

Condé Nast Traveller

A full-page background image of a desert canyon with layered rock formations. A small figure of a person stands on a rocky outcrop in the middle ground, looking out over the vast landscape under a clear sky.

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THE NEW NOMAD ISSUE

WHAT IT MEANS TO BE A
TRAVELLER TODAY

HOLIDAY STYLE GUIDE 2019

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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

IMAGINE BEING DROPPED INTO THE MIDDLE of the Namib Desert by helicopter: nothing ahead of you or behind you, only a huge 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 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 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 UK-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 four-wheel-drive 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 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 Szekeley 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 Founds 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 founded 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 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 practised ➤

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

PHOTOGRAPH: JACK ROBINSON



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

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 energised.

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. According to the Global Wellness Institute, the business of wellbeing is now more than three times larger than the pharmaceutical industry. Asia has long been a hotspot 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, centre, where oils are prescribed according to ancient texts. Thailand's 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 programmes include one dedicated to post-cancer care. Meanwhile, **Kamalaya**, the more spiritual of Thailand's big two, delivers week-long meditation trips. As if the beauty of the 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 escape **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 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: 'Most people are aching for a return to nature, nurture and simplicity. Because of the emptiness and exhaustion, we need places that radically recharge us.' Her new Back to Nurture four-day trips to Somerset, staying in safari-style tents with woodburning stoves, are all about this sort of rejuvenation. 'Back in the day, we knew about community, craft and imagination, so when we tap into these fundamentals, we activate something deep in the memory-consciousness,' she says. Rising to the need, **Friends of Saanenwald**, Gstaad's just-opened forest-bathing escape, offers swimming in mountain lakes, campfires and saunas. Even **Canyon Ranch** has evolved, with a new spot opening this autumn in Woodside, California, where guests sleep in open-air tree houses.

This is detox of a sort, but there's little renunciation. 'It needn't be joyless or about deprivation,' says Bibi Morelli Schofield, the Venezuelan-Italian behind **Malabar Lu Jong Retreats**. 'Spending ➤

THE HEALTH REVOLUTION

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 meditations 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, 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 biohacking at **Red Mountain Resort** in Utah; and 3GL checking of glutathione levels, 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 analyse 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**, **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 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** to offer cleansing trips to Montenegro and Malaysia. In Bhutan, five new **Six Senses** spaces will encourage guests to commit to a full circuit and travel, pilgrim style, from lodge to lodge, experiencing an enriching knowledge of culture and community.

We are, at last, travelling 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 outfits such as 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 ayahuasca ceremony.

After nearly two decades of reviewing spas and healthy holidays, I believe the traditional set-up was simply an initiation making way for the next layer – of deep connection, self-examination and spiritual re-engagement. We are looking beyond the walls and co-creating something different and aligned: foot-to-earth, grassroots experiences. 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 look 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 **Paro Himalaya**, the brand's first intimate retreat in Manali reached via a flight from Delhi, then a two-hour drive high 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. 📍

CONDÉ NAST TRAVELLER'S ALTERNATIVE BUCKET LIST

Staff and friends of the title on the
lesser-known corners worth seeking out

FJÄRDSKÄR, FINLAND

'Nothing beats an island getaway,
especially when it's your very own.

I spend time foraging for fresh
blueberries and lingonberries, climbing
the moss-covered rocks and pink
granite, and floating alongside
swimming seals and cruising swans.
I set up fishing nets in the Baltic Sea,
then throw the catch of the day –
usually a white fish – on the grill.'

KRISTINA ROTH, FOUNDER OF FEMALE-ONLY
RETREAT SUPERSHE ISLAND

WEST SUSSEX

'Go on safari at Knepp Castle Estate, a rewilding project in
the South of England that uses free-roaming grazing
animals to create new habitats for wildlife. It's a beautiful
place with a gorgeous campsite – and, more importantly,
learning about its story and vision is so inspiring.'

DOUGLAS McMASTER, CHEF AND
'SILO: THE ZERO WASTE BLUEPRINT' AUTHOR

NORTH POLE

'Imagine witnessing the
enormity of icebergs,
glaciers and wildlife,
and fully understanding
the impact of your
footprint on the planet.'

OSMAN YOUSEFZADA,
FASHION DESIGNER

THE PRINCE, TEL AVIV

'This semi-secret rooftop bar off
Nahalat Binyamin has it all: a scene
that isn't too sceney, a gentle breeze
and a good energy. I remember that
the drinks were excellent and they
had hummus to haunt your dreams.
I forget everything after that – I'd
recently lost my dad, and I cried into
my drink, then into my mum, and
then into my mum's drink. And even
then, it was pretty damn magical.'

BETSY BLUMENTHAL,
ASSOCIATE EDITOR

MEGANISI, GREECE

'I tend to run on bursts of
energy and then collapse
in a heap. This small
Greek island is where I go
to embrace a slower,
simpler life. There are two
villas – Xeni and Mimi –
and from our pool we see
the sun rise and set over
nearby Kalamos. I toddle
down the steps to the
quiet terrace on the
shoreline, plunge in and
bob about like a sea lion.
The moonlight here is
legendary. Midnight swims
under the stars of the
Ionian? Oh, I think so.'

HUGH BONNEVILLE,
'DOWNTON ABBEY'
ACTOR

TO FIND MORE, GO TO
TRAVELLER.UK/ALTBUCKETLIST