

Condé Nast Traveler

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OUR ALTERNATIVE
BUCKET LIST

The
New
Nomad
Issue

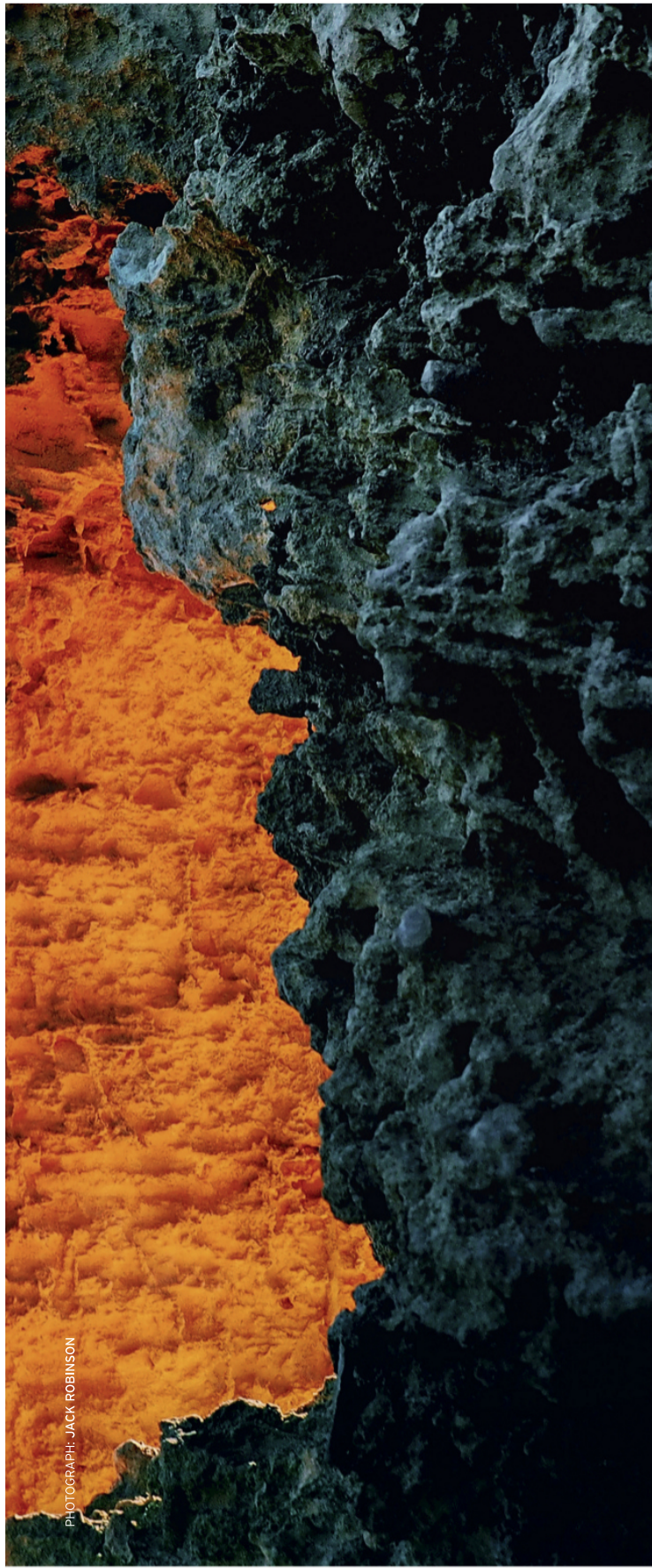
WHAT IT MEANS TO BE A TRAVELER TODAY

SUSTAINABILITY IN FOCUS
HOMEGROWN HOTEL HEROES
SOLO EXPLORING
FRESH FRONTIER CITIES
NEXT-GEN TRAVEL FIXERS
THE WELLNESS REVOLUTION
OFF-GRID ADVENTURES
MODERN MEMBERS' CLUBS
SHARP APARTMENT TAKEOVERS

