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cruise off the calories

Affordable cruise prices are likely to encourage more people to cruise in 2009 than the 13.2 million folks who did in 2008. And why not? The vacation advantages are undeniable: Great value for the price, an unrivaled ease of travel, and enough activities to keep even the shortest attention span entertained. Yet the health-conscious traveler knows that all-you-can-eat buffets, bottomless drinks, and lounging by the pool really pack on the pounds. Sheila Cluff, fitness author and owner of The Oaks at Ojai, offers cruise-lovers her most active tips:

- Book a room that is as far away from the dining room as possible. Not only will you be required to walk more each day, but also it will provide the opportunity to meet shipmates as they stroll.
- Locate the spa and gym as soon as you get aboard. Talk to the staff in the fitness center or spa about special classes such as Pilates and Spinning (there's usually a small, extra fee) and book a space or bike right away.
- Choose on-shore activities at each port: Hike Mr. Vesuvius in Naples, cycle through the Port Olympic in Barcelona, or work your arms and abs using a transparent kayak through the Sea of Cortez in Cabo, Cluff says.



DARING DESERT ESCAPADES

Borrego Ranch Resort and Spa is a luxe camp for adults-only who want to stretch their bodies and minds. Set amidst the Anza-Borrego Desert, California's largest state park, the resort features 19 private casitas and 44 poolside rooms, five resort pools, and a signature 18-hole golf course. After trying acupuncture or reflexology at the Morado Spa, tackle one of these unique feats (fees vary seasonally):

The Catwalk (105 minutes). Picture yourself 30 feet in the air as you climb, breathe, and balance on a 35-foot high horizontal balance beam. As you creep forward on the Catwalk, you become more confident with every step!

Twilight Photography (120 minutes). The desert sky is at its most beautiful as dusk overtakes the valley. Learn photography skills to capture the area's natural beauty. Bring your own equipment.

Stargazing (90 minutes). Looking into the nighttime sky is no ordinary activity here since the absence of light pollution provides impressive visuals. Enjoy a lecture and viewing with a celebrated astronomer. Rates start at \$260; www.borregoranchresort.com

