



Inspirations

Within you, there is a stillness
and a sanctuary to which you can
retreat at any time and be yourself

HERMANN HESSE

ANNUAL RETREAT GUIDE 2024

KINDRED SPIRIT



Your guide to some of the best retreats at home and abroad for relaxation,
healing, enlightenment and spiritual living, plus review of selected resorts





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WELCOME...

It's time to find your sanctuary with
the yearly *Kindred Spirit Retreat*
Guide.

There's nothing like a break to
reset your energy, and we have
gathered many of the best wellness
programmes designed to help you
rest, rebalance and reignite your
inner fire.

This year, we share our round-ups
of the newest and best wellness
retreats at home and away, plus
explore select offerings in Morocco,
Thailand and the UK with in-depth reviews to inspire you
for your next getaway. From yoga breaks to energetic
healing, trending new centres and suggestions for those
looking for something a bit different, seekers of inner
peace will be spoiled for choice.

Settle in and embark on a journey to your own oasis
of peace. Enjoy!

Leah Russell

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CONTENTS

36 Retreat Round-up What's new and trending?

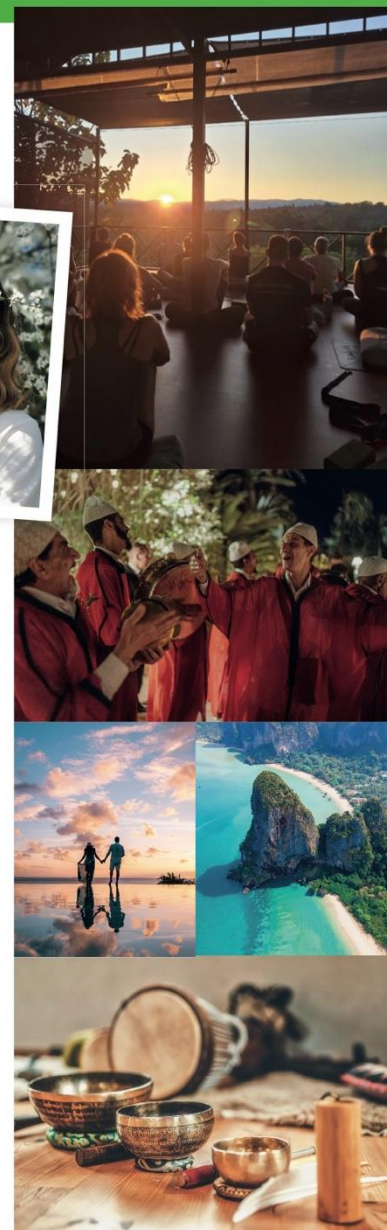
39 Qigong Retreat Energetic healing in Morocco

42 Yoga Homestay Thailand's True Nature retreat

46 Conscious Festivals The rise of sober celebrations

49 Hawthorn Day Retreat A healing day in Dorset

52 Wyrd Time Science & Consciousness retreat



What's New in the World of Retreats?

Dip into our round-up of the newest and best retreat options to inspire your next getaway

TOP 3 DESTINATIONS

Get inspired by some of the hottest destinations in wellness travel with our picks

ST LUCIA

There's plenty of natural healing to be found in the botanical paradise of St Lucia. Enjoy crystal clear waters, dip into therapeutic hot baths at Sulphur Springs, and take part in one of the many wellness programmes the island has on offer.

Where to stay: Book an all-inclusive stay with ayurveda, spa treatments, thalassotherapy and more from \$1,270.50 (3-night minimum stay) with thebodyholiday.com



THAILAND
Thailand boasts breathtaking sights and a whole host of options for those seeking rest and rejuvenation.

You'll find everything from jungle hikes and cave meditations to t'ai chi, massage and herbal steams.

Where to stay: Kamalaya is a multi-award-winning centre providing holistic health solutions. At its heart is a centuries-old cave, once used by monks as a place of retreat. kamalaya.com



BALI

Bali is sometimes known as the Island of the Gods – and for good reason. With volcanic mountains, coral reefs and beaches as well as ancient religious sites, there's endless experiences to be had and a wide range of wellness centres to choose from.

Where to stay: Take the stress out of planning and book a tailored 10-day Discover Recover retreat from £5,540 at healthandfitnesstravel.com



RETREATS BY AREA:

ISLE OF WIGHT

Enchanted Manor
Southern tip of the Isle of Wight
A New Earth healing haven B&B retreat in a magical portal, where the veils are thin. Staycations and private/group deep healing retreats for body, mind, soul nourishment and reconnection to self, Gaia and your divinity. enchantedmanor.co.uk

SOUTH EAST

Creative Soul Journeys® Retreats
Sussex and Kent
Self-care for the body, heart and soul. Deep transformation to reconnect you to your authentic self and feminine essence. A creative experience with expressive art, vitanza®, ritual and group sharing with delicious food and nurturing environment. creativesouljourneys.co.uk

Yoga and Ayurveda Union Retreat and Teacher Training Course at Sadhana Rewild Retreats
Hardwick Estate, Chilterns
23-26 August 2024
Enhance and elevate your teaching with ayurveda, the sister science of yoga. Enlightening short course delivered over the weekend, with room for learning, discussion, practical embodied techniques as well as joyful community connection. sadhana.com

SOUTH WEST

Eden Rise Retreat Venue
Totnes, South Devon
Our 200-year-old converted barns are uniquely designed for 20 residential guests, includes a sauna facility. Located in the Devon countryside and two miles from Totnes market town. networkofwellbeing.org/eden-rise

AROUND THE UK

Try something closer to home with a retreat in the UK

Stables Wellbeing, Llandeilo

This family-run centre offers all-inclusive retreats for visitors who want a relaxing break with time to recharge. Retreats run for 3 or 4 days and include yoga, pilates and guided walks. Prices from £450 for a shared room, or from £780 for single occupancy. stables-wellbeing.co.uk

The Tree, North Yorkshire

You'll find The Tree in the heart of the rugged North York Moors National Park, where you can enjoy soothing yoga, meditation, tasty vegetarian food and holistic treatments. They offer silent retreats, mindfulness days and more. thetree.earth

Crystal Healing retreat, Stirling

This three-night retreat in the Scottish Highlands provides the basics of using crystals and minerals for healing, hosted by Rob Burlinson. The next retreat runs 23-26 August at Creagan House. inner-resonance.org

Glendalough Sanctuary, Co Wicklow

This wellness sanctuary hosts groups and individuals, with diverse offerings including animal connection retreats, sound baths, mindfulness, and Celtic Christian retreats. Rooms cost from €85 per night for shared or single occupancy. glendaloughsanctuary.ie



DID YOU KNOW?

Cornwall has been crowned the UK's self-care capital, with the highest number of spa and wellness facilities per 100,000 people at 12.59. When it comes to wellness, Cornwall has something for everyone, from forest bathing and gentle wild swimming to more invigorating surf, yoga and walking retreats.

Research by: UK Therapy Rooms

TRENDS TO TRY



Holistic biohacking

Healing gets high-tech with these biohacking programmes. If you're seeking peak performance, why not give one of these retreats a go?