Charged Up

WELLNESS HAS BEEN THE BIGGEST TRAVEL BOOM IN DECADES, AS PEOPLE TURN TO DIFFERENT WISDOMS TO DEAL WITH THEIR OWN PHYSICAL, EMOTIONAL, AND SPIRITUAL HEALTH. DAISY FINER SHINES A LIGHT ON THE TRULY EFFECTIVE PLAYERS— AND WHAT'S COMING NEXT

CAPE PERON, WESTERN AUSTRALIA, BACKLIT FROM THE SUNSET AT THE LIMESTONE CLIFFS



PHOTOGRAPH: JACK ROBINSON

IMAGINE BEING DROPPED INTO THE MIDDLE of the Namib Desert by helicopter: nothing ahead of you or behind you, only a vast expanse of ochre sand, glaring African heat, a survival pack containing a GPS or compass, and the knowledge that you've been abandoned in one of the harshest landscapes in the world. You'd better hope that you can handle the 100-mile trek along the Skeleton Coast, camping under a canopy of stars so vast it only confirms your own insignificance. Don't freak out. There's nothing like a bit of danger to sharpen your awareness.

One of a clutch of new "get lost" adventures from cool-crowd tour operator **Black Tomato**, such tests of mental and physical fortitude have become magnets for the disaffected seeking to soul-search through suffering. As a veteran spa journalist, I am far more interested in this sort of wellness experience than I am in a fancy-treatment menu. In truth, we have moved way beyond salt scrubs and meditation labyrinths. We are looking instead for the big emotional, spiritual, and physical recharge, the blood refresher. Calum Morrison, the ex-Royal Marine behind the U.K.-based **Extraordinary Adventure Club**, arranges extreme expeditions with maxed-out extras for his wealthy-yet-weary clientele looking to face the fear of conscious disengagement: off-grid living with Mongolian camel herders, or an epic Jeep journey from Johannesburg to Khartoum while being followed by a team of life coaches, psychotherapists, and holistic practitioners. This is the new breed of transformational travel.

Transformation, of course, was the original promise. Historically, spas were founded by individuals at the fringes or ahead of their time: those who triumphed over their own health woes (or saw others do so at close hand), then felt compelled to share their epiphanies. Natural-living mentor Edmond Szekely opened the world's first destination spa, **Rancho La Puerta**, in 1940 in Mexico to mixed reviews. The *San Diego Union* later ran the headline, "Romanian Professor Finds Cult Across Border at Tecate," warning readers about the screwballs they might find there—health seekers who came for mountain treks and, later, yoga (and who soon included **Burt Lancaster, Sophia Loren, and Aldous Huxley**). Canyon

Ranch opened in 1979 in Tucson after Mel Zuckerman watched his father die of smoking-induced lung cancer. Meanwhile in Europe, a different spa scene was unfolding: Dr. Otto Buchinger opened Germany's foremost fasting clinic, **Buchinger Wilhelm**, on Lake Constance, after curing himself of rheumatic fever with a 19-day water fast; his inflammation-reducing detox formula attracts even more adherents today. Austrian ➤



NEW LODGES AT SIX SENSES BHUTAN, DESIGNED TO BE EXPERIENCED PILGRIM STYLE

doctor Franz Xaver Mayr opened the first FX clinic in the 1970s, after his discovery while working in a military hospital that patients recovered most rapidly when they ate only soup. The Cure, based on the belief that giving the digestive system a break helps the body to heal itself, is practiced in clinics across Europe (the Original FX Mayr, Viva Mayr, and the Lanserhof group, to name a few). I cannot recommend this method more; you get past the can't-stop-crying stage by day three, and a week's stay leaves your cells entirely energized.

But in the past 10 years, lifestyle diseases and obesity have become global plagues, burnout has been classified as a health condition, and the assault of technology has disconnected our minds from our bodies and the natural world. When our doctors can't help, we seek alternatives. It is telling that, according to the Global Wellness

surroundings, with butterflies as big as your hands, weren't enough.

