

The rise of NOW-AGE HOLIDAYS

As spiritual wellbeing becomes a new measure of health, travellers are searching for a getaway that offers something beyond unlimited spa treatments and bargain shopping, writes Emma Vidgen

The girls' trip has come a long way since the all-inclusive booze cruise. As the pace of modern life reaches dizzying new speeds, so too does the need for something meaningful. Healing modalities once dismissed as 'new age' are increasingly topping holiday wish lists.

"Most of the people I work with are stereotypical professionals who

are living very fast lives and are very often parents," says Alan Dolan, aka the Breath Guru. "What they have in common is that they're overloaded and have so many responsibilities."

Today's spiritual getaways are all about stepping off the hamster wheel and reconnecting with yourself. Here, we round up five now-age trends coming to a holiday near you...



Yoga Walking

WHAT IS IT? Yoga walking combines yoga with, you guessed it, walking! "The idea was to marry meditation with bushwalking – an exercise that nourishes the mind, body and soul," says Rajesh Krishnan, from Nirvana Retreat in Barrington Tops, NSW.

HOW IT WORKS "Guests choose a walk depending on the area they wish to focus on. The Peace Walk, for example, explores the concept of shanti, or inner peace," says Krishnan.

WHERE TO TRY IT Nirvana Retreat runs regular four-day getaways incorporating yoga walks. Bonus, Nirvana is pet friendly, so your best mate can come along, too. From \$1250 per person. Visit nirvanaretreat.com.au

Breathwork

WHAT IS IT? "Breathwork is a self-healing modality designed to be done by you, for you," says Dolan. Using a series of connected breathing exercises and techniques, the practice puts participants into a meditative state where the body can rest and repair.

HOW IT WORKS "Breathwork activates the body's auto-pilot recalibration system," says Dolan. "The cells begin to work better and more efficiently, and that means you also work more efficiently." Dolan has helped people with

ailments ranging from depression and anxiety to sleep disorders, chronic fatigue and severe pain. "Indigenous tribes have been experimenting with sound, rhythm, movement and breath since the dawn of time. To me, breathwork is very, very ancient. We're really just rediscovering it."

WHERE TO TRY IT Dolan runs workshops throughout the year from his property in Lanzarote, Spain. Four-night retreats start from approximately \$2000 per person. Visit breathguru.com

Balinese Energy Healing

WHAT IS IT? Drawing on ancestral traditions, healers work with the elements, acupressure, reflexology and massage to release energy blocks and balance chakras in order to heal the body and mind.

HOW IT WORKS Shamans draw on their unique family lineage and connection to the spiritual world to identify energy

blocks that could be resulting in physical or emotional problems. Based on the Balinese spiritual ethos of sekala-niskala – that we exist in both a physical and spiritual realm – they tailor a mix of body work, meditation and energy healing to restore balance and encourage healing of everything from chronic pain to anxiety.

WHERE TO TRY IT Fivelements, located in the lush Ubud hinterland, offers Panca Mahabhuta (five elements) retreats, which can last anywhere from three to 21 nights. In addition to healing therapies, they include nourishing food and beauty rituals. A three-night retreat starts from about \$3000 a person. Visit fivelements.org



Medicine Wheel Ceremonies

WHAT IS IT? "The medicine wheel is an ancient problem-solving device and advanced meditation tool that allows people to gain deep perspective," says Rezinate retreat co-founder Debbie Pask. "The whole process lasts two hours, at least, and afterwards people usually feel elated and deeply moved."

HOW IT WORKS Participants establish the question they are seeking guidance on, then a guide sets up a wheel using stones to prepare an energy grid. "Drumming music is played to invoke a deeper

state and we enter the medicine wheel, walking around it until the person is drawn to a certain direction," says Pask. "They then sit facing that direction and are taken through a guided meditation to help have their questions answered."

WHERE TO TRY IT The Rezinate retreat in Bellingen, on the New South Wales north coast, offers medicine wheel ceremonies, among other modalities as part of a four-day getaway. \$2190 per person, all inclusive. Visit rezinate.com.au



Sound Bathing

WHAT IS IT? Sound bathing, or healing, immerses the senses in a chorus of Tibetan singing bowls, helping create a sense of calm. Research by Naropa University in the US shows the sound encourages our brains into the parasympathetic (relaxed) state, which promotes stress release.

HOW IT WORKS Sound bathing ceremonies are led by musicians and meditation teachers trained to guide a group through an immersive experience. They usually go for about an hour and participants report feeling everything from complete relaxation to having an out-of-body experience. "For me, it is the ultimate in stress reduction and relaxation," says Nolan Dalby, general manager of The Sanctuary in Thailand.

WHERE TO TRY IT The Sanctuary, on the island of Koh Phangan, offers sound-healing workshops along with other therapies. Rooms start at about \$117 a night. Visit thesanctuarythailand.com