- Wellness centre Six Senses Ibiza has recently launched 1-, 3- or 7-day RoseBar Longevity programmes, offering full diagnostic testing to inform biohacking treatments including cryotherapy, PEMF and more. Prices start from €500. [sixsenses.com](https://www.sixsenses.com)
- Rakxa Wellness uses integrative diagnostics and solutions, combining advanced medical science and time-tested wisdom. There are locations in Bangkok, Aspen and Tuscany, and a five-night Rebalance retreat costs from £3,926. [rakxawellness.com](https://www.rakxawellness.com)



Intimacy and sexual wellness

Tantric retreats are seeing a real rise in popularity at the moment, as many of us seek to reconnect and tap back into personal power.

- Earlier this year, SHA Wellness Clinic in Spain launched a new sexual health unit focused on achieving sexual wellbeing from an integrative point of view, with gynaecologists, hormonal experts and urologists. A package costs €2,000, not including accommodation. [shawellness.com](https://www.shawellness.com)
- You can experience traditional tantra sadhana at Satya Loka's authentic meditation retreat near Mount Olympus in Greece, timed to align with the auspicious festival of Navaratri. 1 to 10 October, prices from £772. [satyaloka.net](https://www.satyaloka.net)



Grief-focused retreats

Losing a loved one can feel like an unbearable burden, but a retreat can provide a safe, peaceful environment in which to honour and integrate grief while being truly kind to yourself.

- The Grief Space is based in the oldest house in Cornwall, and helps guests compassionately heal grief with ceremony, workshops and bodywork, and after-care. They're running a Grief Alchemy retreat from 27 September to 1 October, from £1,550 all-inclusive. [thegriefspace.com](https://www.thegriefspace.com)
- New Life Portugal offers lots of bespoke and tailored programmes, one of which includes a Grief Recovery Pathway which runs for 28 days and beyond. At €8,946, it isn't cheap – but it will be worth it for some. [newlifeportugal.com](https://www.newlifeportugal.com)

Brand new retreats...

ENGUL AYURPURA

South Tyrol, Italy
This new hotel debuted last November, and it's completely dedicated to ayurvedic healing. It has 15 rooms, a spa, and a tailored treatment and therapy programme. Rooms cost from €215 per person. [ayurpura.hotel-engel.com/en](https://www.ayurpura.hotel-engel.com/en)



THE DREAMING

Powys, Wales
This new centre opened by Charlotte Church offers two three-night retreats per week. Explore 47 acres of ancient woodland, experience sound healing and wild swimming, and enjoy radical rest. Prices from £900 for two sharing a room. [thedreaming.co.uk](https://www.thedreaming.co.uk)

Treargel Retreat

Looe, Cornwall
Self-cater in a fully equipped stone cottage or venture off-grid in our shepherd's hut or cabin in the woods. Listening Ear sessions available whilst exploring the labyrinth, Treargel gardens, and stunning coastal path nearby. Breathe deeply, rest quietly and think clearly. [treargel.com](https://www.treargel.com)

SCOTLAND

Soulfull Living Academy
Innellan, Argyll
Drum-birthing, sacred pause and soul reconnection with small group weekend retreats, various dates on the Argyll coast. Learn, grow and create. [soulfulliving.academy/retreats](https://www.soulfulliving.academy/retreats)

WALES

White House Health and Wellbeing
Welshpool, SY21 9DA
Venue, sanctuary, haven, retreat – a uniquely restorative environment and therapeutic hideaway, enfolded within its own woodland, gardens, paddocks and stream. It is said to be Wales' best-kept secret... [whitehousehealthandwellbeing.com](https://www.whitehousehealthandwellbeing.com)

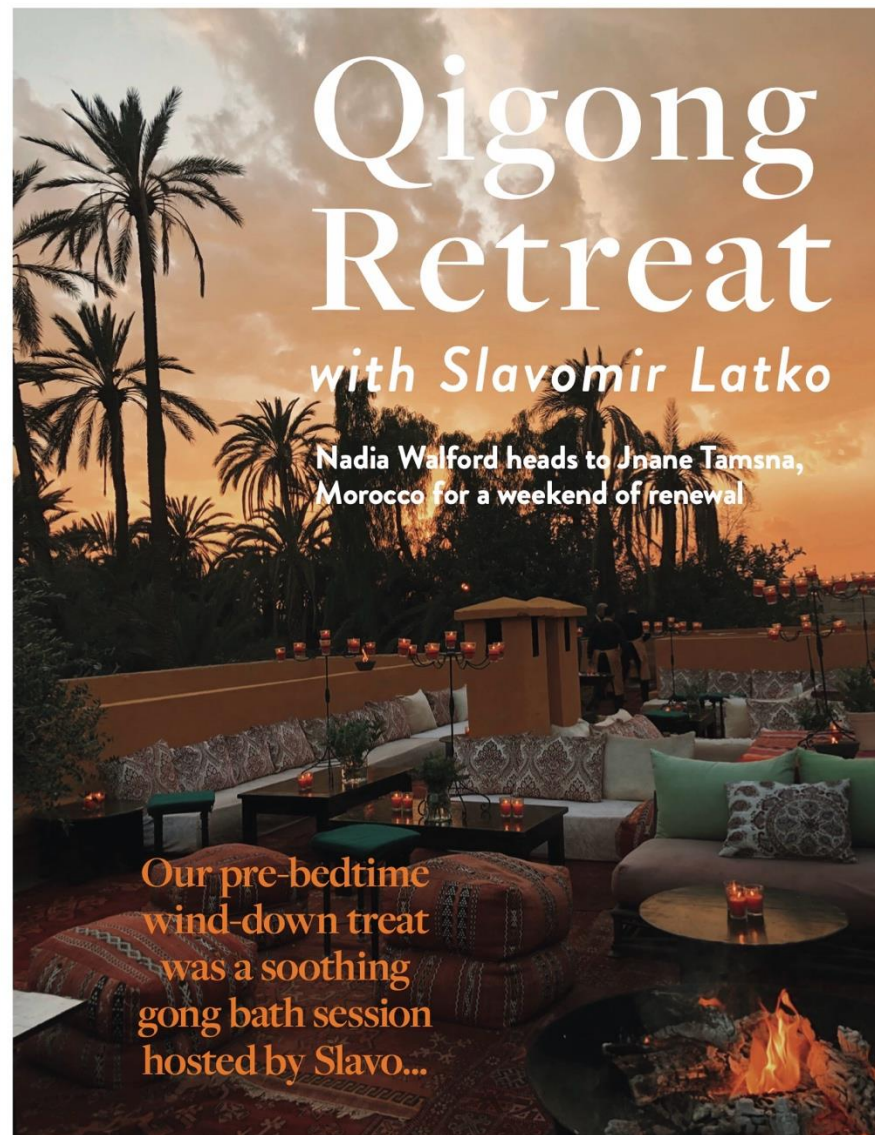
THE RETREAT

Anglesey, Wales
The Retreat New Forest are branching out with the announcement of a new retreat centre opening in Anglesey. It will build on their current offerings in South-West England, where they host reconnection retreats and workshops. [theretreatnewforest.co.uk](https://www.theretreatnewforest.co.uk)

Qigong Retreat

with Slavomir Latko

Nadia Walford heads to Jnane Tamsna, Morocco for a weekend of renewal



Our pre-bedtime wind-down treat was a soothing gong bath session hosted by Slavo...

