose Garden Golf Course**, website: [www.rose-garden.com](http://www.rose-garden.com), located 45 minutes from Bangkok, was recently awarded a Silver Medal by Golf Magazine USA. You'll see why when you visit this exceptionally well-managed resort, which boasts a botanical garden, cultural center, and family spa in addition to its renowned 18-hole championship golf course.

# WORLD'S BEST DIVING

---

## *15. Diving into Belize's Blue Hole...*

The Ambergris region of Belize may well have the best diving and snorkeling in the world. First stop: a visit to **Captain Rene**, tel. (501) 26-2819. He'll take you to all the coolest spots, such as the (ominous sounding) Blue Hole, a 400-foot-deep, 1,000-foot in diameter former cave, located in the center of the Lighthouse Reef Atoll. You may remember this place from when Jacques Cousteau brought the world's attention to it in the 70s. No worries if you don't because you'll never forget this place once you've visited. You'll descend 130 feet and explore huge stalactites and stalagmites and may even catch sight of the reef sharks that inhabit this underwater cave.

## *16. Searching for pirates' treasures in the Cayman Islands*

Ahoy! More than 300 shipwrecks occupy the waters surrounding the Cayman Islands. Plus, because the water is so clear, you'll have visibility of over 200 feet—definitely an occasion for the underwater camera. Some say the ill-fated ships here still contain pirates' treasures; bringing back booty would sure beat a souvenir shot-glass, hey? There's no shortage of diving companies in the area, but the oldest is **Bob Soto's Diving**, tel. (809) 949-2022, run by Ron Kipp. If you find any real treasures, maybe you'll consider splitting the loot with Ron...

## *17. Sights for non-divers in Guadeloupe*

Jacques Cousteau gave the western coast of Basse-Terre his seal of approval as one of the foremost diving destinations in the world. As such, the **Pigeon Islands** (just beside Malendure village), attract some of the world's best divers and snorkelers. But, even if you can't bear to get your hair wet, you can enjoy the fluorescent tropical fish, sponges, and corals here, thanks to crystal-clear waters and glass-bottomed boats. Book a 90-minute tour from Malendure—the Nautilus sails four times daily.

## *18. Honduras' diver's (and dolphin lover's) choice*

**Anthony's Key Resort**, *Sandy Bay, Roatan*; tel. (504)451274, fax (504)45-1140, provides everything a diver (or soon-to-be diver) could possibly want: instruction, air tanks, weight belts, three daily single-tank boat dives, as well as meals and a welcome cocktail. Even if you're not a diver, this place has something for you—horseback riding, wind-surfing, and kayaking are available as well. What's more, this sporty experience won't break the bank. Prices start at \$135, all-inclusive, double occupancy. Note: Do not miss the dolphin show!

## *19. Israel: You've never seen fish like this*

Bordering the Red Sea at the southernmost tip of Israel, **Eilat** offers the best scuba diving on the planet. You'll see varieties of fish that simply can't be seen anywhere else—even the extremely knowledgeable marine biologists here aren't quite sure of the origins of some of these colorful fellas. Why not do a bit of independent research while you're here? The city boasts one of the best underwater observatories in the world and the **Eilat Zoo** and **Hai-Bar**, an 8,000-acre wildlife preserve, are well worth a visit. On a different note, if you feel like tanning (in the

buff!), Neviot, a nude beach, is located 30 miles south of here (make sure to put sunscreen on the areas that don't regularly see much sun...)

## *20. Israel: If you need a bit of hand-holding...*

Maybe you're a bit wary of the sea...afraid of sharks...just plain nervous. What you need is a bit of reassurance. Sam Scott of **Sam's Tour Service**, tel. (680) 488-1720, is one of those good-vibed American dudes and he can arrange everything you need to feel comfortable in the water. Sam knows the Koror area of Israel like the back of his hand (his stepfather is the high chief of Koror) and he can tailor a package to suit your needs. Before you know it, you'll be exploring shipwrecks from World War II, searching for alligators, and diving in the coral reefs. You'll wonder why you didn't take this lifestyle up years ago. Terra firma will seem so dull after this...

## *21. Seeing to the bottom of a deep lagoon in Mexico*

Xel-Ha, just outside Cancun, offers the best snorkeling and diving in the Mexican Caribbean. You'll need a few adjectives to describe some of the fish here: electric-blue, neon green, zebra-striped. The waters here are so clean you'll see to the bottom of the lagoon (and it's deep!) and there are numerous coves to explore. **El Cantil**, near Cozumel, is a great region for exploring shipwrecks. We recommend **Aqua Safaris**, ave. Melgar 39A; tel. (52) 987-2-0101. Do not forget your underwater camera!

# WORLD'S BEST FISHING

---

## *22. Battling the black marlin in Australia*

Cairns, Australia has long ranked as the foremost fishing capital of the world and is particularly rich in shark, baramundi, and marlin. Have you ever tasted black marlin? Well, it's nothing to write home about... The best thing about these feisty swimmers is how strong they are—they're truly formidable opponents. Think of them as the fisherman's equivalent to Mt. Everest for a mountain climber.

## *23. Britain: All kinds of fishing on the Isle of Man*

What sets the Isle of Man apart from other fishing destinations is the variety of fishing available. Boasting nearly 100 miles of coastline—including rocky headlands, tranquil rivers, beaches, and reservoirs—you may find yourself surf fishing at the northernmost Point of Ayre in the morning and at the southernmost Port St. Mary in the afternoon. Man also offers excellent river and deep-sea fishing.

## *24. Canada's best year-round (feisty) fishing*

There's a virulent rumor that Canada has the best fishing in the world. Inland waters teem with freshwater varieties, while the Atlantic and Pacific coasts offer numerous varieties of deep-sea fish. Many believe that the fish fight harder—and thus make the sport more challenging—in the arctic regions of the Yukon and Northwest territo-

ries. British Columbia, a fisherman's paradise, offers five species of salmon in its coastal waters year-round. Contact **Oak Bay Marine Group**, 1327 Beach Drive, Victoria, BC V85 2N4; tel. (800)663-7090 to arrange an expedition.

## *25. Why not join a fishing competition in New Zealand*

Salmon and trout fishermen flock to Methven in the Caterbury region of New Zealand. In the Rangitata and Ashburton rivers, quinnat salmon *run*—i.e. swim back up the rivers in which they were born to spawn and die—during the summer. While you may not look on fishing as a competitive sport, some do: three salmon-fishing contests are held here annually on the Rangitata, Rakaia, and Waitaki rivers. Why not sharpen your competitive edge by duking it out with the black marlin in Australia (see above) first?

## *Further Resources*

### *The World's Best: The Ultimate Book For The International Traveler*

We asked our network of 200-plus seasoned travelers and expatriates to open their personal vaults and share their best travel adventures with you, all the straightforward facts on 46 countries spanning six continents, plus hundreds of surprises and secrets. The result is a whirlwind, one-of-a-kind, breathless armchair experience. Better than a letter from a friend, quirkier than a brochure, more personal than a guidebook, *The World's Best* is just that: a subjective set of bests that will entertain you for hours on end. I dare you to stay in the armchair for long after you get a taste of the best the world has to offer you.

To order your copy of *The World's Best: The Ultimate Book For The International Traveler*, click on the following link:  
<http://www.isecureonline.com/Reports/120SWBST/W120FCUP>