

Where To Unwind, Reset And Recharge in 2020

Written by Judy Chapman

Shinta Mani



EACH YEAR, THE GLOBAL WELLNESS SUMMIT (GWS) RELEASES an annual wellness trends report with predictions from various industry leaders for the following year. According to the latest research by the GWI, the global wellness economy is now worth a staggering \$4.5 trillion and is booming. In a nutshell: we're taking more wellness trips than ever before. As the year draws to a close, Judy Chapman reflects on some of these trends and recommends destinations that delivered.

WELLNESS TAKES ON OVERTOURISM – 'choose a destination where sustainability is at the heart of your experience.'

Excessive growth of visitors not only destroys the environment, damaging beaches and infrastructure, but can also negatively impact the lives of the local people. Choosing to stay at resorts and hotels that protect the local environment, the people and culture and have a strong sustainability program in place is the only way forward now.

Make sure you put **Shinta Mani Wild** Cambodia on your radar for a conscious yet adventurous getaway. You can choose to arrive at Shinta Mani by zipline that takes you through the trees to a waterfall bar! Hotel designer Bill Bensley actually identified the 800 acres of unprotected forest and it was purchased to save it from logging, mining and poaching. Gone are the days of the high-end traveler seeking out pool villas with all the upscale amenities. It's now considered an absolute luxury to sleep under the stars, in yurts and the like. At this property, your abode happens to be a beautifully fitted-out safari-style tent. Feast on locally foraged foods and reconnect with nature through educational adventures led by the resident Botanist and Wildlife Alliance rangers on anti-poaching patrols missions. Kids are welcome and will love the Indiana Jones safari-inspired vibe with, jungle jeep and river cruises and more.

SLOW TRAVEL, OFF-THE-GRID, and PILGRIMAGES...

Did you know that 400 million people take a pilgrimage each year? In France alone, it's estimated that 70% of tourism is spent on pilgrimages. How inspiring! Over the past few years, I've noticed more friends and colleagues traveling to two of the world's UNESCO World Heritage pilgrimages - the Camino de Santiago in Spain and the Kumano Kodo in Japan.

Explains Susie Ellis, Chairman and CEO of the GWI: "The explosion of walking, hiking, biking and riding experiences will just keep surging, where travelers slowly explore nature - local villages, food and craftspeople - and actually connect with the landscape and real people."

I'm personally dreaming of a pilgrim to the newly opened **Six Senses Bhutan** that offers a wellness circuit type experience where you can journey from lodge to lodge over four to ten nights. Also in Bhutan, **AmanKora** offers one of a kind immersions where you temple-hop through mountains, monasteries and forests to their different luxe lodges. These are journeys of a lifetime like pilgrims for the soul.

AmanKora



AmanKora



Menla Mountain Retreat

Closer to home, one of the most inspiring hiking wellness retreats I've been to is **Menla Mountain Retreat** situated in the Catskills. Set on 325 acres of mountains and trees, there are dozens of various lung-cleansing hikes to do in-between your yoga, ayurveda, Tibetan medicine and meditation workshops. Menla offers year-round retreats and wellness getaways that are informative and inspiring. Not to mention their Tibetan Spa, DEWA, offers some of the best treatments I've ever tried.

PRESCRIBING NATURE FOR WELLBEING – 'put down the Prozac and pick up your walking shoes.'

Another wellness trend identified by GWS, this one is also driven by rising pollution (indoor and outdoor) that is now recognized to be one of the top killers in the world, Seriously, taking regular outdoor vacations

is one of the best things we can all do for our health and longevity.

As Ellis points out, Forest Bathing, 'shinrin-yoku' in Japanese, has been around for centuries as a way to balance the mind and inspire the spirit. It's a practice of 'taking in the forest' that is shown to lower our blood pressure, de-stress our mind and boost our happiness.

Ellis says the next wave of wellness is not off-the-beaten-track, but no tracks at all. "We ACHE for nature," she says. "Whether we admit it each day, we're in constant, collective mourning over nature's destruction. The impact of time-in-nature on human bodies and minds is so overwhelming, that doctors all over the world are now prescribing nature."