I first discovered qigong ten years ago in London and loved the pace of it from the get-go. I didn't pursue it regularly, but as I approach middle age (almost!), it's become something I'm keen to practise in my daily life. Pronounced 'chee-gong', if you haven't tried it, it's definitely something to consider if you're looking to build strength, tune into your energetic body and generally cultivate being more present in your life.

Back in February this year, I spent a week travelling with the brilliant Inclusive Morocco, the first LGBTQ+ -founded and led luxury travel company in Morocco with a 100% Moroccan team. Set up by two passionate advocates for sustainability and inclusivity, Bilal El Hammoumy and Rania Chentouf, Inclusive Morocco itineraries are meticulously designed to celebrate the rich tapestry of Moroccan culture, with the local environment top of mind. The experienced team champions excellent hospitality and inclusiveness, ensuring every traveller leaves Morocco with a unique and profound connection to the country's abundant spirit.

After a busy week touring the north of Morocco, I'd asked them to combine my final stop with a few days of doing something relaxing. Their answer: a weekend's qigong retreat at the beautiful Jnane Tamsna, led by the esteemed teacher Slavomir Latko, a renowned practitioner of this ancient healing art who was there as part of a month-long residency at the property. During this time he would also be offering guests of Jnane Tamsna acupuncture and cupping treatments on request.

THE ACCOMMODATION

Nestled amidst the palm tree backdrop of Palmeraie, just outside of Marrakech, Jnane Tamsna stands as a beacon of tranquillity, offering seekers of inner peace a sanctuary to embark on a transformative journey. Owned by married couple Meryanne Loum-Martin and Gary Martin, the property blends Meryanne's splendid interior design and Gary's serene nine-acre garden.

Integrating five houses, 24 rooms, five pools and a tennis court, the property is a labyrinth of bright yellow walls contrasting powerfully against blue skies; where alcoves and bedrooms are adorned with shiny trinkets, exquisite throws and oversized cushions. A thriving botanical garden weaves its way throughout the property, making this the most exotic and serene of settings for this kind of retreat.

From the moment I stepped foot onto the grounds of Jnane Tamsna, I was overcome by a sense of serenity and calm. The energy was palpable. The air was fragrant with the scent of blossoming flowers, and the gentle rustle of palm leaves whispered tales of ancient wisdom. Amidst this oasis of peace, I felt myself drawing inwards, preparing to embrace the profound daily practice of qigong led by Slavomir (or Slavo, as we called him by the end of the weekend), eager to explore its transformative potential.

RESTORATIVE ACTIVITIES

Each day of the retreat began with a beautiful morning meditation in one of the impressive rooms at Jnane (the mornings during the winter months in Morocco can be cold, unlike midday when the sun comes out, strong enough to take some colour).

Here we'd sit peacefully together in silence in front of a glowing fire while Slavo guided us through a meditation practice. A delicious and hearty breakfast would follow, consisting of a generous buffet of fresh fruit, Moroccan pancakes with honey, dried fruit and nuts, eggs, mint tea – you name it – all designed to give us energy for our first qigong session of the day.



Tranquil surroundings, welcoming hosts and restorative healing for mind, body and spirit await at Jnane Tamsna in the fabled Palmeraie oasis near Marrakech, Morocco



Gathered on the tranquil rooftop of Jnane Tamsna, overlooked by protective palm trees and tweeting birds, we began our two-hour stretching practice. The time would fly by. It was an opportunity to connect with the inner body, slow down the mind, build strength through repetitive (sometimes quite intense) stretches and start our journey of self-discovery through the gentle yet powerful movements of qigong.

Under Slavo's expert guidance, we immersed ourselves in the flowing sequences (a second class took place in the afternoon when it was cooler) allowing the rhythmic movements to guide the flow of qi, or life-force energy, throughout our bodies. With each graceful movement, I felt a sense of tension melting away, replaced by a profound feeling of inner peace and vitality, all while enjoying Slavo's gentle and charming sense of humour, which brought a smile to all our faces.

Throughout the weekend, Slavo shared his deep wisdom and insights into the philosophy of qigong, illuminating the profound connections between mind, body and spirit. Through engaging and insightful discussions, we explored the ancient principles of Chinese medicine and martial arts, discovering the keys to unlocking our innate healing potential and cultivating a sense of balance and harmony within.

REST AND RETREAT

In addition to the practice of qigong, the weekend retreat offered ample opportunities for quiet reflection and rejuvenation. After delicious, freshly-made three-course lunches outdoors, we spent leisurely afternoons by the pool, napping, or strolling through the lush gardens of Jnane Tamsna, immersing ourselves in the beauty of nature and allowing the tranquil surroundings to reinvigorate our souls.

Evenings were a highlight for me – not just because our bellies were filled with nourishing food bursting with exotic Moroccan flavours, but because our pre-bedtime wind-down treat was a soothing gong bath session hosted by Slavo. Lying down comfortably in front of the roaring fire, wrapped up in blankets and supported by cushions, we'd allow ourselves to be drenched in the sounds of the mighty gong and other instruments.

Skilfully, over the course of an hour, Slavo would take us all into a state of deep relaxation. In the embrace of the stillness of these sessions and the powerful vibrations rippling through my body, I felt a deep sense of connection to the universe, as if every breath was a gentle reminder of the sacredness of life itself.

As the weekend drew to a close, I found myself filled with a genuine sense of gratitude for the transformative experience of the retreat. My mind was less busy, and my body was stronger. Thanks to Slavo and his powerful teachings of qigong, I had rediscovered a sense of inner peace and a connection to myself. I felt strong and centred – mentally, physically and spiritually – and I left Jnane Tamsna with a feeling of vitality that would stay with me long after the retreat had ended.

In the heart of Morocco at the magical Jnane Tamsna, I had found not only a sanctuary for the soul but also a profound connection to the timeless wisdom of qigong, led by a remarkable teacher. ●

Find out more...

- For more information about Slavomir Latko, visit: slavo-mir.com
- For more information on the latest retreat schedules, residencies and prices at Jnane Tamsna, visit: jnanetamsna.com

Yoga & Meditation Homestay Retreat

In the rolling hills of northern Thailand, **Claire Gillman** immerses herself in a blissful yoga and meditation retreat, emerging buoyed and beaming

Apart from the outstanding reviews, one of the first things that drew me to the True Nature Homestay was the family atmosphere of this yoga retreat. It is run by Ning, Adam and Ning's mum, Yai (Ning's daughter and Ning's brother and his young family were also lending a helping hand during my visit), plus it's also home to a handful of cats, dogs, chickens and ducks. First and foremost, True Nature is Ning and Adam's home, and you are made to feel like an honoured family guest who is welcomed into their simple, wholesome, organic lifestyle.

