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June 6 2015 - 10:15PM

Top 10 most creative holiday lessons

- Michael Gebicki

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 Flamenco classes are on offer in Granada, Spain.

Watching the world go by from a cafe table has its charm, but travel works best when it's hands-on. Here are 10 energising suggestions.

1 TAIKO BEAT, JAPAN

Taiko is to conventional drumming what piloting an F-22 Raptor is to driving. Professional taiko artist Art Lee, artistic director of Japan's Wadaiko Tokara, offers courses from just a few hours to week-long intensives, in the mountainous Shimoina District of Nagano Prefecture. They offer deep immersion in Japanese culture as well as rigorous instruction in the art of wadaiko, as the taiko drums are known in Japan.

See tokara.net.

2 WOK ON, BALI

A resident of Bali for close to three decades, Janet De Neeffe has planted her roots firmly in the soil of her adopted home, introducing outsiders to Balinese cuisine through her Casa Luna Cooking School. Market tours, herbs and spices, and the art of perfect rice cooking all feature. Half-day classes take place on weekdays and you can dip in and out as you wish.

See casalunabali.com.

3 SNAPPY SHOOTERS, WORLDWIDE

National Geographic's photographers are some of the legends of the business. Anyone can sign up for a photo trip with National Geographic Expeditions, which take photo enthusiasts to such exotic locations as Ethiopia, Bhutan, Costa Rica and the Galapagos, in the company of these world-class photographers.

See nationalgeographicexpeditions.com.

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4 FLAMENCO FLING, SPAIN

At the foot of the Sierra Nevada Mountains in the city of Granada, Carmen de las Cuevas, the School of Spanish for foreigners, is dedicated to imparting all things Spanish. There's a choice of flamenco courses or Spanish language with flamenco, from one week up to three months. Dance teachers come with distinguished credentials, and classes are 12 maximum.

See carmencuevas.com.

5 EASEL DOES IT, ITALY

Set on a hilltop estate just outside Orvieto, Arte Umbria's specialty is painting, drawing, sculpture and printmaking workshops. The one-week courses are aimed at all levels, and include long lunches, wine and lounging by the pool. Accommodation is in a rustic, 10-bedroom country house on the estate.

See arteumbria.com.

6 THE WRITE STUFF, ENGLAND

British-based Arvon runs five-day residential writing courses in the English countryside. Tutors include celebrated names from the world of contemporary English literature, and groups are limited to 15. Choose from poetry, radio dramas, writing young adult fiction and short-story writing. Locations include West Yorkshire's Lumb Bank and The Hurst in Shropshire, former homes of Ted Hughes and John Osborne respectively.

See arvon.org.

7 SKYROS WRITING, GREECE

The Writers' Lab on the Greek Island of Skyros promises to polish those penses into prose. Their one-week courses are open to all, from complete beginners with writerly thought bubbles to published authors. Literary luminaries such as Margaret Drabble, Hanif Kureishi, Hilary Mantel and Alison Lurie have all graced the centre.

8 TUSCAN TASTES, ITALY

With nights in luxury Tuscan villas, plenty of wine and lots of laughs as a side serve, the cooking classes that Tuscookany have operated for more than a decade tick all the right boxes. The emphasis is on traditional Tuscan cooking, with instruction in English by local chefs. Each of the three villas teaches its own menu at the discretion of its head chef, with mastery of half a dozen different antipasti, entrees, mains and desserts as the aim.

See tuscookany.com.

9 SACRED SOUNDS, INDIA

Close to the Ganges River in the holy city of Varanasi, the Academy of Indian Classical Music is a residential music school that offers tuition to Westerners in the sitar, tabla, harmonium and flute, the anchor of Indian classical music. The particular style taught here is the Benares Gharana, which has been passed down from teacher to student over many centuries.



See benaresmusicacademy.com.

10 SALSA SENSATION, CUBA

Mi Salsa Cubana is a Cuban dance school that promises to put silk and spice into your parquet shuffle. While the emphasis is on salsa, students learn a variety of Latin styles including son, rueda de casino, mambo, cha cha, and rumba. Mi Salsa Cubana's two-week courses are at Havana's Hotel Kohly. Course co-ordinator Stine Ortvad is a professional dancer from Denmark who has taught salsa for two decades.

See misalsacubana.com.

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