



RACE YOU TO THE BAR

Make 2009 a refreshing one with our step-by-step guide to the world's best activity breaks. By Chris Haslam

you need Alpine or winter experience of routes graded at least Scottish III/Alpine AD+ or equivalent. The price is £3,375, including flights.

SURFING

Beginner: in Bude

Let's get one thing clear: surfing is as easy as riding a bike downhill with a tail wind, and the difference between wallowing in the white water and carving up the green stuff is simply practice. Okay,

you'll need to leave your dignity at home for your first lesson, but four hours should get you on your feet, and by the end of an intensive weekend — £70 in Bude, with Big Blue Surf School (01288 331764, bigbluesurfschool.co.uk) — you'll be carving your name with pride. Camp at the lovely Willow Valley Holiday Park (01288 353104, willowvalley.co.uk) for £11 a night.

Intermediate: in Portugal Portuguese surf is clean and cold — and when it's big, it's

enormous. West-facing beaches can sometimes be blown out, but further south, on the Algarve, the waves are kinder — mainly beach breaks with the odd point break, it's one of the best spots in Europe for improving your game, says Steve England, of the surfing magazine *Carve*: "There's no localism, the beaches are pristine and you can always find a wave." *Carve's* recommended operator in the area is The Surf Experience (00 351 2 8276 0964, thesurfexperience.de) — one of its instructors, Marlon Lipke, has just qualified for the ASP World Tour. A week's advanced surf course starts at £448, including instruction and accommodation. Airlines flying to Faro include EasyJet (easyjet.com) and Flythomascook (flythomascook.com).

Hardcore: on the North Shore

The biggest waves on earth come to die on the North Shore of Oahu, in Hawaii — angry giants whose roar can be heard

from the pineapple plantations far inland. The breaks here read like the seven wonders of the surfing world: Waimea, Banzai Pipeline, Log Cabins, Backyard, Kammieland, Monster Munch and Sunset Beach. My one attempt to surf here ended with a broken board, a dislocated shoulder, a split lip and the observation from Mrs Haslam, who has a doctorate in the bleedin' obvious, that I might have bitten off more than I could chew. If you fancy your chances, a five-day course with local champ Kailani Jabour costs £400, booked through Surf Hawaii (00 1 808 295 1241, surfhawaii4u.com). With Virgin Holidays (0871 222 5825, virginholidays.co.uk), 10-night packages, staying in Waikiki, start at £1,097, including flights.



FEELING INSPIRED?

For ideas on all sorts of adventurous options, see: timesonline.co.uk/activitytravel