



A Rite of Passage

VENTURE AFAR TO RETURN
TO YOUR CENTRE BY CHONGWAN TAY

It is the beginning of spring in Bhutan. The land is alive with cherry blossoms and the mountains are dusted white with snow. Crystal Lim Leahy leads a small, motley group of guests from the luxurious retreat of Uma Paro on a meditation walk across a medieval bridge of chains, up the hills to a private dzong (a fortress-like building with traditional Bhutanese architecture), where the group meditates with a Rinpoche and receives blessings. After the blissful morning, a gourmet lunch is due back at the resort.

The Legacy Retreat

This is by no means a typical holiday. Bhutan, as a destination, is rather off the beaten track. It is a lofty, spiritual backdrop to retreat from the world. The holiday factor comes in the form of the grand Uma by COMO Paro resort, surrounded by spectacular views and the country's stunning cultural landmarks.

The Legacy Retreat (www.thelegacyretreat.com) is a five-night programme that Leahy created and hosts with her husband Mark. While guests get to enjoy the Himalayan landscape by way of hilly hikes, biking trips, archery and yoga sessions, and get pampered at the spa, the true essence of this retreat comes in the form of a carefully crafted programme of private counselling sessions, custom-tailored Ayurvedic and TCM consultations and treatments, an introduction to the Enneagram behavioural system, meditation workshops, meridian detox, jin jing gong (a type of qi gong) and other classes. These are all designed to take the participant through a journey of emotional healing, well-being and ultimately, self-mastery.

Indeed, for the well travelled and slightly jaded, Legacy Retreat offers a different kind of journey. The concept came about when the Leahys, after spending over a decade in investment banking, decided to exit the finance world and urban Singapore altogether, and moved into their vineyard and farm in Australia. "Our friends who visited us were curious about our journey and life choices," explains Leahy. "Most of them are busy, sophisticated people dealing with high-level stress, be it the unpredictable economy, demanding careers or trying to find work-life balance."

She found that their common coping solution was detox and yoga-meditation retreats, which she felt were all well and good, but "temporary solutions rather than holistic ones". The idea of Legacy Retreat sprouted from her desire to offer a more lasting, holistic solution to these issues.

To that end, Legacy Retreat goes beyond detox and yoga meditation and gives attention to the emotional and mental well-being of its guests. "While the body therapies and spa treatments provide physical relaxation, the retreat's life skills workshops based on gentle, effective psychotherapy teach the guests stress management, how to better deal with problems, get perspective on their lives and embrace happiness and fulfilment," says Leahy.

Guests at her retreat have ranged from age 18 to the mid-70s. They are



LEGACY RETREAT AT UMA BY COMO, PARO IN BHUTAN



open-minded, intellectually curious individuals who want to seek pause in their busy lives to recharge, review their passions and get clarity on their goals. Some have returned for “refresher” retreats as a way to remind themselves to find time for rebalancing and renewal.

In order to provide the most serene, nurturing and luxurious environments for her guests, Leahy scours the globe to find ideal settings for her retreats, which are unique each time. So far, the retreats have been held in Bali (Alila Villas Soori), Vietnam (The Nam Hai) and Bhutan (Uma Paro). This October, it will take place at the far-flung, unspoiled Nihiwatu Resort in Sumba, Indonesia.

The Hoffman Retreat

Meanwhile, further south in Australia's ethereally beautiful Byron Bay lies a retreat centre called Sangsurya, home to the Hoffman Process (www.hoffmanprocess.com.au). Founded in 1967 by Bob Hoffman, an American whose vision was to promote peace in the world one person at a time, the weeklong Process is widely considered the most profound and powerful leadership training that one can go through among the world's professional and entrepreneurial elite. Volker Krohn, director of the Hoffman Centre Australia/Singapore, also lends his expertise to the Legacy Retreat as its co-head of Integrated Therapy and Coaching.

“While Legacy Retreat combines the luxurious spa experience with psycho-spiritual inquiry, the Hoffman Process focuses on healing the cause of our compulsive negative behaviours,” Krohn says. A deeper, more intense self-exploration and coaching is part of the experience, and those who have attended tend not to go into detail about the process but attest to its life-changing effects.

A residential retreat, the Process begins on a Saturday morning and runs till the following Friday. According to Krohn, it includes experiential work, guided meditation, deep emotional group and individual work, visualisation and spontaneous creative exercises—all taught by highly trained professional psychotherapists.

The Island-Jungle Retreat

It is rare to find an untamed jungle and pristine beaches in Thailand but Koh Kood is just that little slice of unspoiled Siam with its wild, raw glamour. A one-hour flight by private plane from Bangkok, it is home to the upscale, rustic-chic Soneva Kiri resort (www.soneva.com/soneva-kiri). Now famed for its tree-pod dining experience, the resort is sustainably crafted from recycled wood and operates on eco-conscious practices. Its Six Senses spa is renowned for its yoga, detox and Ayurvedic treatments, and has begun offering special Discover Yoga



LEGACY RETREAT IN BHUTAN



YOGA AT SONEVA KIRI



SONEVA KIRI ON KOH KOOD

Programmes by Cameron Walker, a specialist in cranio-sacral therapy, yoga, breath work and deep-tissue massage.

The three- or five-day retreat includes wellness and yoga consultation, cranio-sacral therapy with breath awareness, reiki, guided meditation and a 90-minute “biography” session with Walker, where the guest shares his or her life account and childhood.

“During our lives, there is a lot of information for us to digest. How it is interpreted comes through our personal experiences,” Walker explains. “This affects our perceptions in the form of fear, control, denial, isolation, avoidance—which may be conscious or subconscious. During my cranio-sacral session, there is an opportunity to find a place of deep relaxation, allowing a shift in consciousness that creates a sense of liberation.” The programme, coupled with the resort's unique environment, aims to send guests home feeling renewed and refreshed.

For the world-weary traveller in search of deep transformation, these retreats are journeys unlike any others. As Legacy Retreat's Crystal Lim Leahy says, “It's a break from the noise and an opportunity to come home to yourself”. ■

