

Sarah Blinco on 2019's healthy holiday options that mean you will come home feeling refreshed and inspired

Once upon a time, a vacation meant drinks, lots of food, tours and shopping. Recently however, there's been a shift in the reasons many of us choose to get away – we want to switch off from the pressures of modern-day life.

The new kind of break, the one that will continue to rise as one of the most sought-after in 2019, is the 'wellness escape'; an enriching life experience, where we return home feeling great about ourselves. Wellness has become a booming industry, evidenced by the fact *Lonely Planet* has just published a gorgeous hard-cover guide on the topic, presenting the breadth of offerings around the world that include everything from Yoga retreats in India and meditation in Ibiza, to fitness festivals set in the English countryside, Italian creativity workshops, and health spas on our own doorstep here in Queensland.

Whether you're signing-up for a health-specific holiday or not, here's how to make the most of your travel this year – reduce worry, and enhance your personal experience:

### Actively engage with the locals

You don't need a gym on hand to be active. You can of course, travel to a destination specifically to participate in Yoga or fitness activity. But, you can also make the most of services like meetup.com to find running clubs, classes, cycling groups or hobbyists who enjoy things you do in the area you're planning to holiday.

Joining active meet-ups during your holiday has two advantages – you'll be energised physically and mentally, while meeting locals and learning about the destination.

### Walk it out

Walking tours are on offer in most destinations, highlighting famous, colourful and interesting landmarks and history. Most options are either free or low-cost, run by locals who know their backyard and are keen to share insider-secrets with you.

It's a healthy option for getting to know a place and enjoying incidental exercise. Get started by Googling 'walking tours' (or variations like 'quirky walking tours', 'Instagram walking tours' or 'insider secret walking tours') in your destination of choice.



# Well travelled



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### Unleash your inner creative

A popular trend in travel is 'creative tourism', which means more of us are using our breaks to engage in inspired activity, like writing a book, photography or blogging.

Creative-specific trips can be arranged too. That is, more travellers are choosing holiday destinations based on what is available to them there, in terms of art, cooking, writing, language and even fashion courses that are scheduled for the imaginative globe trekker.

### Turn off the tech

The ultimate healthy holiday option is to break-up with your tech. Set boundaries for when computers, phones and tablets should be put away. For example, within two hours of bedtime; or not switched on first thing in the morning for at least an hour.

If you find you're too tempted, search for destinations specifically promoting themselves as a 'no-phone zone'. That's now a thing, because so many of us have recognised despite the desire to do so, we have trouble detaching from our devices.

### Give to receive

There's no better way to feel better about yourself and the world, than by giving back. A friend of mine, Amy, truly inspired me by sharing her stories from Thailand when she chose to dedicate holiday time to volunteering at an animal welfare centre. Similarly, I have friends who have gone to Santorini not for the sunset, but to help in donkey sanctuaries; South Africa to take care of wildlife; and to the Caribbean, supporting sustainability projects targeting the redevelopment of industries shattered by natural disasters.

Your experience can be impulsive though, like at Whistler Village in Canada, where if you have a spare few hours you can offer to walk shelter dogs housed near the resort.

Voluntourism helps the world and feeds the soul. Do your research before you go though, to ensure your efforts are genuinely supporting the people or animals you intend to help.

There are opportunities to contribute, create and recalibrate everywhere. All you need to do is seek them. Take a break this year for your mind, body and spirit. It's all win-win and makes for a far more fulfilling story than any Facebook post possibly can.

