

The Best Destinations for Adventure Travel

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We know there are questions around travel amid the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak. Read our note [here](#).

If you're dreaming about your next post-pandemic vacation and want to get really, really active consider heading to a location where you can get your adrenaline flowing. Fortunately, there are plenty of ways to do that — from cliff jumping to whitewater rafting, extreme zip lining, and even shark diving. Wondering where to get started? Here's the ultimate thrill-seekers' guide to the best destinations for planning adventure travel.



DAILY QUESTION

Test your knowledge!

In which U.S. state can you find this "ghost forest"?



PLAY NOW

Heli-Skiing

Credit: [harmphotos](#)/ Shutterstock

Why take a ski lift to the top of a mountain when you can take a helicopter? No lift lines, scant crowds, and miles of untouched powder are just a few of the reasons why [heli-skiing](#) ranks among the top of the list for an adventure trip.

Alaska and British Columbia go head-to-head for the best heli-skiing destination thanks to a wide variety of locations and operators.

Alaska's [Chugach Range](#) near Valdez is one of the most famous, featured in countless extreme snow-riding movies, while [Bella Coola, British Columbia](#), is another top-rated spot that finds itself the frequent star in similar films. Proximity to the ocean affects the depth and characteristics of snowpack — closer to the coast, you'll find wetter, more stable snow, and farther away, you'll find drier, fluffier powder. For this reason, Bella Coola has an advantage over many other locations because it offers a mix of both conditions.

One thing to keep in mind is that *when* you go may help you choose *where* to go. For example, if you're planning a trip in January, your best bet is [Hokkaido, Japan](#), where Siberian storms sweep down and dump loads of the fluffy stuff. North American heli-skiing destinations offer the best conditions and weather in March and April. If you're yearning to escape the North America summer heat, head south to New Zealand or Chile.

If your time and budget don't allow for a multiday heli-skiing trip, you have many options for day trips. Telluride, Colorado, is home to a traditional ski resort, but if you want to give heli-skiing a try, it's one of the most accessible places to make a single drop or day trips.

The [same operator](#) offers full-day excursions from Vail and Aspen. You can also find day-trip operators in Idaho, Utah, Nevada, and California.

Bungee Jumping

Credit: [Martin Vlnas](#)/ iStock

If hurtling weightless through the air with the ground rushing up at you sounds exhilarating, then a bungee jumping trip should be on your radar. It also requires no advance training or preparation. If you're going for the highest drop, head to [Macau Tower](#) in Macau, China. Jumpers leap off the tower 764 feet above the city with specially designed cords that ensure they bounce up and down instead of swinging side to side).

For an even more stomach-churning drop, check out New Zealand's [Highwire Bungy](#), where jumpers dive off a small cable car suspended 440 feet above the Nevis River near Queenstown. Wind can funnel through the gorge, making the cable car swing before jumpers even launch. Another popular New Zealand spot is [Kawarau Bridge](#), where, instead of being cranked back up after your jump, you're dropped into a raft in the river and ferried to shore.

But you don't have to leave the U.S. to get a bungee jump trip checked off your bucket list. [Bungee Expeditions](#) operates about eight bungee jumping locations around the country. Its tallest jump is the 680-foot drop from Rio Grande Bridge in Taos, New Mexico. You can also jump over the Colorado River in Arizona, the Skokomish River in Washington, and the Crooked River Gorge in Oregon. Some locations only offer jumps a few times per year, so check the schedule before you go.

Skydiving

Credit: [Mauricio Graiki](#)/ iStock

Skydiving anywhere is a surefire way to get your heart thumping — but skydiving over breathtaking scenery amplifies the experience. If you've ever wanted to see [Mount Everest](#) but don't want to invest the time into training and climbing, consider skydiving from 23,000 feet onto the side of the mountain. You'll land at either Syangboche (12,402 feet) or Amadablam Base Camp (15,000 feet) — both offer a

higher elevation than many skydive drops around the world. Jumps are typically scheduled in November, and the entire adventure spans nine days.

The [Swiss Alps](#) also offer a fantastic backdrop for skydiving.

Operators in Interlaken or Lauterbrunnen drop divers from 14,000 feet above stunning glaciers or a drop-dead-gorgeous valley full of waterfalls. If you'd rather plummet toward a sparkling turquoise tropical ocean than a snowy mountain, head to Fiji; several operators drop divers from 14,000 feet above the resplendent islands. For an unparalleled view of the Grand Canyon, [Paragon Skydive](#) will drop you from 16,000 feet above this natural wonder of the world.

Whitewater Rafting

Credit: [ihsanyildizli](#)/ iStock

Gnashing Jaws of Death, Ghost Rider, Godzilla, Terminator — these are just a few of the intimidating names given to famous Class V (the most challenging) rapids around the world. Africa's [Zambezi River](#) is legendary for multiple reasons — but it happens to be one of the most electrifying places for whitewater rafting. Some trips start by plunging over magnificent Victoria Falls, which are twice as wide and deep as Niagara Falls.