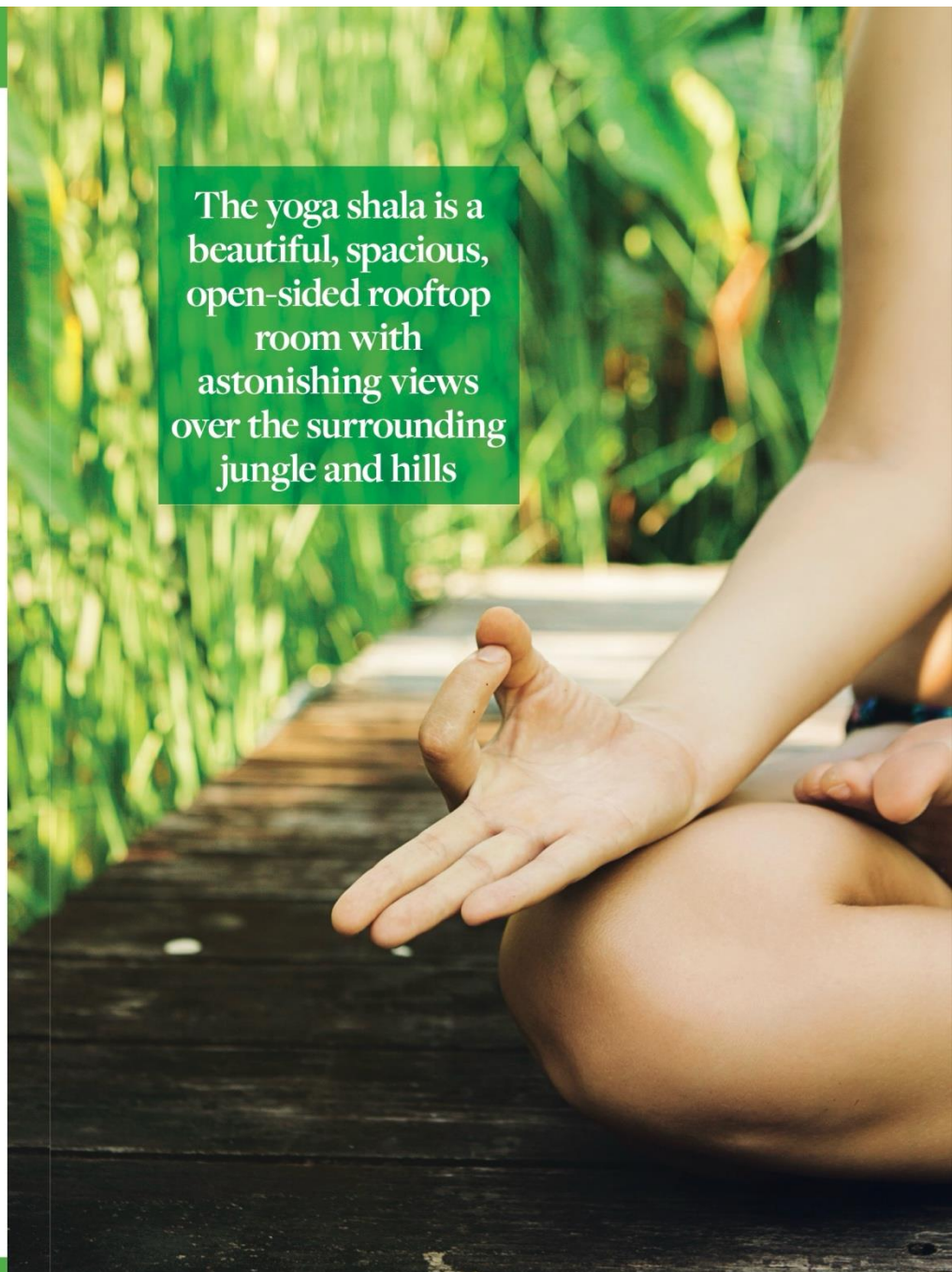
True Nature is located about 40 minutes by taxi from the northern Thai town of Chiang Mai, in beautiful rolling hills. The accommodation is simple and the atmosphere is laid back and relaxed. It was exactly what I needed after a hectic few months over the festive season.

Another huge bonus – and a rarity I would say – is that True Nature offers a rolling yoga programme, so as long as you attend for a minimum of three days, you can join and leave whenever suits you. I believe the longest stay to date is two weeks. This open arrangement fitted in perfectly with my family travel plans, and allowed me to pick five days to myself while my husband and son were off on their own dirt bike riding adventure.

THE CLASSES

During your stay, yoga classes run twice per day – once in the morning before breakfast, and once in the late afternoon before dinner. Each class is topped off with a meditation session. I must confess that, on that first morning, I was slightly anxious about how hard/advanced the yoga classes might be, but soon realised that Adam – a delightful, softly spoken Australian teacher with »

The yoga shala is a beautiful, spacious, open-sided rooftop room with astonishing views over the surrounding jungle and hills





The True Nature homestay offers a rolling yoga programme, authentic Thai cooking classes, glorious views and friendly faces in a lush setting



vast experience in many forms of yoga – tailors the class so that all levels of ability come away feeling that they have got a great deal from it. In truth, the majority of the attendees were experienced young yogis, but there were some pure beginners, inexperienced and older guests among our ranks, and they all told me that they had now fallen in love with yoga.

The morning sessions tend to be more energising and invigorating, incorporating elements of Vinyasa, Hatha and Alignment-based yoga, and this is useful, since it is cool at 7.30am in the hills. The afternoon sessions are more inclined towards yoga therapy, restorative, mobility and yin yoga. Adam says of the afternoons, 'these sessions are like a deep release for the physical, mental and emotional body. Using fine-tuned exercises in breathing, along with the help of various props and yoga equipment, it allows the body to naturally release, unwind and let go of deep physical and emotional stress and tension'.

Ning is also a fully qualified and experienced yoga teacher and, although she tends to focus predominantly on cooking the delicious vegetarian meals at the retreat, she does sometimes step in and take a class. Her passion is for Iyengar yoga, which is more vigorous than some of the other forms – especially in Ning's inimitable kickass style. Yet, she managed to make the class great fun even for the beginners, whilst also challenging each of us. In both Ning's and Adam's classes, we used various props including ropes, back-bending wooden contraptions and balls, which helped with alignment and was highly illuminating, as well as fun.

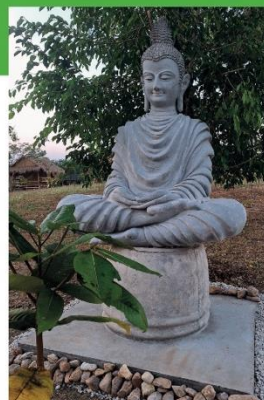
The meditation sessions draw on a range of techniques from guided visualisation to mindfulness. The emphasis is placed on connection and ways to incorporate meditation into daily life, rather than something that is isolated to sitting on a cushion with your eyes closed. Adam is extremely knowledgeable and a keen advocate for meditation, and this shines through all his sessions.

