

**F**eedback buzzed from an amplifier as Paul Dopp stepped onstage in a nightclub north of Atlanta. It was Saturday night, and the noise of the crowd began to overwhelm him as he found a pick and put fingers to frets on his guitar.

"The dance floor was packed," Dopp says. "The stage lights were blinding."

But then Derek St. Holmes, a singer and guitarist formerly of the Ted Nugent band, took the microphone. The drums kicked in, and Dopp struck the first note on his guitar—audio and electricity crystallizing in a riff to send off "Hot Legs," a late-'70s hit by Rod Stewart.

"Tension broke once I struck that first chord," says Dopp, a certified public accountant from Alpharetta, Ga.

It was the final night of Camp Jam, a three-day clinic created to give amateur musicians like Dopp a taste of the rock 'n' roll lifestyle. Led by Jeff Carlisi, the former guitarist of the band 38 Special, Camp Jam's program includes music lessons in professional studios as well as a shot at rubbing shoulders with some legends of the stage.

The final exam is a concert where camp attendees jam with their heroes in front of a live—and, performers hope, enthusiastic—audience.

# Summer Camp

*Today's camps give summer escapism a new meaning—and they're not just for kids.*

By Stephen Regenold

A close-up photograph of a person's hands and arms holding a white electric guitar. The person is wearing a white t-shirt and blue denim jeans. The guitar is white with a black pickguard, two black pickups, and a bridge pickup. The person's right hand is on the strings, and their left hand is on the fretboard. The background is a solid blue color.

*Revisited*

Specialized camps and clinics like Camp Jam are becoming increasingly popular with adults and kids who are looking for alternatives to the common summertime trip or nature camp of old. Covering subject matter as diverse as archaeology, cooking, writing, photography and even paranormal investigation, this new crop of camps combines education with an immersive experience to make the most of a vacationer's time away from home.

"There is a trend of the specialization of vacation time, and if there is a hobby, there now seems to be a camp or program for it," says Nancy

LaPook Diamond, founder of NicheDirectories.com, a Boca Raton, Fla., Internet company that publishes camp community Web sites.

Indeed, grownupcamps.com lists thousands of adult-oriented programs, from basketball camps to humanitarian "adventures" to dude ranches. These venues serve the 1 million adults who attend a summer camp each year, according to figures from the American Camp Association (ACA), a Martinsville, Ind., organization.

For Dopp, a 53-year-old who played live gigs with a band as a young adult, the time at Camp Jam

was a retreat from real life. "It took my mind fully off everything else," he says. The program, a so-called "fantasy camp," also provided a once-in-a-lifetime chance to mingle with the musicians Dopp grew up hearing on the radio. "I got to experience that magic professional musicians seem to carry around," he says.

Of course, traditional summer camps with canoes and crafts and stories around the fire still make up the majority of the 5,000-plus resident overnight camps the ACA tracks. And children are still the top attendees, with about 10 million kids based off to a camp in 2007.

*Surf Camp instructs first-timers and budding barrel shredders alike on the art of riding a wave.*

### *Surf Camp*

Surf Camp Inc. promises "magical islands with translucent waters, soul-warming sun and sugar-white sands." Oh, and you get taught how to surf, too. This Wrightsville Beach, N.C.-based outfit, which offers more than 20 multi-day surfing camps a year, heads to the Bahamas, Hawaii, the British Virgin Islands and Costa Rica to instruct first-timers and budding barrel shredders alike on the art of riding a wave. Campers stay together at small resorts and learn to catch waves during intensive weeklong adventures. The company caters to kids, teens, adults and families, with programs for each group. **Contact:** 866-844-7873, [wbsurfcamp.com](http://wbsurfcamp.com). **Price:** Weeklong camps start around \$1,500.



But kids' camps are becoming more specialized, too; you can now find everything from space camp and circus camp to camps focusing on theater and volunteerism.

Even a traditional summer camp might now incorporate an art or science class as an elective alongside archery. "Back 150 years ago, when people started to organize camps in the woods, it was to get away and live healthier than they were living in the cities," says Peter Surgenor, president of the ACA and executive director of Holmes Presbyterian Camp in Holmes, N.Y. "Today it's more about education and the development of the child. The camps like to show that they have changed kids."