For more on Forest Bathing, see page ??

DIGITAL-DOWNTIME RETREATS

As we start to understand the impact of being connected to our devices 24/7, more brands are offering digital downtime. These range from wifi-free rooms to digital detox days and complete digital detox retreats, and some with low-connectivity that is monitored and scheduled. **Aro-ha New Zealand** is a stunning eco retreat situated on the South Island that covers all bases when it comes to wellness. This includes plant-based vegan cuisine, much of it grown on-site, with nourishing yoga, spa and vigorous hikes. It's truly incredible how the body responds to seven days without of the usual stimulations including coffee or alcohol and digital devices – you feel so calm. In my opinion, Aro-ha is the gold standard of a nature-centric vacation. The results were so good that I've been there twice for a much-needed recharge.

Another favorite is **Australia's Gwinganna Lifestyle Retreat** where you stay in eco-cabins in the bush and surrender to several days of daily hikes, spa, workshops, pesticide-free organic food, and no coffee or alcohol. Groups are big so the atmosphere is very lively (social interaction is now regarded as one of the key contributors to



Australia's Gwinganna Lifestyle Retreat

More Wellness Trends Identified By The Global Wellness Institute

- The power of women's wallets...and women-empowering wellness travel.
- A fierce, feminist wellness travel: from tough adventure to sexual wellness.
- In the new longevity economy, aging will be completely rebranded as COOL!
- The appearance, language and approach to luxury and wellness travel will be REWRITTEN for 55+.



Revivo Retreat



Peninsula Hot Springs



VANA



Oneworld Ayurveda

longevity). That said, there's plenty of space for downtime and healing sessions. It goes without saying that with limited wifi amid ample fresh air, the last thing you'll want to do is check your emails.

URBAN RETREATS

At the other end of the scale, there's a movement in urban wellness, primarily driven by increased urbanization (currently 55% of us are city dwellers and this is predicted to increase to 68% by 2050. **Six Senses Maxwell** in Singapore is the brand's first urban wellness hotel and home to an organic garden and Earth Lab in the middle of this vibrant and thriving city. Even better, their sister property in Singapore, the **Six Senses Duxton**, houses a Traditional Chinese Medical (TCM) clinic next to the reception area and every guest receives a complimentary consultation with the doctor, after which you can book in for a sleep, jet lag and de-stress acupuncture or cupping session – what an epic way to check in! Look out for **Six Senses New York** opening in 2020 that will be an urban wellness resort like no other. Imagine checking into a hotel where everything is designed to make you feel inspired and healthy including several social and communal spaces, a clinic, wellness dining venues, inspiring work spaces and more!

As in the words of Ellis: "The urban wellness resort is no longer an oxymoron, it's the future."

NUTRITION GETS VERY PERSONALISED – 'the era of one-size fits all is well and truly over.'

Bali is leading the way with this wellness trend and one of my favorites is **Oneworld Ayurveda**, a boutique retreat offering 7-28 day Panchakarma detox programs that are one of the most results-oriented cleanses you'll ever try. All your meals, treatments and therapies are prescribed personally by the physician, so no two programs are ever the same. The spa here is outstanding and unlike most Ayurvedic retreats, you receive not only one, but two nourishing

treatments per day. You can also choose to do your Panchakarma in part or all silence and meals can be taken on your veranda, it really is an amazing place to escape the world.

Revivo Resorts is another retreat in Bali offering year-round wellness programs in elegant surrounds. The big news is they recently introduced preventative genetic testing as an add-on to their retreats – you are sent the test before your arrival, which analyzes how your body metabolizes carbs, fats, and protein as well as gives you an understanding of predispositions for weight-gain, caffeine sensitivity and lactose intolerances. A REVIVO Wellness Coach then creates a tailored program with a nutrition and lifestyle plan specifically to you, delivering better results than your average retreat program would.

