

STORY ONDINE COHANE

TACTICAL RETREAT

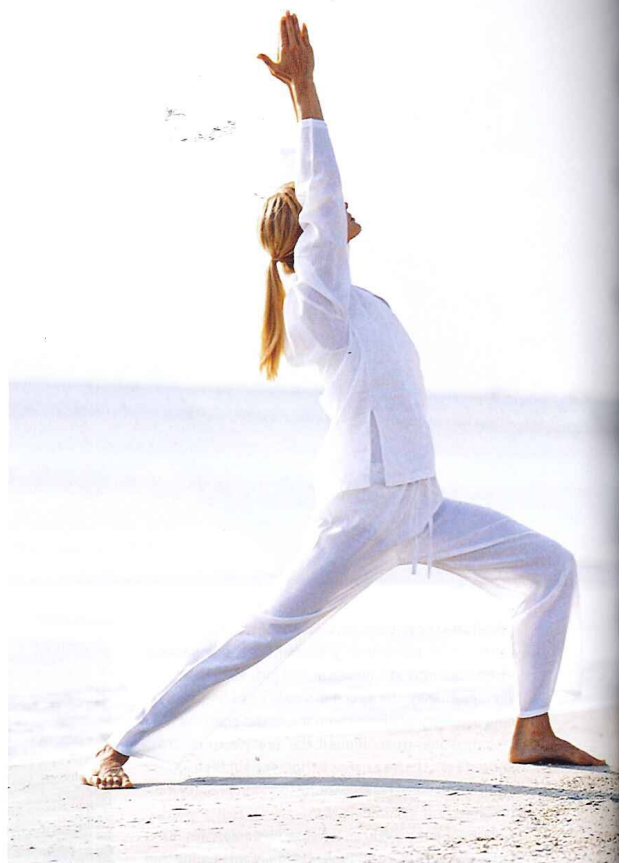
Holistic approach shifts focus to concentrate on the well-being of the mind and soul

It can be very hard to change a lifelong habit or deal with stress and still maintain a daily routine, but extra help is at hand. Destination spas and retreats are now attending to their clients' psychological and emotional issues, and offering fitness guidance and aesthetic treatments. These extra services have created one of the fastest-growing niches in the travel/spa industry.

One of the most respected entrants to this movement is the new Legacy Retreat (www.thelegacyretreat.com), which is held "in select serene and beautiful locations across the Asia-Pacific".

"All of us have to deal with high levels of stress, whether it is the unpredictability of the economy, demanding jobs, or trying to make the work-life balance work," says its founding director, Crystal Lim Leahy.

"We believe there are four basic aspects to life – body, mind, emotions and spirit. We wanted to create something which nurtured all four aspects to achieve a deeper, more sophisticated level of well-being. Nothing we saw in this market addressed emotions and mind in tandem with body and spirit."



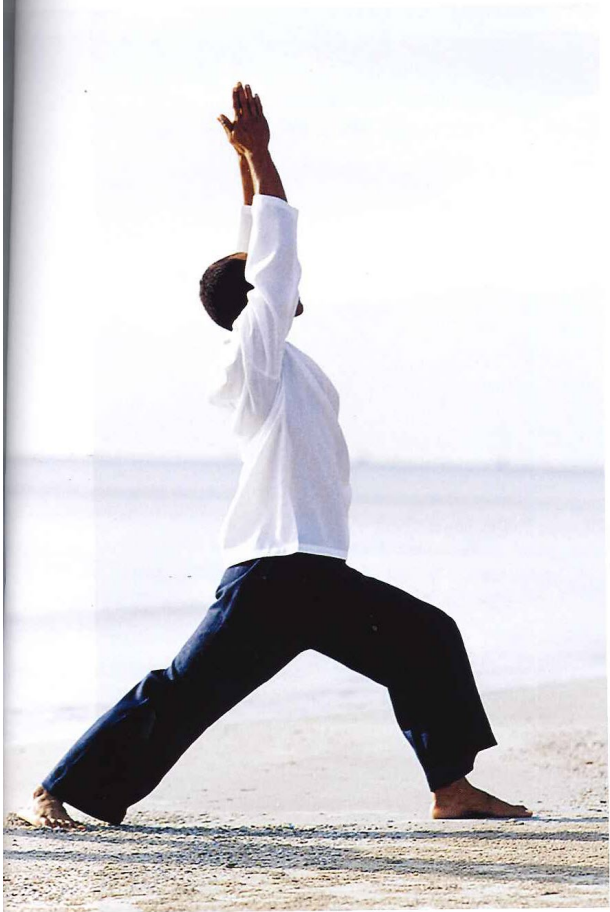
For that reason, the retreat's menu offers qi gong, acupuncture and meditation, to psychotherapy workshops on stress management. Locales such as Bhutan only add to the feeling of being completely unplugged and able to concentrate on bigger issues, from the physical to the emotional.

The retreat's all-inclusive five-day programmes cost between US\$7,500 and US\$9,500, depending on the location, and it hopes to launch weekend retreats and workshops in the US\$3,000 price range in the near future.

For a generation where subjects such as Alzheimer's, and the effect of longer life expectancy on psychological health, are increasingly in the headlines, the esteemed Canyon Ranch (www.canyonranch.com), with outposts across the US in Tucson, Massachusetts and Miami, has unveiled a new programme called "Focus on Brain Fitness and Longevity".