At this point, I should mention that the yoga shala is a beautiful, spacious, open-sided (there are screens for the rainy season) rooftop room with astonishing views over the surrounding jungle and hills. I loved the way the mist hung over the verdant landscape in the early morning – you need a fleece and a steaming cup of tea at the start of the morning session – and how this soon burnt off to reveal another stunning, hot day full of possibilities. The afternoon yoga/meditation session usually ended between 6:15 and 6:30pm – just in time for the sunset. The class lingered in awed silence as the fiery red sun sank behind the hills, the newcomers with phones in hand to capture the beautiful moment.

A combination of the afternoon's deep release yoga and meditation session meant that I generally floated back to my hut feeling spacey and relaxed, only managing to stir myself for a shower ahead of the dinner gong at 7.30pm.

WHERE YOU STAY

There is a variety of accommodation on offer at True Nature. All of it is clean and simple – this is not a luxury 'resort' style experience. I opted for a bamboo bungalow



Claire Gillman, third from left, finds yogic bliss in a class led by Ning

that could sleep two. It had a wrap-around veranda with seating and a hammock, plus its own semi open-air toilet and shower room. My mattress was on the floor, with an optional mosquito net (in the event, I didn't need it, but I rather liked the romance of using it), and there was a fan plus a stand and shelf for your belongings. The bamboo windows were either propped open with a bamboo stick, which also locked them, or were shut – simple and effective. I loved it.

Although there are daily activities on offer – more on this shortly – I spent most days outside of the classes and meals swinging gently in my hammock whilst reading my book or snoozing, whilst the chickens and their chicks scratched for insects underneath my raised hut. Bliss.

There is a full range of accommodation, from an air-conditioned house to a battery-powered nature tent on a wooden platform, and something to suit every budget in between. Some accommodation has private toilet and bathroom facilities while others use shared facilities. There's plenty of choice, and as the fluctuating group sizes are never large – numbers hover between 12 and 20 – I never saw a queue or over-demand for the shared facilities.

ACTIVITIES

The range of activities available during your stay at True Nature includes a Thai cooking class with Ning, ice baths, walking up a 'sticky' waterfall, quad bikes and washing elephants (ethically researched).

The activities take place after breakfast and are democratically decided the night before: there's a show of hands for each activity and the majority vote carries. Since people arrive on different days and stay for varying lengths of time, there is an outside chance that you may not get to do your chosen activity, but Adam goes out of his way to make sure everyone gets to fulfil their choice. During my stay, nobody missed out on their first choice.

I chose two activities. The cookery class with Ning (who used to run a cookery school in Chiang Mai) was great fun, and you get to eat the delicious dishes you make and to take away a cookery booklet created by Ning. I have since tried to replicate the Pad Thai dish back in the UK with some success, and most of the ingredients required are readily available here. My other choice of activity was an ice bath. Quite a challenge for me, I

concede, but the whole activity was well run by Adam, who advised us throughout on breathing techniques and gently encouraged us to stay in for the full three minutes, which we all managed. Getting out into glorious sunshine afterwards certainly helped too.

I visited in February and the climate was perfect; temperatures hovered in the upper 20s (Celsius) and there was not a hint of rain, but you should check out weather forecasts before booking if you want to avoid the peak rainy season (usually from mid-September to mid-October) and the burning season (March/April).

When I first arrived at True Nature, it was Yai who greeted me. Despite an obvious language barrier, through smiles and hand gestures, this diminutive grandmother made me feel warmly welcomed. She proceeded to effortlessly shoulder my overstuffed bag, which I'd struggled to carry, and spryly led me to my bamboo bungalow, where she then proceeded to move the two mattresses into a two-storey single bed, smiling and chatting in Thai throughout. Her warmth immediately put me at ease, and her relaxed and open kindness was echoed by every other member of the team at True Nature.

It must be infectious, because I have never been to a yoga and meditation retreat where the guests, who hearkened from all corners of the world, were so friendly. I talked to different people every day and made quick and easy friendships. Each day, you have to say goodbye to a new friend, feeling sad to see them leave, but wonderfully, new people arrive that very afternoon, and as the 'old hand', you then make them feel welcome. It's a magical formula. And, believe it or not, by the time you leave, you actually feel like you are part of the Adam, Ning and Yai's True Nature family. ●

Find out More...

- Three night minimum stay (4 to 5 nights recommended), prices start from £45 per night all inclusive. For single occupancy in a bamboo bungalow in February 2025, it's £65 per night.
- Yoga teacher training programme (200 hours) also available.
- truenaturecm.com

Soulful Sounds

Navigating the Rise of Conscious Festivals



Festivals have long been associated with excess. Their connection to the carnivals and feast days of times past is apparent; the word festival comes from the Latin *festum*, meaning 'feast'. When it comes to modern music festivals, ever since the acid-soaked days of Woodstock, festivals have been at the very least closely connected with intoxication.

In the UK it's almost a rite of passage for teenagers to attend a festival, with the main goal being to consume as much Strongbow as possible. Times are changing though; market intelligence firm Mintel have been calling Gen Z 'The Sober Curious Generation', with a third of 18-24 year olds not drinking at all. It's no wonder then that soberly-minded festivals have been steadily growing in popularity over the last 20 or so years. In providing much-needed alcohol-free spaces, the community-based, creative elements of festivals are prioritised over the purely hedonistic.

There has always been an appetite for such spaces. In the early 1980s, a group of sober Grateful Dead fans formed, calling themselves 'The Wharf Rats'. They used Alcoholics Anonymous' 12 steps to facilitate conscious living in a challenging, carnivalesque environment. Today, there are a wide range of drug- and alcohol-free festivals that have widened the spaces available to those who choose to abstain.

More and more festival-goers are forgoing alcohol in search of a more authentic connection. **Max Bowden** investigates

ROOTS OF A NEW MOVEMENT

Buddhafield is a Buddhist-led sober festival that's been running for nearly 30 years, starting in 1996. They provide a festival space that is appropriate for families, people in recovery and anyone else looking to find something deeper, away from the well-trodden fields of traditional festivals.

Buddhafield offers spaces for a variety of recovery methodologies, allowing for as much representation as possible, and acting as an important community space for people on a journey of sobriety. The festival boasts its values loudly: a connection with the environment, meaningful work and authentic community are placed front and centre, coming together to celebrate imagination and creativity.

The pioneering organisation now runs a number of events throughout the summer, including meditation retreats and a

cafe space at other festivals. The organisers use the festival as a means of reinforcing and widening their spiritual practice, as shown in the 2013 documentary 'The Dancing Buddhas'. The act of working together to create a conscious, ecstatic celebration of the very work that drives the festival nourishes both organisers and participants. It's this harmonic, pensive approach that has led to Buddhafield thriving for so long.

THE BURGEONING SCENE

Buddhafield laid the groundwork for festivals that seek to overcome a long and troubled history with alcohol. Today a sober festival-goer has many options to choose from, both in the UK and further afield. Lovejam is one of the UK's leading sober festivals, born when founder Nathan Gallagher found himself yearning for the community and joy he found at free parties, without the excess and illegal undercurrents.

In 2018 Lovejam began, in traditional hippie fashion, as a drum circle in Victoria Park. They prioritise innocence and authenticity, hoping to create an ecstatic experience that will reconnect you with your inner child. The project has quickly grown in popularity since that North London drum circle. Today they have 'Jambassadors' setting up local events all over the country and their offerings run throughout the year, making it their mission 'to inspire rejuvenation over intoxication' wherever they go.

