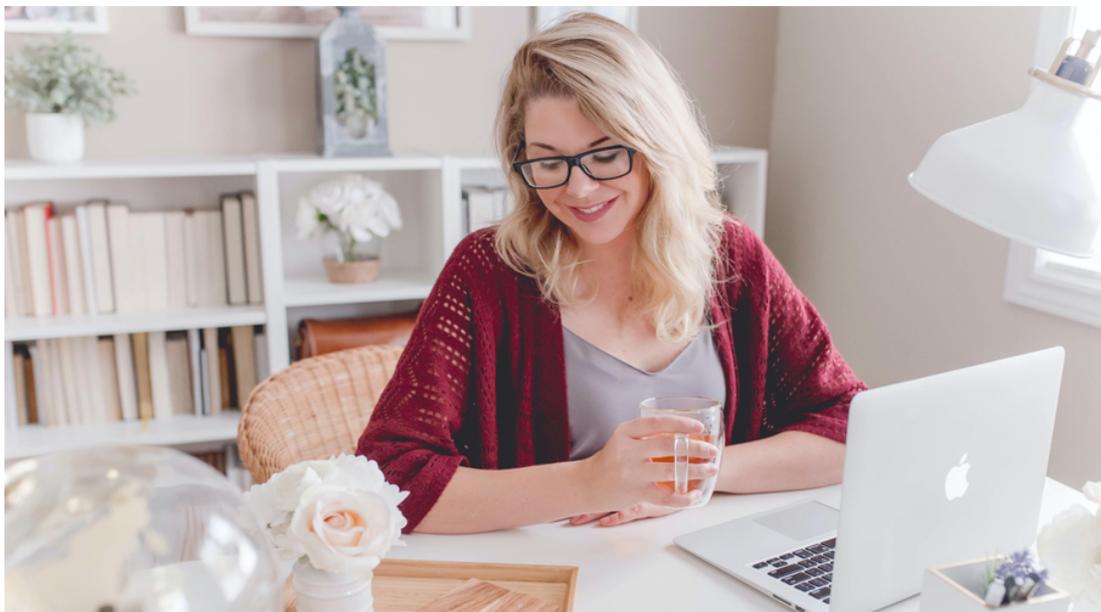


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'I have to be alone very often. I'd be quite happy if I spent from Saturday night until Monday morning alone in my apartment. That's how I refuel'

Audrey Hepburn



Queenly retreating at home

Can you Zoom to Zen?

Queen of Retreats writer Christine Fieldhouse embarks on an online retreat with Euphoria Retreat in Greece and explores how best to retreat at home.

Take a look at more ways to retreat at home or read tips on queenly retreating at home in our journal.

"I'm off to Greece!" I'd call to my husband and son, just five weeks into lockdown in the UK.

No one batted an eyelid. They knew my trip was purely in my head. My body was staying put in North Yorkshire.

With lockdowns still in place and travel a big no-no in many parts of the

world, it's easy to feel you've kissed goodbye to that retreat, where you were going to rest, rejuvenate and rediscover yourself.

Well, that may not be so. With many retreats now offering virtual sessions, usually via Zoom, we can try before we buy. By sampling a retreat's teachings and getting to know our guides, we can decide if it's worth stumping up for travel and a few days away.

My virtual retreat was a month in the Greek Peloponnese, an area I know and love, and about as close to my idea of bliss as you can get. Except I wasn't at the Euphoria Retreat, near Mystras, relaxing in the spa or overlooking the Greek mountains. I just thought I was.

My course was the retreat's signature programme - Emotional and Physical Transformation, which, based on ancient Greek and Chinese philosophy, looks at the five elements of Water, Wood, Fire, Earth and Metal.

Every week, our Zoom 45-minute webinars explored a different element and its properties, ending with a guided meditation. We did yoga postures and energy exercises to balance our elements, and Theta healing to instil new beliefs. On Fridays we took part in a group discussion about what we'd learnt. Some days asked for an hour and a half of our time, others just five minutes.

And for the most part it was an insightful experience. I would shut myself in my office, look deep into my computer screen and bask in the five elements, as I embraced what I learnt from the retreat's wonderful and warm founder Marina Efraimoglou and Euphoria's talented spiritual mentor Mary Vandorou.

I discovered a lot - I'm a deep-thinking Water type, who loves writing and peace and quiet, while the Wood part of me enjoys walking, running and the outdoors. As someone who pays attention to detail, and appreciates order and beauty, I also have a good smattering of Metal.

And therein lies the problem. At home, in my paper-strewn office, with my son home from university and studying remotely in the next room, I never felt I could completely escape, switch off and go deep into meditation or bare my soul in the group chats.

Next time I would do things differently. But for now, the experience gave me what I needed most - hope. It has planted the thought that one day when we return to normal, I'll go out to Greece and do the course in real life.

Meanwhile, here are some tips to Zoom your way to Zen, which I've put together with help from life coach [Becki Houlston](#) and founder of Pura Vida

Your Life [Rachel Wade](#).

Set your intention

Before you sign up for an online retreat, decide what it is you need. You might just need a rest, or you might want a diet and exercise overhaul. If you can't find exactly what you're looking for, you could sign up for a retreat and add some private, personal sessions, like three appointments with a life coach or an hour with a nutritionist.

Sort your surroundings

It's important to create the right space for your retreat. If there is chaos around you, your mind will be chaotic. You need somewhere in the house away from other people, somewhere that's clean and tidy. If you're upstairs, ask the rest of your family to stay downstairs for an hour or so, and vice versa, and lock your dog in the kitchen. Put down a yoga mat with a cushion and light a nice candle. All this will state: "This is a space and time for me."

Do a digital detox

If you're going to do a retreat, and cocoon yourself from the outside world, you won't be updating Instagram or Facebook, so warn your friends and family you're doing a digital detox. That way, no one will worry about you, and no one will be knocking on your door or bombarding you with messages to check you're okay.

Buy some treats

Order some luxury products that you've denied yourself, such as an expensive candle or a face mask, and get some self-improvement books to read on your retreat at home. Create yourself a goodie bag to make the retreat feel like a proper treat.

Take a breather

Don't just rush from one appointment to the next as if it's your work schedule. Instead of going from one task straight onto a Zoom call, go for a short walk, have a cup of tea or do a few deep breaths. This will disconnect you with what you've been doing, and prepare you for the next stage.

Create your menu

If you have a budget, consider ordering in some healthy meals, so you don't need to shop, cook or tidy and wash up. Or you might want to do a three-day juice and broth programme so order them in.

Be kind to yourself

If you choose an online retreat that isn't what you'd hoped it would be, don't be hard on yourself. Instead, look at what you got out of it, or what you discovered about yourself and move on.

To find out what Euphoria's Emotional and Physical Transformation retreat is like for real at its beautiful holistic spa retreat in Greece, read Caroline Sylger Jones' personal experience [here](#).

Photo by [Paige Cody](#) on [Unsplash](#)

Plan ahead

More about Euphoria Retreat in Greece

Euphoria Retreat opens again later this month. The state of the art holistic spa retreat is set within striking distance of the mysterious ancient UNESCO world heritage site of Mystras on the Peloponnese and offers an exceptionally beautiful spa and environment in which to experience wellbeing programmes that pivot on a combination of Chinese Taoist and Greek Hellenic philosophies. There's everything from destress, detox, fitness and weightloss programmes to those dedicated to yoga, self awareness or meaningful relationships. Plan ahead for a visit by reading our [full report](#) and checking out euphoriaretreat.com.

Other brilliant retreats in Greece

A curated collection of retreats reviewed by trusted writers, wellbeing buffs and you.

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