

# Condé Nast Traveller

in association with  
Healing  Holidays

THE SPA GUIDE 2017





# LET IT GO, LET IT GO

## THE INDIVIDUAL

A FIFTY-SOMETHING WOMAN WITH  
CONTINUAL BACK PAIN WHO  
STRUGGLES WITH GUILT AND ANXIETY

I took up yoga seriously in my thirties after a nagging backache had been plaguing me, and years of work stress and a sedentary life meant I couldn't touch my toes. Soon, I was hooked. Regular practice dealt with physical stiffness, and I also began to discern

pain coming from repetitive movements – such as carrying a handbag on one shoulder – and from a more subtle kind connected to places in my body where I was containing negative emotions and uneasiness. I put my intermittent back twinge down to desk-bound stiffness, but also knew it had to be linked to my held-in belly, taut from nervous tension and shallow breathing. I was always fretful, even as a child, and had come to accept that I was a naturally anxious person; so although there was nothing medically wrong with my lower back, an underlying strain continued to pluck away.

As I also found it increasingly hard to switch off, the hope was that a week at YogaRosa's *finca*, with its shady pines, pool and aromatic lavender, would help me keep a mental distance from urban life. After a warm welcome from owner Rosa Klein (glowing and serene from a morning class), I feasted on a breakfast of porridge with cinnamon and goji berries, scrambled eggs peppered with chopped chives from the kitchen garden, and smoky hot coffee. After I'd eaten, there was a rare chance to laze. My only appointments were the evening yoga and meditation class followed by dinner. Yet my mind whirled into guilt mode about what else I should or could be doing. The more my thoughts raced, the less I was able to relax and that niggling pain was there again. I drifted in and out of a hazy light sleep until it was time for yoga. I joined the other guests in a Bedouin tent with fluttering prayer flags as Rosa guided us through an hour and a half of pranayama breathing exercises. This led seamlessly into meditation accompanied by the pure sounds of a singing bowl. There were delicious moments when the constant whirr of thoughts in my mind dropped into complete stillness with the fading golden-pink glow of the Ibiza sunset. I learnt that Rosa travelled to India to recover from a serious car accident that had left her with brain and spinal injuries. Surgery fixed her body, but it was traditional yoga therapy, along with other meditative practices, that brought back her flexibility, energy and spirit. Heading for dinner later, my city walking pace had at least halved, and already I felt less tired and on edge than I had in a long time.

As I settled into a routine, it turned out the unravelling had just begun. On the third night, I was woken by a searing

## THE REMEDY

A WEEK OF PHYSICAL AND EMOTIONAL  
REALIGNMENT AT THE GO-SLOW  
YOGAROSA THERAPY RETREAT ON IBIZA

pain in my shoulder. By morning, my lower back had that familiar, sickening nerve sting. I stretched gingerly through the class, and noticed vividly how my mind was reacting. A certain kind of spinal twist has always awakened this sacral pain and I felt

irritated that I'd pushed too far, tearful that I was trapped in a self-inflicted cycle of strain. My stiffness got worse during the day and I had to lie down for the evening meditation.

Later, Rosa told me people often feel real discomfort with this yoga process three days in – it's a psychosomatic reaction. I had to go through it to release it. My lower-back soreness was intermittent and unrelated to injury, but it subsided with the meditation, surely a sign that it was in the mind as much as the body. At home, I'd avoid yoga positions that aggravated it. Now it dawned on me that I was resisting change on some level. In fact, some holistic therapies link tension in the right side of our bodies to an inability to move into the future, which resonated with me as I had been putting off making changes in my life for a while. It felt good to talk about it, yet the next day my lower back had practically seized up. Rosa, whose spine flexed and bent despite fused vertebrae post-surgery, advised me to not dodge any postures and to trust the slow rehabilitation of the morning class. And with her gentle encouragement, I was able to breathe into the agony in that nemesis twist, and release a rush of emotion as hot tears rolled down my cheeks – something I couldn't imagine ever allowing back home.

It was the breakthrough I was looking for. In that evening's meditation, I felt a wave of expansiveness come over my body. I spent the next day in silence, which was a great way to capitalise on the release. I was able to savour every mouthful of food, and allow myself to rest without guilt and just be. A rush of creative ideas flowed and I scribbled in my journal. I came home feeling like I had not only a new lower back, but also a massive spring in my step and the head space to move forwards. Rosa's authentic yogic teachings were truly therapeutic, her understanding of anatomy and the body/mind connection rare in a world of insta-yogis. It helped that the retreat had such a wonderfully individual ethos, from the one-on-one attention and the beautiful hand-painted black-and-pink mandalas on the walls to chef Philipp Gandler's epicurean food and the dogs, chickens and micro-pig Lola that roam the grounds. It was a deeply supportive place in which to explore how deeply yoga could help me acknowledge pain and anxiety in order to fully let go.

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**BOOK IT** HEALING HOLIDAYS (+44 20 7843 3592; [HEALINGHOLIDAYS.CO.UK/CONDENAST](http://HEALINGHOLIDAYS.CO.UK/CONDENAST)) OFFERS A SEVEN-NIGHT RETREAT AT YOGAROSA'S EL NIDO FINCA FROM £1,820 PER PERSON FULL BOARD, INCLUDING FLIGHTS, TRANSFERS, YOGA AND MEDITATION