There are also festivals like Medicine Festival, who, while they do allow attendees to bring their own alcohol and drink in moderation, do not serve alcohol on-site. They say: 'We do not wish to profit from the commercial sale of alcohol and we believe the container is much more potent when people are not drinking alcohol'. Instead, they offer a botanical cocktail and elixir bar with many other options.

In Washington, DC the Mindful Drinking Festival runs in January each year, showcasing non-alcoholic drinks for adults and facilitating mindful approaches to modern socialising. From zero-proof spirits to sparkling teas, the Mindful Drinking Festival hopes to spread awareness that not every toast requires champagne, and there are a range of social options for non-alcoholic beverages. Say goodbye to J2O and hello to kombucha, kefir and celebratory cacao.

CONSCIOUS MUSIC AND MOVEMENT

'Conscious dances' are also becoming popular, offering sober and lucid celebrations of dance and movement. Ecstatic Dance was founded in Hawaii in 2000, and today hosts celebrations from London to Bali. There are many of these smaller organisers offering unique social events that seek to

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

● **Buddhafield**
17 to 21 July, Somerset
buddhafield.com

● **Shambhala**
25 to 29 July, British Columbia
shambhalamusicfestival.com

● **Medicine Festival**
14 to 19 August, Berkshire
medicinesfestival.com

● **Into the Wild Gathering**
23 to 26 August, West Sussex
intothewildgathering.com

● **Lovejam Campout**
6 to 9 September, location TBD
lovejam.community

● **Ecstatic Dance**
Runs an AM dance every Sunday and a PM dance every Wednesday in Hackney, with more events across the country
ecstaticdance.org

remedy our lack of third spaces with spiritually aware and safe alternatives, improving on the pub or the social club in meaningful ways. These events often offer celebrations in the daytime, again centring safety and wellbeing in their holistic approach to recreation.

The music on offer at these events is as varied as the people who may enjoy them. Ecstatic Dance uses electronic music, while Lovejam's 2024 campout promises world music, jazz, afrobeats and more. There are also artists who frequent the conscious festival circuit, such as Mobius Loop, known for their vegan lyrics and nature-driven folk approach.

Whichever styles of music you enjoy, there will be space for you at one of these ever-growing celebrations of life and love. Music is, of course, the *raison d'être* of the modern festival, and its function as a social tool is never clearer than when the excess has been stripped back. Music makes the festival experience, and drives connection through dance and communal experience. Sober festivals allow this nourishing core to speak for itself again.

A LUCID FUTURE

Increasingly, people are choosing to prioritise their health and wellbeing over raw hedonism. The corporate alcohol world with its relentless advertising and social engineering is losing popularity, increasingly seen as a profit-hungry monster instead of simply a supplier of cool icy beverages. Younger generations are moving away from alcohol, and spaces that don't centre beer and wine are only increasing in popularity.

The human connection to dance, music, and celebration is one of our oldest, predating *Homo sapiens*. The idea that a party must involve alcohol is not an essential truth. More of us are realising that alcohol can be a burden

in social situations, confusing intentions and adding a chaotic element to plans.

Lovejam and the festivals and events like them remove that cloud, promoting genuine connection and instilling a mindful approach into everything that they do. This allows you to have a beautiful weekend, remember it, and come away having grown as a person – as opposed to slumped on a train table, three stops past your destination. ●

Find out more...

- Max Bowden is a PhD student and freelance writer whose work focuses on the intersection between music and storytelling.
- 'The Dancing Buddhas' documentary can currently be watched for free on YouTube at: bit.ly/dancingbuddhas

MEDICINE WOMAN
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WORKSHOPS | ECSTASY DANCE | BREATHWORK | ORGANIC COMMUNITY KITCHEN |
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I feel as though I've spent a couple
of challenging years incubating a
'something', and now am on the cusp
of change. Or am I?

Hawthorn Day Retreat

Jini Reddy ventures to the Dorset countryside to
experience relief and relaxation with **Katy Theakston**

Following a bout of asthma, I decided I needed tending to. As I see it, when you don't care for yourself, stress calcifies. And while I consider myself to be reasonably fit – respiratory issues aside – with both heart disease and cancer in my family, I'm very conscious of my health. I've also been in a post-menopausal funk that has gone on for far too long. When I stumbled upon Katy Theakston's Hawthorn Day Retreat, I decided to take the plunge and weave a mini-break in Dorset around it.

Confession: I used to go on retreats quite regularly, but in recent years, not so much. That's mainly down to work commitments, but the conspiracy theories occasionally peddled by hosts (participants too, sometimes) and the – still – shocking lack of diversity in the entire wellness sphere have played a part too. In short, I've become a bit disillusioned.

So, what better than a one-on-one retreat for a skittish retreatée? It's billed as a space for women to 'connect in sisterhood, ceremony and magic'. (Curious, I look up 'magic' vs 'magick'. The first definition I alight on says that the 'k' is what separates stage magic from the more mystical kind, and that this usage originated with occultist Aleister Crowley.)

The retreat takes place in Katy's home in the Dorset town of Beaminster. Meditation is on the menu, as well as an energetic healing session, lunch, a bit of art-making, and a walk in the hills. All of this, as I soon learn, will be enlivened by my host's caring spirit. There is flexibility too, as every retreat is tailored to the individual. Perfect.

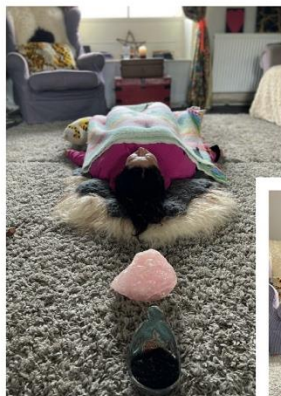
FINDING NEW PATHS

We have an initial chat over Zoom, and Katy's warmth and kindness shine through. For many years she worked as a mentor and leader in the creative business industry. It was during a stint at a London advertising agency that she experienced a cataclysmic heartbreak that led to a dramatic change. 'I felt so unstuck', she tells me.

Katy was drawn to Dorset, and out of her life experiences – she is now, thanks to an anonymous donor, the mother of a much loved 8-year-old boy – grew a calling to work with women. 'My aim is to connect women back to their whole selves – their physical, emotional and spiritual selves. And my medium – my space – is the earth', she says.

A few weeks later, the morning after a too-short stay in the market town of Bridport, I take the bus to Beaminster. Through the window, the rolling hills, cloaked in a hazy sunshine, look as though they are awakening from a slumber. Soon, the bus passes the town square and I feel sad that I'll have no time to visit the local Little Toller bookshop, which is devoted to nature writing.

I find Katy's home easily and she comes bounding out to me, arms open wide. 'Welcome!' she says, ushering me into her home. Rather pleasingly, it's filled with vibrant, colourful art. She has done a lot of energetic work to create a safe, held, healing space, she tells me, and I do



Katy Theakston welcomes Jini Reddy, pictured, to her home for a one-day retreat designed to melt away stress and foster reconnection to the whole self



feel at ease. My host prepares a mug of warming cacao with a drop of cinnamon for me (it's delicious) and leads me through into her living room. Here, I'm invited to sit facing Katy on a cosy rug and after a bit of chat, she leads me through a soothing spoken meditation that helps me to decompress.

