

FINDING BALANCE

Wellness and wellbeing are two words that we bet you hear daily. Wellness means something different to everyone, but one thing is for certain, we all need to embrace and incorporate the practices into our lives. **VANESSA GAINFORD** talks to the brains behind Balance Holidays about their ethos and why a wellbeing retreat can have such an impact



From breath work to yoga, once you understand what enhances your life and what works for you, you ignite the passion and start the journey to a more balanced you. Wellness retreats are the perfect way to escape everyday life, reset your mind, body, and soul along with discovering what you want and need when it comes to wellness. However, the search for a wellness retreat can be as challenging as searching for yourself.

When Livia Manca encountered this challenge, it inspired her to pioneer Balance Holidays. An exclusive collection of locations, experts, and programs that curate authentic wellbeing travel experiences that guide guests whilst allowing them the freedom to reconnect with themselves and their potential.



When it comes to wellness retreats, it's Balance Holidays' expertise and multi-faceted experiences, alongside the purity of its natural settings that are committed to eco-sustainability, that differentiates the retreats from others. *House of Coco* had the pleasure of speaking to founder, Livia, and consciousness teacher, Lisa De Narvaez, to understand more about Balance Holidays and why we should all be booking their upcoming retreats.

When booking a wellness experience, it's wise to see if those behind the retreat line up with their wellness ethos. So, understanding the personal wellness journey of those involved is imperative.

For Livia... it began when I was very young. My mum took me to what were considered unconventional experts, in the eighties from acupuncturists to sound

bath practitioners, to even trying to, uh, cure my allergies to pass therapy. 2015 was when I realised the importance of mental wellness together with the physical one.

For Lisa... growing up in Colombia, I didn't have access to a lot of this sort of thing. I have always been curious about who we are as humans. I have over 20 years of experience in the awakening, recognition, and embodiment of our individuality. In 1991 I was invited to a monastery in Kathmandu for a meditation retreat and it was life-changing.

The ethos and philosophy of Balance Holidays is to reconnect, learn, restore and sustain, how does this transfer to your personal lives?

For Livia... I would say it's a lot of small



things in my everyday life. From the way I eat; local and as much as possible organic, to the practices that I implement. It's never extreme, it's always soft; my everyday life. Consciously, I try not to waste resources. I'd say 80% of what I wear is pre-owned. I surround myself with a community with like-minded people that support each other. I feel Balance Holidays reflects my life.

For Lisa... I think what wellness comes down to is really getting to know yourself. There are so many different paths but the one that is the most effective and is truly sustainable is when you're true to yourself. Whether that is the way you eat, the way you exercise or the way you meditate. I find that the Western mind struggles with going through traditional meditation practices.

Balance Holidays locations range from the UK to the Amalfi Coast, how important is the location to a retreat and how do you select specific destinations?

For Livia... it really depends on the benefits we want our guests to achieve and the team on the retreat. So for example, for the type of work that Lisa does, I thought that the property should enhance Lisa's work. We decide the time of the year and the property that would work well and the overall energy of the place.

For Lisa... a beautiful setting creates a safe space, and this works well for my soul sessions. The sessions are a hybrid of all the things I've studied. They're very intuitive and give people the opportunity to be seen in a holistic way.

Once a retreat is complete, do attendees take what they have learned and put this into practice in their lives and how does Balance Holidays encourage them to do so?

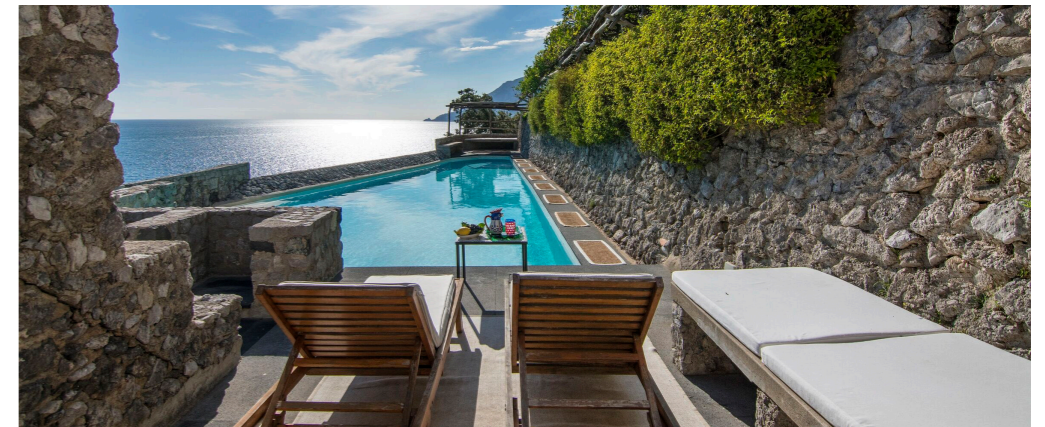
For Livia... all the experts we work with like Lisa, teach practices that can be taken home. We also offer a community that they continue to relate to as a mini community always forms from each retreat. As they have access to the safe space that was created on the retreat.



For Lisa... the work I facilitate is very multi-layered, so people can step out of their daily lives and drop into a sacred space. We reconnect them with their truth, their real joy, and a sense of freedom within. They leave having a deeper experience of themselves and want to continue evolving. The fastest access tool to be able to shift your state is breathwork, as you are physiologically working to regulate your nervous system. So even just taking three deep breaths is enough to clear focus.

Aligning with your true self can be a challenging journey, how do practitioners balance the state of attendees and ensure they leave feeling empowered and reset rather than lost?

For Lisa... the magic and mystery of this work is that it will never take a person further than where they are ready to go. There's a deep level of trust in knowing that whatever comes is because they are ready to have that insight or to move through that learning opportunity. The biggest gift I offer is that someone having a challenging time it's important to see



them as whole and that they identify as whole through the experience. Breakdowns often lead to breakthroughs.

Balance Holidays are reinventing wellness retreats, after the current retreats that are scheduled what do you think will be next and are there any spaces you will be tapping into to help people further.

For Livia... I'm always looking to create teams that help with the relevant challenges of modern life. We will be hosting the first women-only retreat. This will revolve

around menopause, how to manage it and how to prepare yourself for it. We will also be launching retreats in Central America and corporate retreats as the pandemic has impacted communities at work. There are a lot of projects and I'm excited for the future.

For Lisa... I'm delighted to collaborate with Balance Holidays. The opportunity to create a very unique, special, transformative, gentle-yet-potent experience for people to come and let go of everything in their daily lives is magical. ■