EXTREME BATHING – 'an antidote to our modern lives'

While hot and cold bathing is as old as spas themselves, 'extreme bathing' is a fast growing trend around the globe regarded for its immune-boosting benefits. For a day experience, I highly recommend the new 'Fire and Ice Ritual' at **Peninsula Hot Springs** in Melbourne Australia where you journey between hot saunas, sub-zero ice caves, a deep Freeze Chamber, cold plunge pools and geothermal hot springs. The combination of extreme heat and extreme cold help 'reset' the body back to homeostasis. Extreme bathing increases

circulation and brings the mind and body to a heightened sense of being present and alive.

World-renowned Prof. Marc Cohen is leading Extreme Bathing retreats at **Komune Resort Bali** and **Maruia Hot Springs New Zealand**. He explains that "Extreme-Wellness" is the experience of deep connection with nature, including our human nature and immersion in the natural world.

Says Cohen: "Extreme Wellness also involves an exploration of human experience and performance and practices that allow you to be extremely comfortable in any situation."

In the retreats, he uses a range of technologies and techniques to create 'controlled stress' that allows users to practice remaining calm and relaxed during extremes of temperature, activity, hydration, breathing, physical posture, exertion, human connection and performance. The program combines reflection, blissing out and active workshops on unexpected, yet embarrassingly simple ways to get our minds, bodies and homes in tip-top condition so we are free to live our dreams. They include inspiring sessions on detoxification strategies and ways to turn your home into a health retreat and practical sessions on breathing, ice bathing, fire-twirling, fermented foods, yoga and creativity. They also involve being indulged with organic food, healthy beverages, massage and deep relaxation in the beautiful natural settings.

Extreme Wellness Retreats are a chance to dive deep into how to stay cool and calm in difficult situations, experience profound joy and exhilaration and do things you never thought possible.

Wellness Sabbatical@ – 'the sabbatical is an academic concept: an earned, long, very intentional travel break to recharge and work in a newly inspired way.'

This is possibly my favorite wellness trend predicted by the GWS this year (probably because I've personally been taking wellness type sabbaticals for most of my adult life). I thrive when working remotely

and living nomadically, and have long blended working from a yoga or wellness retreat as a lifestyle choice.

On a serious note, the trend for more of us choosing to take intentional monthly or year-long breaks is thought to be primarily driven by the fact we are all working longer hours and yet not taking our vacation time. It's now estimated that the US just hit a record, leaving 768 million days on the table last year.

Explains Ellis: "People are untethered from offices: 53% of people worldwide work remotely at least half the week. And if you're like me, the reality is you NEED to get away, you NEED a wellness break, but you NEED to keep working. Vacation shaming feels naïve."

One of the best holistic wellness destinations in the world is **Kamalaya** in Thailand. This year, they launch their 21-day Wellness Sabbatical" retreat series. Another recommendation for your well-deserved sabbatical is **VANA** retreat in India. This luxury ashram retreat is positioned as a 'refuge for all beings'. The minimum stay is five-nights although many stay for three weeks, and their highly-personalized programs consist of traditional medicines, meditation yoga and other proven Eastern medicine disciplines all centered around an ethos to teach one how to 'live' again. Give your being over to their experienced team, shed layers, and be nurtured back to a state of inspired wholeness. □

About the author: Judy Chapman is the author of four books on spas and the former Editor-in-Chief of Spa Asia magazine. Over the past twenty years, Judy has created award winning spas, wellness retreats, and products for luxury brands in Australia, Bali, Germany, India, Maldives, Middle East, Myanmar, Singapore and New York. With a relentless pursuit of unique and original experiences, her curiosity has led Judy to explore the Himalayas, spending time with Tibetan doctors to onsen bathing in Japan and Ayurvedic retreats in India. She has created over 200 skincare, tea, and candle collections for luxury brands around the world. Judy is also the Editor of 'The Chapman Guides, a curation of wellness retreats and destinations. www.thechapmanguides.com