

FYI Travel: Vacations for daredevils and thrill seekers

by Tom_Roebuck

Leaping out of a plane 15,000 feet above the Earth. Swimming with great white sharks. Scaling the sheer face of a 1,000-foot cliff. For most people, the thought of these activities conjure feelings of terror and dread. For adventure lovers and thrill seekers, they sound like the perfect vacation getaway.

WHEELIN' IN NEW ZEALAND - Looking down above Lake Wakatipu in Queenstown, New Zealand, home to herds of red deer, wapiti, fallow deer and the supremely shaggy Himalayan Thar. The animals have freedom to roam within the 800-hectare park – some are tame enough to enjoy being fed by hand. CNS photo by Holly Wademan. With adrenaline junkies in mind, Hostelworld.com has compiled vacation destinations for those who prefer bungee jumping off bridges to picnics at the beach.

- Queenstown, New Zealand

Renowned as the worldwide epicenter of adventure tourism, the resort town of Queenstown offers daredevils of all breeds an array of heart-thumping activities that are guaranteed to keep the blood racing. Resting on the shore of lightning-bolt-shaped Lake Wakatipu, and within sight of the Southern Alps, Queenstown provides a stark backdrop for a myriad of adventure activities. Those who crave the excitement can bungee jump more than 300 feet above the Shotover River in Skippers Canyon or tandem sky-dive out of a plane at 15,000 feet and within 60 seconds reach a screaming 200 miles per hour. Once the sun sets, those still on their feet can experience the raucous night life that earned Queenstown the nickname "Vegas by the Lake."

Hostelworld recommended Hostel: YHA Queenstown Lakefront. Rates start at \$18 a day.

- Swakopmund, Namibia

Nestled between the unforgiving heat of the Namib Desert and the cool relief of the Atlantic Ocean lies the

fog-laden summer capital of Swakopmund. Home to an eclectic mix of artists, hippies and game rangers, Swakopmund offers a desolate playground for adventurers of all extremes. Thrill seekers flock to this seaside town not only for the cool water and big waves, but also for the fierce challenge presented by the relentless terrain. Quad-bikers can feel the burn of the roasting dunes emanate beneath their wheels as they twist and turn through the endless sand, passing the Gravel Plains and the Horses' Graveyard, while sandboarders carve their mark on the dunes, riding the constantly shifting waves of sand under the broiling desert sun. When a reprieve from the blistering heat is required, travelers can retreat to the palm tree-lined streets of downtown for a leisurely afternoon in one of the local pubs.

Hostelworld recommended Hostel: Dunes Backpackers Lodge. Rates start at \$14 a day.

- Mission Beach, Australia

A year-round tropical paradise perched along the shores of the Coral Sea, Mission Beach is a small village on the frontier of untamed wilderness and excitement. Explore an ancient shipwreck in the warm, clear waters that teem with rainbow-colored life as you scuba dive along the Great Barrier Reef. Leap into the Aussie heavens as you sky-dive above ancient rain forests, clear volcanic lakes and towering, blue waterfalls. Tame the raucous Tully River as you go whitewater rafting through the frothing waters of this turbulent waterway. In the midnight hours, those still standing can toss back a handle of grog with fellow party-goers at one of Mission Beach's famous night spots.

Hostelworld recommended Hostel: Scotty's Beach House. Rates start at \$20 a day.

- Penang, Malaysia

Resting on the northwestern coast of the Malaysian peninsula lie the sun-kissed beaches of Penang, also known as the Pearl of the Orient. An outdoorsman's dream, Penang offers endless activities that take advantage of the natural beauty of this tropical paradise. Parasail across the warm Penang sky alongside the isolated beaches of the Pantai Acheh Forest Reserve or snorkel and scuba dive in the waters of one of the

leading dive destinations in the world. Those who enjoy a good fright can start their heart racing by exploring the deeper mysteries of local folklore, including the ominous Snake Temple, dedicated to a Buddhist healer-priest, filled with the smoke of burning incense and swarming with pit vipers. The vipers, with fangs intact, are believed to be rendered harmless by the sacred smoke. The most important rule: Don't pick up the snakes!

Hostelworld recommended Hostel: Ali's Ferringi Guest House. Rates start at \$12 a day.

FYI: For more information about hostels, visit www.hostelworld.com.

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