When it is over, I share all the things I have on my mind. I'm an unofficial carer for my elderly mother, I say, so I think about mortality – hers and my own – a lot. Thanks to the menopause, my physical body has changed, and so too has my sense of self. I also feel a deep craving to start an art practice, just for fun, even though I have no discernible talent. I'm keen to change direction in my

writing, too. I feel as though I've spent a couple of challenging years incubating a 'something', and now am on the cusp of change. Or am I?

Katy listens attentively and invites me to choose an oracle card from a deck fanned out on her rug; it is called *Woodland Wardens* and has a nature theme. I pull the Sheep and Blackberry card – it is the most un-enigmatic-sounding name for an oracle card I've ever come across.

This card suggests that I focus on commitments, whether they're to a job or a partner, a creative practice or a spiritual tradition. Sheep, I read in the accompanying handbook, are 'innocent and vulnerable and must be watched over and guided'. Blackberry thorns, the text says, are symbols of protection, its fruit, prosperity. Together, the two energies offer a path to flourishing. I quite like the sound of this.

TAPPING IN, GROUNDING AND RELEASING

Next comes the best bit: Katy invites me to lie down on the cosy rug and begins a healing to release blocked energy. During the session, in which she lightly places her hands on my face and body, I drift off into a reverie. Towards the end, she draws me out of it by playing a Koshi wind chime. The sound is crystalline and heavenly. She also shakes what I think is a rain stick.

Katy had mentioned she is a reiki master, but given that she likes to work with the healing energies of the landscape she dwells in, I doubt she is using reiki today. She tells me: 'Even during my training the Eastern philosophies felt at odds for me.'

I'm a bit confused, though. The philosophy which underpins most Eastern medicine is the practice of treating the whole person, not just the symptom. And aside from reiki, don't so many practices commonly used in the West, like meditation, yoga and massage, as well as many of the tools used in sound healing (like wind chimes) originate in the East?

'I am hugely grateful and welcoming for the practices, modalities and deities that originate from the East', she clarifies. 'It's just that my interest and calling lie in what comes from the earth and traditions here. I have deep Celtic roots: my paternal line is Irish and my maternal line comes from Germany, so I am drawn more and more to what is within my blood and bones', Katy says.

Whatever her method, it works, and I feel refreshed when the session is over. I nibble on some grounding chocolate and walnuts from a bowl Katy has thoughtfully placed nearby.

She tells me that during the healing, she sensed a disconnection between my womb and my heart. The former, she says, is 'concerned with ideas and creativity and is the force that connects with the earth and the divine feminine' while the latter guides us 'in our meaning and purpose and connection.' To align both, Katy believes, is to operate from a place of truth.

The disconnect makes a lot of sense to me. I've found the menopause to be a dispiriting change, not an enlivening or positive one. I wonder if my womb – that

part of myself that I've put in the metaphorical deep freeze because of the hormonal changes in my body – needs to be welcomed back, energetically speaking.

I begin to see that it might be time to stop mourning what has been lost and to come to a place of acceptance. Not easy, granted, when I keep trying (and failing) to channel a more youthful version of myself. But acceptance and a little self-love might be the key to igniting a feeling of aliveness that is aligned with who I am now. A lightbulb goes off in my head, entirely unexpectedly. I'm not sure if the feeling will last, but I sense it is significant.

ALL-ROUND NOURISHMENT

I park that thought: it's time for a simple lunch of lentil and tomato soup, toast, avocado, and goat's cheese with honey and halloumi. Afterwards, Katy shows me how to create a besom, which is a kind of witch's broom in miniature. 'You can use it to energetically cleanse the rooms of your home', she says. I create a bundle using hawthorn, sprigs of rosemary and lavender, and tie it all together with twine and ribbon – it definitely looks witchy.

We wrap up the formal part of the retreat and then head out for a walk up to a circle of beech trees high atop a hill. Katy calls this 'The Witches Circle'. Under blustery skies, she leads us through a wooded area dotted with primrose flowers and past fields where the newborn lambs are bleating under the protective gaze of their mothers. The beech trees, when we reach them, are tall and majestic. The spinney feels like an outdoor cathedral. In this spot, the wind has fallen silent.

In Celtic mythology, the beech is associated with femininity; it's seen as a tree with nurturing properties, and one from which to seek blessings for wisdom and peace. This, I feel, is as good a place as any to send out a prayer for a little divine guidance going forward.

'Don't just go straight back into your life after this,' Katy counsels as we head back down the hill. 'Do a bit of journalling, go for a walk and reflect on everything that has emerged here. You're on the cusp of a transformation. I can't wait to see what comes to fruition in the summer months.'

My day with Katy has been unexpectedly insightful, as well as restorative. When I return to my London suburb, I'm fizzing. Of course, a change of scenery and time out in the countryside have worked their magic. But I also feel as though pieces of a puzzle are finally beginning to come together. Perhaps I'll even give another retreat a go. ●

Find out more...

- The one-to-one Hawthorn Day Retreat with Katy Theakston costs £333. She also hosts four-day spring and autumn Wilding Escapes, longer programmes and mentoring packages.
- For more information, visit: owlapotheary.com

A Walk on the Wyrd Side

The Science and Consciousness programme at Broughton Sanctuary approaches mystery from a 21st-century perspective

Imagine a world in which you can affect the outcome of an exam by revising afterwards, or actively cause time to pass more slowly or quickly. Well, it turns out that we might already be living in that reality.

In November 2023 I went along to the residential Science and Consciousness event in Yorkshire, where the theme was 'Wyrd Time'. Organised by Ubiquity University, who offer transformational graduate degree programs, dozens of us had gathered together to explore one question over the course of five days: can we – do we – experience time in a non-linear way?

The 'wyrd' of 'Wyrd Time' relates to an old Anglo-Saxon concept similar

to the idea of destiny, or the lines of fate. By engaging in scientific inquiry through this lens, the goal is to 'rediscover the interconnectedness that our ancestors knew, now from our 21st century perspective', says organiser Peter Merry. 'We believe we can make wyrd the norm, and create the conditions for humanity to remember our wholeness and express that fully in this amazing world of ours'.

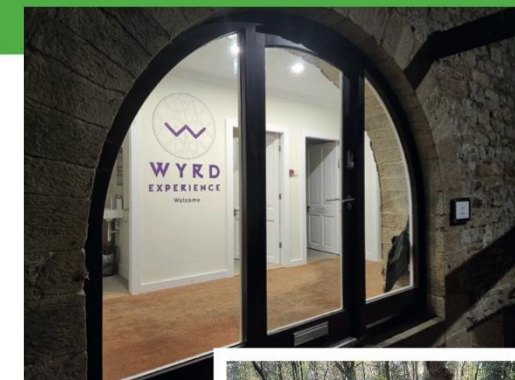
LOCATION, LOCATION, LOCATION

The yearly residential event is hosted at Broughton Sanctuary in the green hills of Skipton, Yorkshire. I arrive during the night, but the next day, I'm full of quiet joy while taking a first

misty morning walk around the open land. Visitors will find walking trails, a stone labyrinth, sweat lodge, fire temple, wild swimming opportunities and more. Broughton seems to exist in its own little bubble – and that has me unwinding immediately.

