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3 Virtual Wellness Retreats You Can Do from the Comfort of Your Own Home

By Heather Mikesell | Discover, Travel |



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With many Americans prioritizing health and wellness due to the COVID-19 pandemic, demand for immunity-boosting therapies, online fitness workouts, mental wellbeing options, and connection is on the rise. Thanks to various mask mandates and the vaccination rollout, it looks like we may all be able to emerge from our socially distanced cocoons before long. In the meantime, spas and wellness practitioners are bringing the programming to you in the form of virtual retreats that you can do from home. According to Caroline Sylger Jones, founder of [Queen of Retreats](#), a guide to both in-person and virtual retreats, some virtual retreats, which have debuted in response to the pandemic, are so successful they will continue after people resume traveling. “Proper retreats, with a live element, rather than pre-recorded ones, are the best ones to go for, so you are personally hand-held through the process by an expert and can experience proper, tailored advice and the support of a community if you want it,” says Sylger. “Look, too, for schedules that include off screen activities and outside time in nature.” Here are some options if you’re looking for a transformative retreat that feels like a true getaway.

In Health & Beauty, Lifestyle

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My Valentine, in Arabic?
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In **Cuisine, Lifestyle**



An Ayurvedic Immersion

While a visit to [Ananda in the Himalayas](#) may be a bucket-list trip for many, it recently became both affordable and accessible to those looking to tap into the expertise of the famed destination spa’s team of more than 60 Ayurvedic physicians, yogis, therapists, and chefs trained in healthy cuisine without leaving their own zip code. Located in a Maharaja’s palace estate in the foothills of the Himalayas and overlooking the ancient Ganges river valley, the multi-award-winning spa and wellness retreat is a pioneer in Ayurveda and yoga-focused health and wellness. The resort, which was temporarily closed on account of the pandemic, recently launched its first-ever online wellbeing services in an effort to provide its expertise and signature programs to those seeking wellness from home.

“We wanted to stay connected with our guests during this phase and help them continue their wellness journeys from the comfort of their homes,” says Mahesh Natarajan, senior vice president of marketing, sales, and business development for Ananda in the Himalayas. “This is when we decided to do online yoga and meditation sessions. But the response we got was really encouraging and that gave us the idea to open these sessions up to everyone and also expand our online offerings.” Offering a virtual passport to India, the spa is making six of its programs available online with the most comprehensive being the Ananda Wellness Bliss package (approximately \$580). It features three Ayurvedic consultations, one set of signature

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Ananda recipes personalized for your body type, one yoga consultation and introductory session, and 12 60-minute personal sessions of yoga, pranayama breathing, or meditation.

According to Natarajan, the daily group Yoga & Meditation sessions are the most popular. All online programs are conducted via Zoom.

Although the virtual programming was first embraced by former guests, it soon attracted new converts thanks to the positive word of mouth. The response has been so encouraging that the spa has continued to expand its online offerings. “We have people who have been doing regular sessions with us now for 10 months,” says Natarajan. “And this makes us realize the potential and potency of our online wellbeing services. We have just added sessions on emotional wellness, as well, to our portfolio to help people suffering from anxiety, depression, and psychosomatic issues among others.” Because the conversion to online programming has been so successful, the spa plans to continue it beyond the pandemic.



