

TRAVEL + LEISURE

It's

All

About

the

Journey



Learning from the Best

There's a new gold standard when it comes to sporty vacations: hotels, resorts, and tour operators that connect travelers with Olympic-caliber athletes. **By Nora Walsh**

"OUR GUESTS ARE seeking the unique," says Tom Rutherford, the general manager of **Amanyara** (*doubles from \$2,400*), a luxury resort in Turks and Caicos. That's why the oceanfront escape launched Amanyara Legends, a series of sports clinics hosted by elite athletes, including tennis star Maria Sharapova, NBA All-Star Kevin Love, and stand-up paddleboard champion Candice Appleby. The drive to pursue those sorts of sports, says Tom Marchant, cofounder of the travel outfitter Black Tomato, has never been higher. "We've seen increased interest—especially among younger generations—to learn or improve skills," he notes. "People are interested in how these athletes are representative of their own cultures."



POLO IN KENTUCKY

Professional player Jorge Vazquez coaches the fundamentals of horsemanship, swing mechanics, and game strategy at the **Manchester** (*doubles from \$179*), in Lexington, which bills itself as the "horse capital of the world." Says Vazquez: "It's incredibly rewarding to watch guests fall in love with the sport."



SURFING IN AUSTRALIA

Legendary world champ Wayne "Rabbit" Bartholomew guides guests of outfitter **Reveling Australia** (*trips from \$1,348 per person*) around the top breaks in Queensland, and can even help visitors design their own boards. Rest up between reps at the **Langham, Gold Coast** (*doubles from \$352*), which overlooks Surfers Paradise Beach.



TENNIS IN CALIFORNIA

A retired pro from the Netherlands, Caroline Vis is now director of tennis at **Sensei Porcupine Creek** (*doubles from \$1,395*), outside Palm Springs. Her four-night clinic pairs real-time data from wearables with coaching from a team of nutritionists, physiologists, and mindfulness instructors.



SUMO WRESTLING IN JAPAN

The **Palace Hotel Tokyo** (*doubles from \$775*) has teamed up with retired wrestler Aminishiki Ryūji, who only rarely opens the doors to his Ajigawa Stable, where a handful of professional wrestlers live and train full-time. Visitors can watch practice drills, and men (in keeping with Japanese tradition) are allowed in the ring to learn the basics alongside the pros.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: COURTESY OF THE MANCHESTER; PAUL GIGGLE/COURTESY OF TOURISM AND EVENTS QUEENSLAND; COURTESY OF SENSEI PORCUPINE CREEK



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: TIANA KARTADINATA/COURTESY OF PALACE HOTEL TOKYO; COURTESY OF TORDRILLO MOUNTAIN LODGE; COURTESY OF BLACK TOMATO; COURTESY OF DOLOMITI SUPERSKI. ILLUSTRATIONS BY BASHEL LUBARSKY

FROM LEFT
Polo at the Manchester; surfing in Queensland; tennis pro Caroline Vis; skiing the Sellaronda; sumo at Ajigawa Stable; fishing guide Jennifer Cornell; taking aim at COMO Uma Paro.



SKIING IN ITALY

Downhill skier Peter Runggaldier repped Italy in the 1994 and 1998 winter games. Today, he coaches on the Sellaronda, the 16-mile route that's part of Dolomiti Superski, a mega-resort that includes Alta Badia, Val di Fassa, and Val Gardena. An ideal base is the **Grand Hotel Savoia** (doubles from \$503), in Cortina d'Ampezzo—at least until the Cristallo Resort & Spa, currently under renovation, reopens as a Mandarin Oriental in 2025.



FLY-FISHING IN ALASKA

Competitive angler and backcountry guide Jennifer Cornell also manages **Tordrillo Mountain Lodge** (three-day trips from \$9,400), near Anchorage. She leads excursions in search of salmon, rainbow trout, and grayling, offering tips on technique along the way.



ARCHERY IN BHUTAN

Olympic archer Dorji Dema, who represented Bhutan at the 2008 Beijing games, now offers private coaching for guests traveling with **Black Tomato** (nine-day trips from \$30,000 per person). The outfitter can organize a circuit through the country that includes stays at COMO Uma Paro, Six Senses Punakha, and other high-end lodgings.