The 3000-acre estate hosts year-round retreats around a variety of themes and modalities, including tantra, the Hofman Process, manifestation and more. Ruby Wax has hosted retreats at Broughton previously, and they will be welcoming Lynne McGaggart this September.

You'll find a wide range of accommodation for guests – there are 20 options, including rooms in Broughton Hall itself. Roger Tempest, the current custodian of Broughton,



The Wyrd Experience showcases equipment including the disc-dropping machine to the left, affectionately known as 'Murphy'; above, guests take part in a remote viewing experiment

mingles freely with visiting guests, making easy conversation and leaving you feeling completely at home with his welcoming, down-to-earth attitude.

Roger is no stranger to the spiritual path himself. He and his wife Paris Ackrill, who is a sound and energy healer, established the award-winning wellbeing centre Avalon on the estate in 2018. Their aim was to create 'a safe haven in which people can explore and transform their own lives', and the centre itself – and the awards it has won in the years since opening – attest to their success in that endeavour.

WHAT YOU'LL BE DOING

After a nourishing breakfast served from 8am at the Utopia walled garden bistro (where the food is all seasonal, plant-based and absolutely bursting with flavour), we are treated to the privilege of a daily meditation session with the HH Khedrupchen Rinpoche. The programme

then kicks off in full at 9:30am with engaging talks from a variety of experts: Steve Taylor explores time dilation and cessation, Calen Rayne discusses the primordial grid of space and time, and the very clever and wonderfully engaging Bernard Carr enlightens us with a physicist's perspective on the mind-bending effects we've been learning about.

There are researchers, scientists, and engineers showcasing new technologies, and we're shown and told some truly consciousness-expanding stuff. While the information can be a lot to process if you don't have a scientific background, the tone is always informal and there's grounding and discussion time built in too. The programme allows time for attendees to connect with each other, walk in the vast grounds of the estate, or enjoy the swimming pool suite, sauna and relaxation rooms in the Avalon centre.

Each day of talks and activities concludes in the late afternoon, with »

RETREATS FURTHER AFIELD

Yoga Evolution Retreats
Castelo Branco, Portugal
Join us in Portugal on a yoga, qigong and shamanic immersion retreat, or join our yin yoga teacher training course.
yogaevolutionretreats.com

Magical Doors Astrology Retreat
Dalyan, Turkey,
October 2024

Residing at a family-run, boutique hotel set in the forest yet close to the centre, enjoy daily astrology classes with Jean-Marc Pierson.
jeanmarcpierson.com/astrology-retreat-2024

Egypt Spiritual Retreat With KumariDevi Spiritual Teacher
Cairo, Egypt

Explore the mysteries of Egypt. Meditate in the Great Pyramid and by the Sphinx. Egypt calls your soul into alignment and accelerates spiritual awakening.
kumarainstitute.com/egypt-spiritual-tour

Skyros Holidays
Skyros, Greece

Explore your creative potential and meet like-minded people on a stunning Greek island. A true mind, body and spirit experience with a wide range of courses and activities including yoga, art, writing, music and singing, dance, mindfulness, meditation, comedy, kayaking, abseiling and so much more.
skyros.com

The Goddess Retreat
Goddess Garden, Costa Rica
Feel your sacred wholeness as we embrace all the parts of ourselves. Each chakra is paired with archetypal goddesses from around the world. Self-inquiry and deep embodiment through sacred dance, yoga, meditation, journaling, song, and connecting sisterhood on a journey towards self-love.
interweave love



Two worlds collide at Broughton, where the rustic old wheelhouse has come to house the PEAR lab research equipment, now being restored by a team of experts

enjoy a hypnotic session of drumming and vocalising before we head our separate ways the next day. While we have come from all over the world for this event, I sense the strength of the connections that have been made over the five days we have spent together.

For those interested in the nitty-gritty practicalities of living a consciously connected life, the Science and Consciousness event at Broughton will be well worth it to spend close quarters with real experts and like-minded individuals contributing to our collective wisdom.

By the end of it all, it feels like we've done something both nourishing to the soul and genuinely impactful to the collective. Plus, even while the mind is being challenged, it's hard not to feel grounded at the end of the day when you are surrounded by the backdrop of Broughton Sanctuary, which truly does something magical to a person. ●

Find out more...

- Science and Consciousness 2024 has the theme of 'Wyrd Space' and will be taking place from 18 to 22 November. Tickets cost £799.
- Find out more at: ubiquityuniversity.org/annual-science-and-consciousness-event
- Broughton Sanctuary: broughtonsanctuary.co.uk

dinner served at 6:30pm in Utopia. Guests can also register interest earlier in the day for optional extras after dinner, including participating in a research study into floatation tanks and whether they might affect intuitive capabilities, or trying out a VR tarot experience. Broughton also houses a collection from the Princeton Engineering Anomalies Research (PEAR) lab, established in 1979 and open until 2007, and we're lucky enough to be shown around by members of the team who have been working on restoring the equipment.

One of my favourite activities is a remote viewing experiment, which we conduct in two groups after a beautifully grounding forest bathing session. Splitting off into pairs beforehand, with one of each pair per group, the two groups visited the woodland separately. After some peaceful nature meditation and contemplation, each 'sender' group was given a different set of prompts in

order to transmit a message to their partner, the 'receiver', who was stationed back at the retreat centre in a receptive state. We later compared notes, and some of the results shared were genuinely impressive.

A SENSE OF COMMUNITY

Collaboration and discussion is encouraged and flows easily between attendees – we're all a little wyrd, after all. There's a lot of information ready to be absorbed over the course of the week, and making new connections to hash it all out with becomes a grounding way to process the huge downloads of information we've been receiving. I begin to think of us like little neurons, connecting, communicating and firing off one another via a multitude of synaptic connections forming between us. Perhaps all the science is getting to me.

On the last evening we gather in the fire temple after dinner, where, bundled up in cosy blankets, we sip hot cacao and

FESTIVALS

Mind Body Spirit & Wellbeing Festival
Trinity Park, Ipswich, 6-7 July
100 specially selected stands to feed and nurture your heart and soul. Free talks, workshops, yoga, meditation, dance, bushcraft and a healthy food village.
lifearts.co.uk

Burning Woman Festival
Belvoir Castle, Leicestershire
19-21 of July 2024
A 3-day and 3-night empowerment festival for women. An opportunity for you to heal, connect and transform.
burningwoman.co.uk

The Mystical Path Shamanic Retreats
Sacred Valley, Peru, 9-25 August
Luxury 16-day retreat with Pampamesayoc Don Agustin and Wilma Pinedo.
alirabjohns.com

See the world. It's more fantastic than any dream

RAY BRADBURY

KINDRED
SPIRIT

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