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Slow travel: The destinations you should visit to have a real holiday

Penny Watson



Tiger nest monastery, Bhutan. Photo: iStock

SHARE My first real moment of pure slow travel occurred in Bhutan while relaxing in a wooden hot tub awaiting a hot-stone massage. That day, I had hiked to Tiger's Nest Monastery, the fantastical Buddhist temple clinging to the edge of a mountain cliff overlooking the Paro Valley.



I was overwhelmed by the experience, a fusion of feelings that touched on cultural enlightenment and spiritual awakening and now – while sitting in warm water heated by hot rocks from a mountain stream – mental rejuvenation.

SLOW WAYS TO WELLNESS

While travel health and wellbeing have traditionally been confined to often-exclusive retreats, nowadays wellness experiences are a mainstay of most resort and hotel offerings. Guests can rise early for a poolside yoga class, choose from healthy options on menus and indulge in a holistic spa treatment. Along with the now-common yoga retreat, wellness adventures – trips specifically mapped out with wellness-focused itineraries – are travel's next big thing.

ARO HA, NEW ZEALAND

traveller.com.au/slow-travel-the-destinations-you-should-visit-to-have-a-real-holiday-h1js0v

Slow travel: The destinations you should visit to have a real holiday

In the rarefied air of New Zealand's Southern Alps, near Queenstown, Aro Ha is all about B.R.E.A.T.H: being, relating, eating, activity, toxicity, healing. At this intensive wellness retreat, these elements are addressed through a fusion of Zen-styled eco-accommodation, permaculture practices and a program that encourages spiritual rejuvenation. The six-day itinerary includes vegetarian cuisine, healing bodywork and daily mindfulness practice combined with hikes into the World Heritage-listed mountainous surrounds, vinyasa yoga sessions and time set aside for journal writing. The end result is a return to the day-to-day world with a still mind and an energised body. See aro-ha.com

EUPHORIA RETREAT, GREECE

Mount Taygetos, at 2407 metres, is the highest mountain in the Greek Peloponnese. Euphoria Retreat is built into its rocky mountainside. The four-storey wellness haven's beautiful rock walls and terracotta rooftops are camouflaged by native fir and pine trees. Euphoria is open for day visits, but the seven-day signature Emotional and Physical Transformation is the standout offering. Activities and workshops include wellness lectures, nutrition classes, meditation, yoga, qi gong and Pilates. There's a dreamy pool and a deck overlooking citrus groves, olive trees and the city of Sparta. Beyond it, is town of Mystras, a World Heritage site with Byzantine churches, palaces and fortresses. See euphoriaretreat.com