Mindfulness meditation continues to surge in popularity. Cornelius O' Shaughnessy, the Advaita Vedanta teacher behind nomadic mind-body retreat company **Bodhimaya**, suggests this change goes even further: "In the Maldives or in France, what I've noticed is that it isn't just 20 minutes of meditation that people want. They want you to turn their head inside out, give them a full breakdown of the mind, teach them high-level Buddhist philosophy." We belong to a culture that is now becoming open and receptive to "the work," particularly when we feel supported by experts we can trust. Some of these are being called in by hotel groups to offer guests more than just a traditional spa. Brian Hilliard and Shannon van Staden run **Mindfulness Journeys** retreats in Morocco, while also working with

WE ARE TRAVELING BEYOND THE CONFINES OF THE TREATMENT ROOM AND STRAIGHT INTO WHAT IT MEANS TO BE HUMAN—CEREMONIES, DANCE, RITUALS PASSED FROM GENERATIONS

Institute, the business of well-being is now more than three times larger than the pharmaceutical industry. Asia has long been a hot spot of holistic therapies, but herbs, sound healing, reflexology, aromatherapy oils, and qigong are all tipping into the mainstream. India's **Vana** offers not just a popular Ayurvedic wing but a Sowa Rigpa, or Tibetan medicine, center, where oils are prescribed according to ancient texts. Thailand's newly refreshed **Chiva-Som** excels in superlative therapies rooted in local traditions: The Chi Nei Tsang abdominal massage, which releases emotional tension, has a waiting list, while the new 10-night recovery programs include one dedicated to post-cancer care. Meanwhile, **Kamalaya**, the more spiritual of Thailand's big two, delivers weeklong meditation retreats to help guests connect with their "divine depths." As if the beauty of the

the Belmond and Aman hotel groups. Van Staden offers yin yoga and crystal-sound-bowl healing, which are said to placate the nervous system, while Hilliard has worked with Tibetan masters since he was a teenager. "Clients leave astonished at what's happened," Van Staden says. "It's not about being more successful, more beautiful, having more money," she adds. "It's about being more human and seeing life through a different lens."

Fiona Arrigo, a biodynamic psychotherapist and founder of the **Arrigo Programme**, also pushes for the stripped-down tipping point: "What most people are aching for is a return to nature, nurture, and simplicity. Because of the emptiness and exhaustion, we need places that radically recharge us." Arrigo's new Back to Nurture four-day retreats in the British countryside, staying in safari-style ➤

tents with woodburning stoves, are all about this sort of rejuvenation. “Back in the day, we knew about community, nature, craft, and imagination—so when we tap into these fundamentals, we activate something deep in the memory-consciousness. As we walk barefoot, light a fire, beat a drum, sing a song, tell a story, we connect to this primal force, and it feeds a hunger in us we cannot feed in our normal world,” she says. Rising to the need, **Friends of Saanenwald**, Gstaad’s just-opened forest-bathing retreat, offers swimming in mountain lakes, campfires, and saunas. Even **Canyon Ranch** has evolved, with a new retreat opening this fall in Woodside, California, devoted to nature reconnection while sleeping in open-air tree houses.

This is detox of a sort, but there’s little renunciation. “It doesn’t have to be joyless or about deprivation,” says Bibi Morelli Schofield, the Venezuelan-Italian behind **Malabar Lu Jong Retreats**. “Spending four nights in the heart of the Zambezi is intense and basic; it helps you to take off the mask, look in the mirror, see your mistakes, accept them. Out the window, there is the luxury.” Her retreats in Zimbabwe, Mozambique, and Spain are grounded in workshops imparting the ancient modality of Lu Jong, which combines muscle, mind, energy, and breathing. Along with gin and tonics, a touch of safari, and moonlit med-

at Tuscany’s **Castello del Nero**; it will be exciting to see integrative philosophy land in this part of the world. **One&Only** has partnered with master detoxer **Henri Chenot** and will offer cleansing retreats in Montenegro and Malaysia. In Bhutan, five new **Six Senses** lodges will encourage guests to commit to a full circuit and travel, pilgrim style, from lodge to lodge, experiencing not just hot stones but the touchstones: psychological well-being, sleep, mindfulness, work-life balance, and, not least, an enriching knowledge of culture and community.

