

TRAVEL + LEISURE

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Extra Credit

Travel has long been a way to learn about the world. Now a range of next-gen educational vacations are making it easier to learn about history, pick up a language, or gain a better understanding of our planet. **By Devorah Lev-Tov**

“NOW MORE THAN EVER, expertise matters,” says June Chin-Ramsey, the new CEO of the tour company **Context** (contexttravel.com). Chin-Ramsey has seen the pandemic strengthen travelers’ urge to really dig in to a destination. “These days, people don’t just want to visit a city; they want to deeply know and intimately connect with the history, people, food, and culture.”

Context makes that happen through a network of scholars that specialize in fields such as art history, archaeology, cuisine, architecture, history, and theology. These pros offer private, custom, and small-group walking tours in 60 cities around the world. During the

pandemic, the company launched Context Learning, a digital platform offering live seminars by experts on a variety of topics. Perhaps surprisingly, those virtual classes “are here to stay,” Chin-Ramsey says. “Online learning can be a stand-alone adventure in its own right.”

Other players are adding educational elements, hoping to appeal to the growing number of travelers keen to make each trip count. **Beyond Green** (staybeyondgreen.com), a new hospitality brand focused on sustainability, requires each of its nearly 30 member hotels and resorts to offer guest enrichment. For example, the **Brando** (thebrando.com; doubles from \$3,916), a private-island

resort in French Polynesia, regularly hosts lectures and educational presentations from visiting scientists, anthropologists, and other experts. Read on for our pick of the best teachable moments for travelers.



LANGUAGES

Apps like **Babbel** (babel.com), **Drops** (language-drops.com), and **Duolingo** (duolingo.com) can help travelers learn the basics before arrival, but in-person classes like those from **Coucou** (coucoufrenchclasses.com), which has locations

in Los Angeles, Minneapolis, and New York City, can help polish that all-important accent. **Idlewild** (*idlewildbooks.com*), a travel-focused bookstore in New York City, moved its language classes online during the pandemic, so now people anywhere can join sessions in Italian, Portuguese, or Spanish. For an in-country experience, sister Costa Rican resorts **Nayara Gardens**, **Nayara Springs**, and **Nayara Tented Camp** (*nayararesorts.com*; doubles from \$390) can arrange a full immersion, with language lessons and cooking classes taught in Spanish. The **Family Coppola Hideaways** (*thefamilycoppolahideaways.com*; doubles from \$159) in Belize and Guatemala added both Spanish and Creole language classes in 2020. **Grand Hotel Tremezzo** (*grandhoteltremezzo.com*; doubles from \$710), on Lake Como, Italy, uses its Cook & Conversation program to teach Italian through food. And guests at the three Botswana safari lodges run by **Belmond** (*belmond.com*;

from \$1,500 per person per night, all-inclusive) can signal that they want staff to teach them Tswana by wearing a special bracelet.



HISTORY

The **Efendi Hotel** (*efendihotel.co.il*; doubles from \$385), in the ancient city of Acre, Israel, offers a four-day seminar focusing on the history of the Crusades led by Efraim Lev of the University of Haifa. Lectures include often-overlooked Jewish and Muslim perspectives on the period, and are complemented by tours of the area's historic forts. A different sort of history comes from

Crafted Ireland (*craftedireland.com*), which connects guests with Cork historian Michael Martin, a *Titanic* specialist. His detailed tours illuminate the ship's tragic history and its connections to the country, from the Belfast shipyard where the vessel was built to its final port of call in the town of Cobh.



WINE

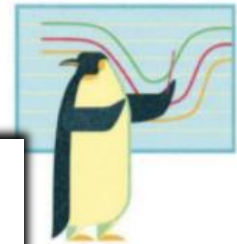
The newly opened **Four Seasons Resort & Residences Napa Valley** (*fourseasons.com*; doubles from \$1,800), which is the area's first and only resort on the grounds of a working vineyard, offers behind-the-scenes access to Elusa Winery, with tours of the barrel rooms and guided tastings of Cabernet Sauvignon grown on its 7.4 acres.

"demystifying port" as well as more detailed explorations, such as a study of sparkling wines from the Douro.

SCIENCE

The **Ameswell Hotel** (*ameswellhotel.com*; doubles from \$259), in Silicon Valley, organizes an ongoing series of talks with technology insiders such

as Adrianna Quintero of the Energy Foundation, Jane Gideon from indoor vertical farm company Plenty, and experts from the nearby NASA Ames Research Center. At the **Lodge at Blue Sky, Auberge Resorts Collection** (*aubergeresorts.com*; doubles from \$1,349), farmer Lynsey Gammon teaches guests sustainable practices by letting them get their hands dirty irrigating crops, cultivating vegetables, and planting seeds in the on-site greenhouse.



MATE CHANGE

aw vessel from edition operator **ant** (*us.ponant.com*), **Commandant Charcot**, slated to launch in December with a scientific laboratory on board. Guests will have the chance to assist researchers with ice-floe studies, water sampling, and placing data beacons to monitor environmental conditions. Expedition packages arranged by **Cromble & Kent** (*cromblekent.com*) are often joined by working scientists, including figures

like James McClintock, one of the world's foremost experts on the impact of climate change on polar regions. On one upcoming itinerary (*from \$12,995 per person for 13 days*), McClintock will lead multiple lectures and accompany guests to Palmer Station, the Antarctica base operated by the National Science Foundation.