Chile's Patagonia region is loaded with awe-inspiring sights, and you'll experience plenty of them rafting on the [Futaleufú River](#) through granite cliffs and pristine wilderness. The "Fu" is legendary among whitewater rafting enthusiasts because it flows over thrilling Class IV and Class V rapids with names such as Terminator, Gates of Inferno, Wall Shot, and the Perfect Storm. You can find plenty of Class IV and V rafting locations around the U.S. as well. The [Upper Gauley River](#) in West Virginia earns nicknames such as the "Beast of the East," with more than a hundred rapids. The [Cherry Creek section of California's Tuolumne River](#) offers 15

Class V rapids in a nine-mile stretch, giving rafters minimal opportunities to catch their breath. Oregon's [Rogue River](#) is another consistently reliable spot for Class IV and V rapids.

Shark Diving

Credit: [MaFelipe](#)/ iStock

Watching these fearsome marine animals glide past baring their teeth isn't for the faint of heart, but if you do want to see these magnificent creatures up close, you can free dive without the protection of a cage or watch from inside a sturdy metal cage suspended from a boat. Where to go shark diving also depends on which species of sharks you most want to see.

If you want to see the mightiest of them all, the great white shark, South Africa is your best bet. [Seal Island in False Bay](#) teems with fur seals, cormorants, and penguins — an irresistible buffet for hungry great whites. California's [Farallon Islands](#) off San Francisco is another ideal place to watch great whites hunt elephant seals. You don't need to be a certified diver to enter the cage here — it's suspended just below the surface, and you breathe through an air hose attached to the boat.

If you'd prefer to free dive and watch sharks glide overhead or past you, Tiger Beach off [Grand Bahama Island, Bahamas](#), is an excellent place to see tiger sharks. (Tiger sharks earn the rank of the ocean's second most dangerous shark, after the great white.) You're also likely to see reef, lemon, and nurse sharks circling above you as you hang out on the bottom. For a tamer option, check out [Gladden Spit near Palencia, Belize](#), where you can snorkel or dive with gentle, majestic whale sharks.

Cliff Jumping

Credit: [RyanJLane](#)/ iStock

Also known as tombstoning, cliff jumping requires no skill other than a hefty dose of bravery and the ability to swim. In fact, Hawaiian King Kahekili, rival to King Kamehameha in the 1770s, urged his warriors to prove their bravery and loyalty by leaping off a 63-foot cliff into shallow water. You can follow these warriors' leaps on Lanai's south shore at a place called, unsurprisingly, [Kahekili's Leap](#) or Warrior's Leap. The Big Island also has a popular cliff-jumping spot called [Ka Lae](#), also known as South Point Hawaii, which sits about 40 feet above the ocean. Another warm-water favorite is Jamaica's Seven Mile Beach in Negril. You can jump from the seaside restaurant [Rick's Café](#) into the Caribbean Sea 35 feet below. You probably didn't need another reason to visit the Greek Islands, but you can add cliff jumping to the list. [Santorini](#) alone has three popular cliff jumping areas: Amoudi Bay, Perissa Beach, and Kamari Beach. These cliffs aren't nearly as high as many others, but the breathtaking surroundings more than makes up for it. One thing to keep in mind is that many extreme cliff diving spots are best left to professional divers — and many places where people cliff jump aren't safe, legal, or regulated.

Extreme Zip Lining

Credit: [Elenathewise](#)/ iStock

Nepal, best-known for its access to the world's highest peak, Mount Everest, also happens to have one of its most extreme zip lines. Called the [Zipflyer](#), you can reach speeds of 90 mph with an almost 2,000-foot drop along a 1.1-mile span — you might manage to catch glimpses of the mighty Himalayas and the Seti River along the way. If you've made the trek to this remote part of the world, you can also try the park's other thrill attractions such as bungee jumping and paragliding.

Instead of snow, you can find extreme zip lining over the United Arab Emirates' arid landscape. On [Jebel Jais Flight](#), currently the world's longest zip line at 1.7 miles, riders soar 5,511 feet above sea level at speeds up to 93 mph. To zoom along the world's longest urban zip line, check out Dubai's [XLine](#), where riders look facedown over the Dubai Marina at speeds of 50 mph. You can also [skydive](#) above the marina.

You don't have to travel to these exotic locations to get in on the fun — zip lines are cropping up all over the U.S.

Colorado's [Cloudscaper](#) is one of the nation's highest, soaring 1,200 feet above the roaring Arkansas River at about 40 mph. Another nearby option is the [Royal Gorge Zip Line Tours](#), which offers an Extreme Course with 11 zip lines, some that reach 60 mph. For a truly unique experience, check out Kentucky's [Mega Zips](#), where you soar in underground caves across six lines. In [Niagara Falls](#), you can zip 2,200 feet past American Falls and land at the base of Horseshoe Falls — try it at night for a truly surreal experience.

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