

TEACHING
PROS

"Travel is so expensive nowadays," says tennis director Robin Henders. "This is a cool way for our pros to take a break, refresh and spend time with their families at these luxury resorts."

TRAVEL

Recharge and Refresh!

BY LYNN ARMITAGE

Looking for a cost-effective getaway? Consider a resort 'teaching vacation.'



> Did you know that all these years you've been working hard as a certified tennis professional, you could have been taking nearly-free vacations at luxury hotels in exotic locations?

These "teaching vacations" may be one of the best-kept secrets in the industry. In exchange for teaching tennis a few hours a day, you—along with your partner or family—can enjoy a greatly discounted, weeklong vacation at an all-inclusive beach resort in locations like the Caribbean,

Mexico, Central and South America, Japan, Thailand, Fiji, Indonesia, the Maldives and Malaysia.

But according to a tennis insider, only about 30 percent of U.S. tennis instructors even know about them.

Robin Henders, co-owner and director of tennis at Five Star Tennis Center

in Plainfield, Ill., has taken eight teaching vacations with his wife and two daughters in the last 15 years.

"That was my main means of traveling in the early years, when I didn't have a lot of discretionary income for family vacations," he says.

Over the years, Henders has invested a lot of sweat equity and many long hours into making Five Star Tennis Center an award-winning facility. So he started taking advantage of the tennis teaching vacations offered by Fit Bodies Inc.—an organization that places certified health and wellness instructors at all-inclusive, luxury beach resorts to teach fitness classes to hotel guests for just a few hours a day in exchange for an almost-free, seven-day vacation.

Teaching pros pay their own airfare and a booking fee ranging from \$500 to \$1,000. But all food, drinks, alcohol, land and water sports, and hotel rooms are comped by the resort for the fitness pro, spouse and up to two children under the age of 13.

"Many of these luxury resorts charge \$600 to \$1,000 a night, depending on the time of year. So that's a vacation savings of about 80 to 85 percent," explains Fit Bodies owner and fitness enthusiast Suzelle Snowden. She says she developed this novel business concept in 1992 after an opportunity came her way to fill in for an injured yoga instructor while vacationing with her husband at a resort in Jamaica.

More than two decades later, Fit Bodies Inc. (fitbodiesinc.com) has become an industry leader for wellness teaching vacations. For the tennis side of the business, Snowden works with eight resorts in four countries—Jamaica, Mexico, Dominican Republic and the Maldives.

To recruit qualified tennis teaching professionals to meet the burgeoning demand—which Snowden says is her biggest challenge—she partners

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