

THE WORLD'S BEST THRILLSEEKING DESTINATIONS

Why limit yourself to the local hotspots? Adrenaline junkies have no shortage of places to go thrillseeking abroad.

1 Switzerland

The Swiss Interlaken is the number one European adrenaline destination – spectacular scenery and terrain that lends itself to enough adventures to fill any holiday itinerary. Skydiving, paragliding, hang gliding, canyon diving, bungee jumping, river rafting, glacier trekking, canyoning... need I continue? Add to this the usual snow sports, plus heli-skiing, snowshoeing, sledding, snow tubing, slope gliding – the list is endless.

With some of the most breathtaking views of the Swiss Alps, the buzzy Interlaken is nestled between two picturesque lakes and acts as the jumping off point for activities in the surrounding mountains and further up in the Jungfrau Valley.

The Jungfrau Valley alone offers over 200km of pistes for skiers and snowboarders, 100km of winter-walking trails and 48km of sled runs, which invariably transform into a hiking and mountain biking mecca

in the summer months. The network of chairlifts and cable cars make access to high altitude trails a breeze.

2 Chile

This little-visited South American beauty is 4,000km of every type of landscape imaginable. From the High Atacama Desert in the north to the mountains and fjords of Patagonia at the southern tip of the country, Chile's unique offerings will impress all.

Surf the 100 metre high sand dunes in Valle de la Muerte (Death Valley) or straddle a horse and gallop, action movie style, across the salt pans in one of the driest places on earth: the Atacama Desert. Further south in the lakes and volcanoes district, climb up Volcán Villarica for a close-up inspection of a huge smoldering crater that caps an active volcano, and take the special "sliding" trail back down to the bottom. Ski resorts operate on the north side from July to September.

In the south, hit the Futaleufu

River, which is considered the best place in the world to white water raft and kayak. Fed by glacial waters and snow melt, the Futaleufu River has some exhilarating rapids, and with names like "The Terminator" and "Dynamite," these Class V rapids are bound to get hairy. If you prefer terra firma, tackle the four-day "W" trek (down-up-down-up) in Torres del Paine National Park.

3 South Africa

You could spend a lifetime getting high on adrenaline on the African continent, but narrow it down to South Africa and you may just fit a stack of death defying adventures into one trip. Great white sharks are prolific in this part of the world so if cage diving with sharks is on your bucket list, it's time to tick it off. Fall up to 91 metres when you bungee jump off the 213 metre high Bloukrans Bridge, which is the highest bungee jump in the world. South Africa also boasts



the highest gorge swing and the world's fastest zip line, if jumping off a bridge isn't thrilling enough.

No visit to Africa is complete without going on safari. Exchange the 4WD for a horse and share the veld with rhinos, crocodiles, hippos, giraffes, wildebeests, baboons and springbok – and no big cats.

4 Costa Rica

It feels as though Costa Rica has more zip lines per capita than anywhere else in the world, but there's nothing quite like zip lining through the cloud forests with rumbling and smoking volcanoes as a backdrop. Expect zip lines over 900 metres in length and phenomenal views of lush rainforests to match.

Although Arenal Volcano has slowed down its geothermal activity in the last five years, it's still one of the country's five active volcanoes. Mountain bike and hike around Arenal's base, or for white water action head to one of the country's many rivers. July is when the water really starts pumping.

The Cocos Islands are a bit of a schlep at 540km off the mainland, but dive enthusiasts won't blink at the 36-hour cruise to this "must-do" dive destination. The drawbacks are

Keeping with the African theme, how about kloofing? It's along the same lines as canyoning; hiking into ravines and jumping or abseiling off massive cliffs into rivers. Oh, and if you've ever harbored a desire to ride an ostrich, or maybe even enter the Ostrich Derby – here's your chance!

the large schools of scalloped hammerhead sharks that congregate in the top 40 metres of water, and I mean up to a hundred of them at one time. Try a night dive where white tip reef sharks hunt in frenzied packs looking for dinner.

5 Iceland

Don't let the cooler weather and dark winters put you off – Iceland will invigorate the senses. Take a helicopter flight from Reykjavik to the dormant Thrihnukagigur volcano, and then via an open cable lift descend almost 120 metres to the bottom to explore its interior.

Surfing the Icelandic coastline is nothing short of exhilarating when you factor in sharp volcanic rocks, icy water temperatures and wild North Atlantic seas. Just wear as much neoprene as possible to battle the elements. It does make diving or snorkelling the extraordinarily pure volcanic rock filtered glacial waters a breeze, especially in a dry suit.

The supernatural landscape and isolated mountains are full of adventure possibilities. Mountain bike gnarly single tracks and discover steaming fumaroles. Too energetic? Jump on an ATV bike and tear up tracks



LEAN, MEAN...



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over the rugged mountains, and in winter do the same by snowmobile.

The glaciers are riddled with amazing ice formations and sinkholes. Clip on crampons and grab ice axes to explore the glaciers that form the biggest ice cap in Europe and climb up vertical ice walls. This is also one of the places to join man's best friend for a dog sledding adventure.

6 Nepal

With the highest drop zone in the world, Everest Skydive takes solo and tandem jumpers up in a Helicopter and drops them in the shadow of Mt. Everest from 9,000 metres up. This privilege is only available once or possibly twice a year. The catch? The hit of adrenaline will set you back from \$25,000 for a solo jump and \$35,000 for a tandem.

Paragliding too sedate? In Pokhara, Parahawking adds an Egyptian Vulture to the

paragliding experience. Follow your feathered friend to the best thermals in the sky, sticking out a gloved arm to feed and reward the local guide several times throughout the flight.

Edmund Hillary types can trek to the top of the world (or close to it), but mere mortals may prefer to get their kicks from rafting raging rivers, or bungee jumping or swinging off the 150 metre high suspension bridge over the Bhote Kosi gorge. Alternatively, abseil, jump and slide down steep canyon walls.

Forget the hard slog to the top, and experience the best bit – downhill mountain biking. Roar through the heart of the rugged Annapurna Ranges, hitting single tracks, seldom-used dirt trails and across suspension bridges teetering precariously over deep gorges. Also, with the plethora of mountains and gorges, rock climbers can climb their socks off.

7 New Zealand

Virtually every square inch of this country is geared towards heart-thumping good times. But if you're time poor, venture to Queenstown, the quickly beating heart for adrenaline escapades.

Jet boating through steep, narrow canyons at breakneck speeds while spinning, twisting and turning is a must-do. Take a helicopter ride to hard to reach places to ski, hike and mountain bike, or attach a parachute and either jump out of a plane or paraglide from a mountain.

Bungee jump or canyon swing New Zealand's highest and scariest bungee, The Nevis. Sitting at 134 metres above the Nevis River, the jump has been known to make grown men cry. Forget the freefall and do your best Tarzan or Jane impression while zipping through the trees on the steepest high-velocity zip line in the world – some zip lines are almost a kilometre in length. And all this in Queenstown! **13**

