

Perched above the Paro Valley in the Himalayas, Taktsang Monastery embodies the mystery and majesty of the Kingdom of Bhutan.

# DEEPER Than Detox

Legacy Retreat offers guests a program with experts in the fields of experiential therapy and oriental medicine in a transcendent location. **Anne-Marie Cook** met the creators of this platform for emotional and spiritual development.

While taking a two-year sabbatical from banking careers in Singapore, Crystal Lim and Mark Leahy moved to a small farm on Victoria's Mornington Peninsula. When friends inevitably visited them from London, Hong Kong and Singapore, the pair recognised how many of them were feeling burnt out, unfulfilled and out of balance. Crystal had recently undertaken a personal development course called The Hoffman Process and Retreat in Australia with Volker Krohn and Jutka Freiman. She felt that her friends and many like them could benefit from the same program.

"Everyone seemed to be taking little yoga or detox retreats, but

returning home only to quickly become overwhelmed by work again and needing another break," says Crystal. "Beyond the detox-and-yoga offering, we felt retreats needed to enter a far deeper level of treatment, designed to leave participants with new perspective, awareness and general life skills."

She and Mark felt so passionate about this idea that, instead of returning to banking, they teamed up with experts in the fields of behavioural therapy and oriental medicine to pilot what has now become Legacy, a bi-annual pilgrimage to the mountains of Bhutan where they've taken more than 40 participants.

Beyond detox-and-yoga, we felt retreats needed to enter a far deeper level, to leave participants with new perspective, awareness and general life skills.



Uma by Como propertie also hold two commanding positions overlooking verdant Bhutanese scenery.



"I thought that it would be great if we could take the concept of a rejuvenating holiday and bring it to a deeper level by offering a retreat where you could be treated and nurtured on all levels – mind, emotions, spirit and body," she describes.

She brought Volker and Jutka on board to run group and individual therapy sessions. "It probably is unusual for what people consider to be a spa retreat to include psychotherapists," says Volker. "But it fits implicitly into the format of people who are looking to learn some essential life skills. When you leave the retreat and go back to work, you're more equipped to handle all the routine stresses of the world."

Crystal adds that though people perceived a stigma around the psychological and behavioural therapy style of courses like The Hoffman Process, it became acceptable for them to participate during a destination retreat. "So often it seems we don't feel that self-development is appropriate until we reach crises like addiction and burnout. But we've introduced these techniques to help guide our clients in getting perspective on their life. They can break down blockages, old habits and stagnancy and focus on the areas of life that are meaningful and according to their values."

Jutka was a client of acupuncturist Mark Phillips and recommended him to Crystal to be a part of the Legacy offering.



Mark Phillips leads morning Yi Jin Jing Qigong practice.



The Legacy Retreat team, from left: Mark Phillips, Jutka Freiman, Mark Leahy, Crystal Lim Leahy and Volker Krohn.





ABOVE: Accessing elements of nature is key to the Legacy Retreat experience.

RIGHT: The luxury of simplicity and escape offered at Uma by Como, Paro.



"I combine classical Oriental medicine techniques that reflect a natural way in life," says Mark. "A retreat like this gives me one-on-one time with participants with sessions every day if they wish. That can be enormously transformative."

Mark explains that though he's not worked in a format directly with a psychotherapy program before, it blended seamlessly. "Acupuncture is the observance and support of natural movements in life and a core way it can achieve that is to help overcome emotional and physical stagnancy and blockages. Jutka and Volker's approach to this may be more of a mental process, but the two complement each other wholly."

Added to the daily acupuncture and therapy sessions, guests can take in ayurvedic treatments and spa therapies of the Uma by Como calibre.

"We've run retreats in Bali and in Australia, but when we tried Bhutan we knew we'd found the right location," says Crystal.

### Legacy Differences

Some of the tools used in the program:

- The Enneagram System is principally a typology of nine interconnected personality types. Knowledge of the Enneagram helps to reveal survival structures, core motivations, attitudes and behaviours as well distinguishing how to become more connected to your essential being.
- Yi Jin Jing Qigong is a system of internal and external exercises with breathwork used to optimise physical, emotional, intellectual and spiritual health. As a moving meditation it strengthens and nourishes the entire body and influences the mind to be quiet, allowing our deeper consciousness to surface.
- At the end of the Legacy Retreat, monthly group call-ins help participants remain inspired and clear about life goals and values that they discovered while away. Some participants have continued working with Legacy on a one-on-one basis in person or via skype.

"Everything clicked—it's such a pure environment and it's away from everything we're accustomed to in the West.

"My family has connections with Como Hotels in Singapore, but we chose Como because its wellness philosophies align closely with ours. We wondered if by choosing such a remote location we'd limit the type of people able to participate, but that's been proven untrue. Mostly we have businessmen, bankers, lawyers, advertising executives from Singapore, Hong Kong and Australia—but there have also been yoga teachers, housewives and retirees. We've had guests in their early twenties through to mid-seventies, from all over the world," says Crystal. "They've all been attracted to practicing a holistic approach that targets mind, emotions, spiritual development and body healing, and few retreats venture into all these realms."

Even though he's run his own retreats in Australia and South-East Asia, Mark agrees that the location in Bhutan is profoundly different. "That location in Bhutan has an other-worldliness to it, a sense of the spiritual and the ritual. When we visit the monks in their monasteries there is an energetic resonance that's undeniable. I know that even the most sceptical of our guests has felt it and it has aided them to break down some of their defensive structures and patterns."

"We can end up very easily living a life that we feel others expect of us rather than the life we really want for ourselves, and when we live a life that is not in accordance with our values ultimately it is depleting to our passion and life force," says Crystal. "We can't change this unpredictable world, but we can change our responses to it."

"I believe that we each leave a personal legacy—what we wish our time on earth to mean. Our aim with the retreat is to help each of our guests define what that is and to start living it." 🍃

THELEGACYRETREAT.COM

THE LEGACY RETREAT HAS MADE A SHORT DOCUMENTARY ABOUT THE EXPERIENCE IN BHUTAN. YOU CAN VIEW IT ONLINE AT [SPAASIA.COM.AU/CURRENT-ISSUE](http://SPAASIA.COM.AU/CURRENT-ISSUE).