Adults and families undergo change, too. Summer camp—no matter the venue or the theme—can be the ultimate recharge. Here are 10 unique camp options that guarantee a change from your regular summertime routine.

### *Camp Jam*

Kids and adults alike can rock out at Camp Jam's clinics, which push amateur guitarists, bassists, drummers, keyboardists and singers during three- to five-day clinics to "unleash their inner rock star." Founded by Jeff Carlisi, the former lead guitarist of the band 38 Special, the camp schedule includes music lessons in professional rehearsal spaces and personal contact with pro rockers like Ed Roland of Collective Soul and Peter Stroud, a guitarist for Sheryl Crow. The camp guarantees to turn "the bedroom player into a bona fide rock star." This year, 15 U.S. cities—from Atlanta to Chicago to Phoenix—will host a Camp Jam gathering. **Contact:** 800-513-0930, campjam.com. **Price:** Adult weekend getaways cost \$2,000-\$5,000, depending on the venue and the list of visiting rock stars.

Right: Jeff Carlisi, former guitarist for 38 Special, instructs a student at Camp Jam.



### *Summer Ski Camp*

The perpetual winter on Oregon's glaciated Mount Hood provides a unique opportunity for year-round skiing and snowboarding, with chairlifts cranking through June, July and August. The adults-only Mt. Hood Summer Ski Camp, held the last week in August, has programs to ready aspiring skiers and experts alike in moguls, racing and freestyle/jumps. Snowboarders are also welcome, and can enjoy a private terrain park on the slopes of Mount Hood. Last year the camp hosted about 175 adults, ranging from single 20-somethings to 75-year-old retirees. Daily lessons build skills via group and private coaching as well as video analysis of your form on the slopes. Bonus: Each afternoon, groups head down the mountain to enjoy whitewater rafting, rock climbing, mountain biking and other warm-weather diversions. **Contact:** 503-337-2230, mthood.com/adult.htm. **Price:** Weeklong sessions start at \$1,060.



## Archaeology Field School

Indiana Jones would fit right in at the Warren Wilson College Archaeology Field School. Attendees get their hands dirty digging up history while uncovering a 16th-century Spanish fort near Morganton, N.C. During one- to four-week-long summer sessions, motivated amateurs work side by side with archaeologists, learning to identify stone tools, pottery, architectural features and other artifacts. The program welcomes a range of ages, including children as young as 14, who can come with their parents. (Children 16 years of age and older may enroll on their own.) The 2008 session will concentrate on a one-acre area with the remains of what is believed to be a Spanish compound called Fort San Juan—one of the earliest European settlements in the interior of what's now the United States. **Contact:** 828-771-2013, warren-wilson.edu/~arch. **Price:** \$300 per week (lodging not included).



## Fashion Design Institute

Got a young fashionista at home? At this weeklong program in Running Springs, Calif., kids ages nine to 16 can sharpen their creative skills by designing their own line of clothing under the guidance of working professional designers. With field trips to clothing distributors and factory warehouses in Southern California, campers get a close-up look at the industry's inner workings. Back at the camp's studios, they sketch illustrations of their ideas, choose fabrics, and learn hand- and machine-sewing techniques to as-



semble handbags, pants, shorts and shirts—all of which are showcased at an end-of-session fashion show in front of hundreds of fellow campers.

**Contact:** 909-867-5743, paliadventures.com. **Price:** \$1,535 per week (discounts available for siblings and multiple sessions).



### *Family Canoe Trips*



Want a camp experience that actually includes camping? The Ontario-based outfitter PaddleFoot runs family canoe trips into Canada's Algonquin Provincial Park and Papineau-Labelle Wildlife Reserve, where kids and parents paddle and portage between camps on a five-day journey à la French Canadian fur traders of yore. PaddleFoot provides equipment and food, and the trip is led by one of the company's guides. Along the way, families learn to canoe and camp together, with swimming and hiking serving as daily diversions. At night, gather around the campfire for a cookout, followed by songs and tall tales told as stars poke into the sky. **Contact:** 888-388-3668, [paddlefoot.ca](http://paddlefoot.ca). **Price:** About \$2,300 for a family of four, including food, equipment and guiding.