Neurofeedback lectures on healthy eating for the brain – stay away from inflammatory food – plus meditation and tai chi are covered in the programme.

"Through our integrative approach to wellness, ➔



ABOVE LEFT
Exercise at Chiva-Som in Thailand

ABOVE
The pool at Canyon Ranch in Miami, Florida

LEFT
The peaceful environment at Chiva-Som



NOTHING WE SAW ADDRESSED EMOTIONS AND MIND IN TANDEM WITH BODY AND SPIRIT **CRYSTAL LIM LEAHY**

ABOVE
Meditating at Canyon Ranch in Tucson, Arizona

BOTTOM RIGHT
Fitness programmes and physical therapy are offered at Chiva-Som.

TOP RIGHT
From the Legacy Retreat experience in Vietnam: Nam Hai Hoi An pool villa courtyard

Canyon Ranch is able to offer our guests the tools they need to age healthily," explains its corporate medical director, Mark Liponis.

"Exercise, nutrition and stress management all play a role in boosting memory and brain power, and now more than ever our guests are realising that they can and should be proactive in ensuring cognitive vitality for the later years in life."

Canyon Ranch has always aimed to be at the cutting edge of more innovative and truly holistic approaches to health. The integrative approach to wellness focuses on everything from nutrition to stress management, along with exercise, physiology, sleep habits and brain health.

A recent addition for women "examines the physical, emotional and spiritual challenges of

health, ageing and relationships". A recent client related how the retreat, following a breast cancer diagnosis, helped her before her chemotherapy and made her recommit to her health, inside and out.

Retreats start from US\$7,160, including fitness classes, lectures, all meals, transfers to and from Tucson International Airport, and US\$1,200 for spa treatments, individual sporting activities and personalised wellness consultations with health and healing practitioners.

Although a number of retreats now offer these increasingly specialised programmes, many holistic retreats simply force us to unplug and abandon our usual habits and, therefore, promote a life change.

"I still remember an overcast day sitting by the Gulf of Thailand – it had the wonderful feel of a [sanctuary]," recounts Dana Dickey, the former beauty editor of *Condé Nast Traveler*, of her experience at Chiva-Som (www.chivasom.com); five nights stay from US\$2,875 per person in an ocean room), one of the world's most famous retreats. "It forces you to get into the rhythm of the place, which is slow and purposeful rather than rushed and hectic."

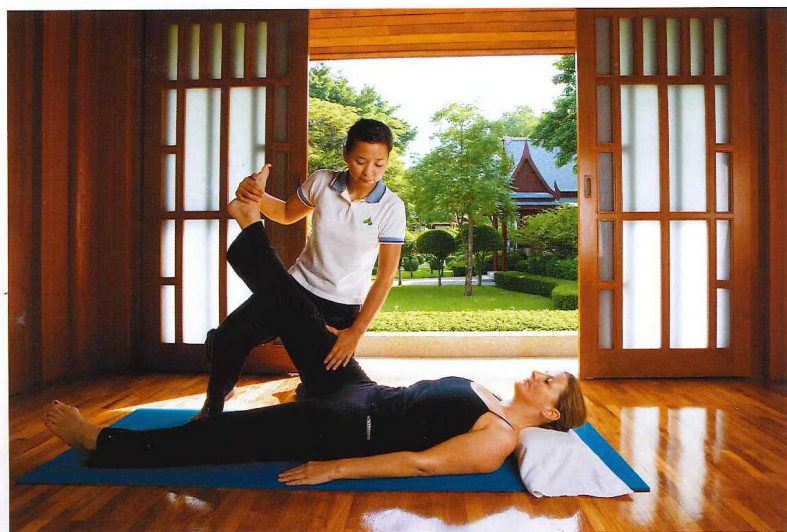


When I visited Six Senses Yao Noi in Phuket (www.sixsenses.com; from US\$5,000 for three days, everything included), I had the same feeling. Working with a respected nutritionist for a week, I gave up caffeine, alcohol and sugar, and followed three days of menus of raw food with a juice fast, with juices made from organic fruit and vegetables on site.

Every day I practised yoga, meditation and had personal training, plus detoxing spa treatments with energy healing specifically designed for me. The effect of less stress on my physical and emotional health became increasingly apparent as the week went on.

My meditation practice grew longer, my body looked like it had when I was in my 20s, and my skin glowed, all without feeling as if I was on a draconian regimen.

Ever since my return home, I do a shorter, do-it-yourself version of what I learned there. Because, ultimately, that is the point: to figure out a personal programme that can be integrated into your life at home, to be able to turn off, and to be healthy even in the midst of a daily routine. ✕



WEALTH OF HEALTH

Other retreats that concentrate on a particular emotional or health issue:

SLEEP

Kamalaya, Thailand (www.kamalaya.com): Sleep difficulties are addressed through a combination of traditional Chinese medicine, massage therapy and acupuncture. Treatments focus on beating stress and body imbalances which affect sleep quality and health. From US\$2,775 for single occupancy.

FERTILITY

Simply Healing Detox Retreat, West Sussex, Britain (www.simplyhealingcentre.com): Fertility issues are becoming an increasingly specialised field within holistic retreats. This is one of the best, with treatments such as abdominal-sacral massage and reflexology. There is also a special juice fast which targets issues such as ovulation problems. From £1,615 (HK\$20,050) per person, full board, including treatments and consultations.