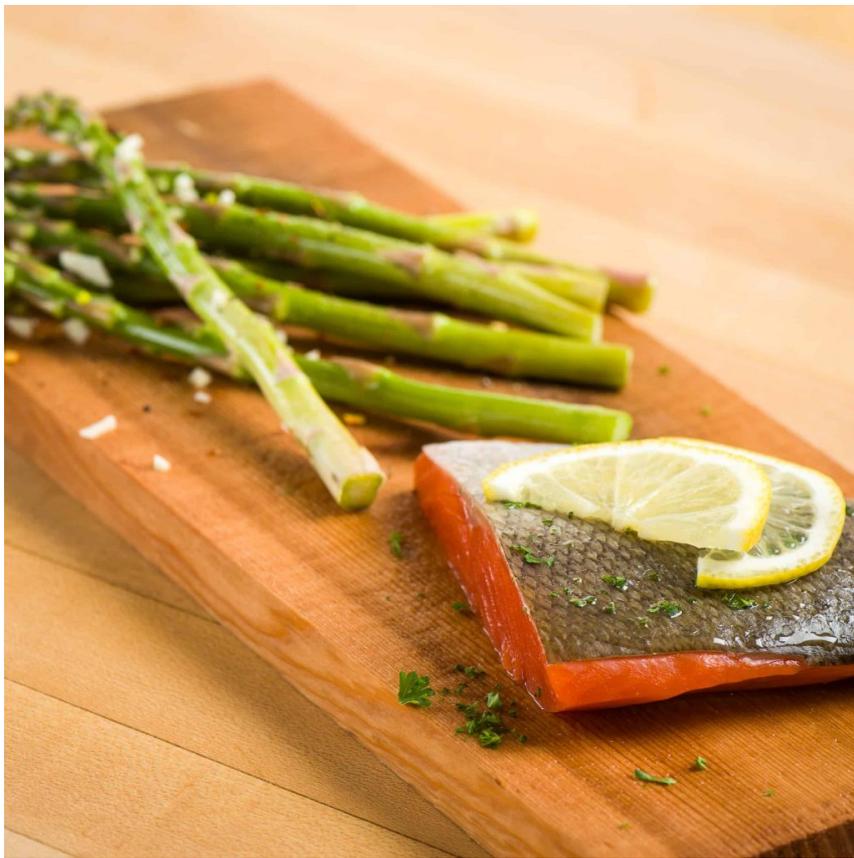
“Wellness is a lifelong process, a lifestyle choice, and with the right kind of support and guidance, one can stay on course and enjoy optimum wellbeing from virtually anywhere,” says Natarajan.

A Health and Wellness Reboot

In Canada’s British Columbia, [Mountain Trek Fitness Retreat & Health Spa](#) (Ainsworth) is known for its daily hikes, sunrise yoga, and chef-prepared spa cuisine. When the pandemic hit, the destination spa was about to kick off its best season yet. According to owner Alex Timmons, that’s when it became obvious the spa would need to pivot if it was going to provide the health and wellness programming its guests had come to expect. Because of self-isolation, work-from-home mandates, and missing friends and family, it was important that if the guests couldn’t come to Mountain Trek, then the spa needed to go to them.







Debuting its virtual [Basecamp Weekend Retreat](#) (\$450 per individual/\$600 per couple), the popular health spa transformed its full-week in-person program into 48 hours of programming that takes place over a weekend. Beginning on a Friday afternoon and ending on Sunday, the retreat involves two cookalongs; two sunrise mobility and release yoga sessions; two exercise classes; one functional and mobility class; guided meditations; and educational talks on nutrition, fitness, balanced health, goal setting, habit formation, and more. “The cookalongs are really appreciated because most people are incredibly intimidated to cook healthy, beautiful meals in their own kitchen,” says Timmons. “Our classically trained chef, Jillian Fae, and certified nutritionist, Jenn Keirstead, take the fear out of the equation, guiding guests step-by-step as they prepare, cook, and plate meals they never thought they could produce.” Another popular activity is a life-



vision exercise that incorporates an online design tool. “It’s basically digital collaging where guests pull images that represent their dreams and desires onto a single canvas,” says Timmons. According to him, you do have the power to be healthy in your own home and can benefit from the physical, mental, and emotional benefits that come from having a balanced life, such as reduced bloating and inflammation, less anxiety, improved sleep, and more joy.

A Women’s Circle

Another option specifically for women interested in healing and connection is one of the many [virtual offerings](#) from Fiona Arrigo, founder of [The Arrigo Programme](#). A globally renowned intuitive healer, psychotherapist, mentor, and life teacher, Arrigo launched her program to treat burnout and exhaustion; depression, grief, and addiction, relationship and family issues; and more. Her Women Together Weekend Retreats (approximately \$332) are a nourishing at-home experience, which involve meditation, breathwork, movement, and harnessing the intelligence of feminine wisdom. “The ability for women to come together and sit in a circle has been re-imagined during this crisis,” says Arrigo. “I am in awe of the power and impact of these gatherings and now wish to widen the group and call in more women to join us.”

An annual membership (approximately \$46 a month) will also be launching in April for those interested in an ongoing virtual experience. It includes a monthly three-hour circle hosted by Arrigo; a daily prompt and reminder through the group’s What’s app to bring focus and intention



to a 6pm meditation that is practiced individually; weekly Wednesday evening support groups; weekly Friday Night Groove, which involves 30-minutes of dance, music, and movement; and recommended reading and courses. These virtual options give you the option to connect and enact positive transformative change. Says Arrigo, “As we circle together, we discover the glue that binds us, and we are able to dream of a new story, a new way of being.”



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