### *Secret Agent Camp*

Created with kids ages nine to 16 in mind, this camp caters to aspiring James Bonds. The weeklong sessions teach commando field techniques,

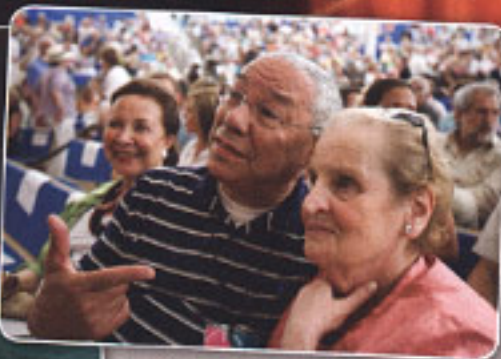
shooting (with paintball guns) and evasive driving maneuvers with go-karts—all in the name of train-

ing kids to become "secret agents." Camp attendees can learn martial arts, race their way through a ropes course and even launch stink bombs (what preteen boy could resist that?). Organized by Pali Adventures of Running Springs, Calif., Secret Agent Camp is held on a 74-acre campus in the mountains northeast of Los Angeles, where obstacle-flanked paintball fields and dirt tracks for go-karts wind through the woods. **Contact:** 909-867-5743, [paliadventures.com](http://paliadventures.com). **Price:** \$1,535 per week (discounts available for siblings and multiple sessions).

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## Ghost Hunter University

These two-day clinics, held at haunted sites around the globe, are led by paranormal investigator Christopher Moon, senior editor of *Haunted Times* magazine. After an intro class, participants head into haunted hallways and basements—cameras, recorders and electromagnetic field meters in hand—to search for flashes of light and other “paraforensic” clues. Upcoming venues include the Lizzie Borden B&B in Fall River, Mass., site of a 19th-century ax murder, and Philadelphia’s Eastern State Penitentiary, which has been featured on the Sci Fi Channel’s “Ghost Hunters.” **Contact:** 877-880-6232, [hauntedtimes.com](http://hauntedtimes.com). **Price:** \$65–\$129 per day.



Colin Powell and Madeleine Albright have both spoken at the Aspen Ideas Festival.

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## World Series of Poker Academy

Hosted at Harrah’s casinos across the United States, the World Series of Poker Academy offers two- and three-day clinics where amateur card handlers get instruction from the pros. You dine and stay at the casino hotel—from Caesars Palace in Las Vegas to Harrah’s in Atlantic City—and live and breathe poker for the weekend-long course. Presentations and lessons on the craft of playing cards are intermixed with time at live poker tables. One instructor, a retired FBI investigator named Joe Navarro, teaches players how to read nonverbal behavior to detect bluffs and winning hands. In addition to an education, attendees are dealt into private tournaments that offer them the chance to win World Series of Poker buy-ins, which can be applied toward entry in contests that could net big bucks. Last year one attendee, Sally Boyer of Midway, Utah, went on to win \$262,077 in cash. **Contact:** 800-989-9767, [wsopacademy.com](http://wsopacademy.com). **Price:** Two- and three-day camps cost \$1,699–\$1,999, including food, discounted rates at the hotel and instruction.



## Aspen Ideas Festival

“Inspired thinking in an idyllic setting.” That’s the motto for the Aspen Ideas Festival, a six-day meeting of the minds in the mountains of Aspen, Colo. Held at the nonprofit Aspen Institute, the festival attracts eggheads and altruists from around the globe to ponder politics, culture, science and religion. A diverse list of movers and shakers including Madeleine Albright, Alan Greenspan, Colin Powell, Tobias Wolff, John Negroponte, Lance Armstrong and Thomas Friedman interact with attendees via daily presentations and educational sessions like “Religion and the Modern World,” “The Net Generation” and “Medicine 2025.” **Contact:** 970-925-7010, [afestival.org](http://afestival.org). **Price:** Full festival admission is about \$1,800 (lodging not included); sessions cost \$10–\$20 each. ▼

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