

A different flavor of instruction awaits you at **Tuscookany**, an outfit that leads Italian and Mediterranean cooking courses amid glorious Tuscan scenery. Guests have their choice of two absurdly picturesque villas, where local culinary experts strive to make an Italian grandmother out of even the most ardent Chef Boyardee enthusiast. Their lessons are supplemented by excursions to a nearby cheesemaker, a winery and an olive oil mill. And in case the learning curve is steeper than you'd hoped, the magnificent restaurants of Florence are only an hour away.

Budding sommeliers might want to try the **Chelsea Sun Inn**, in Mount Bethel, Pa. This cozy, rustic B&B has positioned itself as an ideal getaway spot for nerve-racked Philadelphians and New Yorkers. The main attraction is the adjoining Stonehenge Winery and Vineyard, which offers guests the opportunity not only to drink lots of wine, but also to try their hand at making it. At the end of your stay, you get to take home 12 bottles of self-made plonk—and while this vintage probably won't win any awards, you'll love it, if only because it's yours.

The hope is, when we return from vacation, we'll have gained something enduring from our travels. We will have been made better in some way—happier, healthier, worldlier.

For a hands-on experience sure to prove enriching to both you and the world at large, check out the **Ritz-Carlton Orlando, Grande Lakes**, a participant in the Ritz-Carlton's Give Back Getaways, a volunteer program whose offerings range from feeding the homeless in Tokyo to saving sea turtles in Sanya. Here, you're invited to help conserve the Florida ecosystem, joining hotel staffers as they keep tabs on local critters, construct artificial reefs, practice the art of "aquatic plant enhancement" and generally get in touch with the furry, scaly, swampy side of the Sunshine State.

Then there's Rio de Janeiro's **Hotel Santa Teresa**. While the hotel—formerly a coffee plantation mansion—is an architectural

marvel, the buildings you'll be focusing on are more modest. The Santa Teresa has a package that allows guests to lend a hand in the construction of new houses in the impoverished favela Barreira do Vasco. The work involves replacing plywood shacks with permanent housing, so you'll learn to pour cement, set bricks, fit windows and wear a hard hat without looking ridiculous. But the real payoff comes when you meet the people who'll be living in something that you helped build with your own two hands. And the resulting sense of fulfillment you'll experience will feel a lot better than the sunburn you might have sustained merely falling asleep by the hotel pool.

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» dating back to the Roman era, in case additional inspiration is required.

Meanwhile, the **BodyHoliday at LeSport**, St. Lucia, places the emphasis more firmly on Apollo than on Dionysus. The resort employs a team of trained instructors to school guests in such activities as fencing, archery and kickboxing, all of which promise to provide interesting interludes for couples who've opted for the honeymoon package. If gouging and punching aren't your taste, there are also instructors for tennis, golf, scuba diving, yoga, Pilates, windsurfing and a bunch of other cardiovascular challenges. (As for slobbering next to the pool all day, you're on your own.)

Those looking to hone their golfing prowess can try the **Treetops Resort** in Gaylord, Mich. This sprawling property is overseen by Rick Smith, who's made his name designing golf courses and then teaching people how to play on them. Treetops has five courses in all, ranging from the sedate to the sadistic; regardless of which you choose, Smith's award-winning golf academy can help you raise your game. Other activities here include fly-fishing trips, for those who need to work on their overhead swing.



**LEISURE STUDIES** Clockwise from top left, fine-tuning a golf swing at the Treetops Resort in Michigan; creative contemplation at France's Château Veritenac, whose offerings include writing classes; going "hands on" with gusto at Tuscookany in Italy