We are, at last, traveling beyond the confines of the treatment room and straight into what it means to be human. Ceremonies, dance, ritual, dress, shared spiritual values, wisdom passed on from generation to generation: These have become more important than a good essential oil. Authentic indigenous experiences are bubbling up everywhere, from the Yucatán’s **Chablé**, where shamanic-style treatments meld ancestral bodywork techniques, to new getups like Ecuador’s **Hero’s Journey Experience**—for men only, where past traumas are released by working on self-empowerment while also stepping into a sweat lodge and an ayahwasca ceremony.

After nearly two decades of reviewing spas and healthy holidays, I believe the traditional setup was simply an initiation making way for the next layer—of deep connection, self-

TRANSFORMATION WAS THE ORIGINAL PROMISE: THOSE WHO TRIUMPHED OVER THEIR HEALTH WOES FELT COMPELLED TO SHARE

itations with lions roaring in the distance, this is a means to excavate the mind’s inner architecture and rewild our urban outlook.

But time is our most precious commodity; we won’t stand for vague and wishy-washy results. Which is why science is increasingly promising us lasting, meaningful change. You’ll find Harvard-and-NASA-engineered Brain Photobiomodulation treatments for depression at macrobiotic **SHA Wellness Clinic** in Spain (it’s all about the oxygenation of cells); the latest in genetic testing and bio-hacking at **Red Mountain Resort** in Utah; and 3GL testing to analyze your levels of glutathione, the key biomarker of metabolic health, at **Euphoria Retreat** in Greece. The Lanserhof group has just opened arguably the most advanced gym in London, the **Lanserhof at the Arts Club**, where MRI scans to analyze functionality are standard issue.

The smart hotel chains are finally upping the ante too. The ones I hold in highest esteem are, in no particular order: **COMO Hotels & Resorts**, **One&Only**, and **Six Senses**. All are taking things one step beyond, as the need for the experiential and unique becomes evident. COMO is opening its first European outpost

examination, and spiritual reengagement. We are looking beyond the walls and cocreating something different and aligned: foot-to-earth, grassroots experiences, taking us back to the age of innocence. When did you last see the sunrise? Gaze at the Milky Way? Perhaps it’s no coincidence that at two of the most anticipated recent spa debuts, Sweden’s new **Arctic Bath Hotel**, with its ring of floating cabins, and **The Retreat at Blue Lagoon**, a geothermal enclave in Iceland, guests in ice baths can gape at the northern lights. Frances Geoghegan, founder of specialist travel agency **Healing Holidays**, believes “the elements, isolation, exploration of our own inner landscape—this is what the future journey of spas holds.”

This is the shift, the thing we want to tune in to and touch. Anita Lal, founder of India’s Good Earth interiors empire, is expanding her organic philosophy into the brand’s first retreat, **Paro Himalaya**, an intimate escape in Manali reached via a flight from Delhi, then a two-hour drive deep into the mountains. Yes, there will be a hot tub under the stars and a skylighted room. The more pressing our need for escape, the farther and deeper we will travel to achieve it. 🌐



MAX OUT YOUR MICRO-TRIP

smärtwater.

Savvy wanderlusters are increasingly favoring micro-trips—a growing trend focused on shorter, frequent bursts of travel instead of extended leisurely vacations. These jam-packed jaunts can even be fleeting enough to make a long weekend seem generous.

But micro-cationing is more than just throwing oneself into a destination for 48 hours or less. It’s a travel strategy that encourages efficient usage of paid time off from work, while at the same time reducing on-the-road expenses.

Get the most of your micro-trip by choosing a jet lag-free destination that offers maximum excitement (hello South America!), and take an overnight flight to get there. You’ll not only save on hotel stays by sleeping on the plane, but you’ll also wake up fueled by enthusiasm to explore.

The Takeaway: Start by building a list of cities you’d like to visit, then scout out direct flights to get you there. If you’ve got less than 24 hours, consider a same-day trip to a city under two hours away. And if you’ve got the weekend, extend your micro-trip to an international destination a bit farther away.