

X TREME OUTDOORS

7 Treacherous

You've toured plenty of castles and seen enough artwork. You've checked off those bucket-list cities and monuments. Now, it's time to step up your European adventures with these seven treacherous treks ... if you dare.

1 Caving

Using a harness, ropes and determination, you can rappel, climb, shimmy and crawl in some of the most remote and untouched caverns known to man.

Switzerland's Hölloch cave network is among the largest in the world, covering nearly 200 kilometers. For a creepy and exciting spelunking trip, book the two-day excursion with Trekking Team (www.trekking.ch); you'll stay through the night in the cold, dark depths.

Bundle up to explore the lava-formed cramped crevices and caverns of Iceland. With a guide from Arctic Adventures, you can navigate the twists and turns of the Gjáðakkahellir, located in a region known for volcanic activity. Then suit up to snorkel the Silfra Tectonic Fissure. Find out more at www.adventures.is.



2 Cliff Jumping

Peer over the cliff to pinpoint your target. Step back, take a deep breath, run forward and jump. Feel your stomach lurch as you fall, and brace for impact — water hurts!

Known as tombstoning in parts of Europe, cliff jumping doesn't require fancy equipment or guided tours. But you need to be a strong swimmer, and you have to be able to simply let go. Cliff jumping is not without its risks, including fluctuations in water depths, changing currents and hazards below the surface. A word to the wise: don't be the first to jump, heed all warnings, talk to the locals and stick to well-established sites.

Warm up with a swan dive into the Aegean Sea from the 30-foot-tall cliffs of Kamari Beach in fabulous Santorini, Greece. In Switzerland, start small with a 20-foot jump and work your way up to the terrifying 80-foot fall from Ponte Brolla. Then stand at the edge of the Falkenstein Cliff and plunge 100 feet into Austria's Wolfgangsee.



3 Mountain Biking

Cycling is a favorite hobby in much of Europe. But rather than stick to paved routes and level stretches, why not live on the edge? Conquer mountains, glide down hills and create a dizzying GoPro show during an off-roading expedition.

Try the fun trails and park in Winterberg, Germany, and once the ski bunnies leave, take over Ischgl, Austria or the Portes du Soleil area of France. When you're ready to push boundaries, maneuver the difficult terrain of Mt. Edna, Sicily's extremely active volcano. And try out stunts in France's massive Alpe d'Huez bike park.

4 Mountain Boarding

Taking elements from skate boarding and snow boarding, mountain boarding (aka dirt boarding) is catching on in Europe. The sport requires a special board that is nearly the same size as a skateboard but with larger wheels designed to hug terrain.

While you can get started at home, visit a mountain boarding facility for lessons and a variety of trails. Before you know it, you'll be somersaulting off half pipes and balancing on rails. Visit www.mbseurope.com/about-mbseurope/centres to locate mountain boarding parks near you.



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5 Paragliding

Gaze down at Europe's mountains, forests, beaches and cities as a huge sail and the wind or air thermals keep you airborne. Head to the following destinations and connect with local paragliding companies to reach the sky.

Ease into flight at France's Dune of Pilat (or Pyla). The lower altitudes, warm temperatures and coastal scenery will have you hooked, and you'll soon want more.

Float above King Ludwig II's exquisite Neuschwanstein Castle and the Bavarian Alps. Glide above Interlaken, Switzerland to watch the sunset over the Bernese Alps and glittery lakes. Plus, discover famous fjords late at night during Norway's unending summer days. Need the ultimate thrill? Leap from Babadağ Mountain, 6,000 feet above the Turkish Riviera. Feel the hot sand between your toes as you touch down in Ölüdeniz, surrounded by a captive audience of beach-goers.

Attention, dare devils! Though dependent on your tandem pilot and flying conditions, you may have the chance to experience a dramatic death spiral during your descent. You'll impress your friends as you come in for a landing.

6 Via Ferrata

Your heart will pound so loudly that it's all you can hear as you look at the gorge below, with only your own strength and a rope to keep you from meeting an unpleasant end. Via ferrata (*Klettersteig* in German) is the Italian name given to an iron-climbing route, where ladders, cables and bars are mounted into a mountain face. Routes are typically rated according to length and difficulty. Climbing via ferrata style requires a helmet, a harness, two via ferrata ropes with special karabiners and boundless energy — are you



up to the challenge?

The Dolomites mountain range spans northern Italy and boasts several peaks surpassing 10,000 feet. Hire an expert from Dolomite Mountains (www.dolomitemountains.com) and choose from more than 130 trails to create your ideal adventure. With many notches on your belt from previous climbs, you'll be prepared to conquer the Costantini — which will likely take more than 10 hours — to find incredible vistas and feel like you are invincible.

While ascending the Loen route in Nordfjord, Norway, watch your footing on the 400-foot-long bridge suspended 2,500 above the earth. To cross Europe's longest via ferrata catwalk, schedule a trip with www.loenactive.no.

Austrians don't call it the Super-Ferrata Dachstein for nothing! Advancing 4,000 vertical feet will take at least seven hours. Your goal: reaching an altitude of nearly 10,000 feet! To learn more about Dachstein, visit www.ramsau.com.

7 Zip Lining

Hanging from a metal cable and speeding through the air may not seem so scary. Did we mention that you may travel as fast as cars on the autobahn while hundreds of feet above ground with that cable and a harness? Europe has dozens of high ropes courses with



zip lines (or zip wires), but for an exhilarating flight, check out these destinations.

Adrenaline X-treme Adventures has 10 zip lines designed to get you from the top of the Dolomites down to the town of San Vigilio, Italy, 1,300 feet below. Careen at 50 miles per hour, nearly 330 feet above the ground on this crazy course. You can book your adventure at www.adrenalineadventures.it.

Zip World boasts a mile-long line across a quarry in Snowdonia, Wales. Soar like a superhero, topping out at 100 miles per hour as you barrel toward the ground. Purchase tickets at www.zipworld.co.uk.

The Fantasticable at Portugal's Pena Adventura (www.penaaventura.com.pt) is one of the most intense zip lines in the world. Catapult nearly 5,000 feet in daylight or darkness — headfirst — at 80 miles per hour.

Dare to find out if seven is your lucky number. And if you live to tell your tale, we want to know! Email us at contentteam@stripes.com. ■