

Have Mat, Will Travel

These unique wellness and yoga retreats will feed your body, mind and spirit.

BY CATHERINE DUNWOODY AND AMANDA BALTAZAR

THIS IS THE ULTIMATE mother-daughter or bachelorette getaway: a wilderness weekend with more creature comforts than you'd find at home. These are fitness retreats that are more gentle stretching than heavy sweating. Add gourmet health-food cuisine and spa treatments, and you'll be ready to pack your bags for a new generation of holistic yoga and wellness holiday packages. Here are a few happening this autumn.

ISLAND LAKE LODGE

Fernie, B.C.

PACKAGE Opt for two nights' accommodation, two gourmet dinners, two buffet breakfasts, a 60-minute spa treatment of your choice and two yoga classes, all part of the refreshing Mountain Yoga mini-break (\$546, based on double occupancy). Or for a complete restorative vacation, go for a three-day, three-night women's retreat (\$997, subject to availability), which includes meals, luxury log-cabin lodging, a spa treatment and guest speakers attuned to women's issues—we loved the sage advice of life coach Sue Bawden. Plan each day's activities from a menu that includes hiking with an expert eco-tour guide through a cedar-scented old-growth forest, yoga classes in a calming forest-view studio and workshops on loving communication.

LOCATION The drive from Fernie along a twisty country road up to the lodge is a bit challenging (drive during daylight hours), but the postcard-perfect lakeside location makes the white-knuckle drive worth it.

COOL PERK You tailor your package to be as outdoorsy and active, or as quiet and zen-trospective, as your heart desires.—*C.D.*



Island Lake Lodge makes the most of its mountain setting near Fernie, B.C., to host luxe mountain yoga, couples' wellness and spa getaway packages that include hiking, eco-tours and log-cabin lodgings.

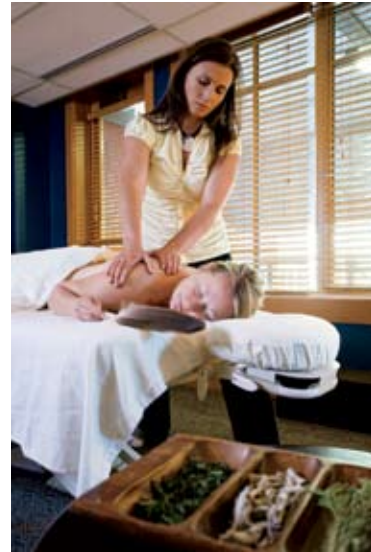
Available during summer season (June through September). Highway 3 just west of Fernie, B.C., 1-888-422-8754, islandlakeresorts.com

LOKA WELLNESS AND YOGA CENTRE
Whistler, B.C.

PACKAGE We recommend the four-hour Loka Ritual (\$400): a one-hour Jivamukti private yoga class and a traditional Abhyanga Ayurvedic massage, followed by a Shirodhara treatment, in which a stream of warm oil is poured on your forehead, melting away any traces of stress. Or, have the centre create an itinerary that involves a stay at partnering luxury boutique hotel Nita Lake Lodge, plus meditation classes, vegetarian meals, hiking and some time spent in the Serial Mud Room with organic mud harvested in B.C.

LOCATION At the base of Whistler Mountain and, like adjacent Nita Lake Lodge, convenient to the Whistler Mountaineer train station in Creekside (five kilometres down the highway from Whistler Village).

COOL PERK As one of only 10 Jivamukti yoga centres worldwide and the first on the West Coast, it lands high-quality guest speakers (like Jivamukti co-founder Sharon Gannon this past January).—C.D.



At Loka Wellness Spa in Whistler, B.C., various cultural traditions infuse the treatments.

and meditations with a singing bowl. Legend Excursions (legendexcursions.ca) partners with The Aerie to offer this and other Cowichan Valley tours.—C.D.

Offered year-round. 600 Ebedora Lane, Malahat, B.C., 250-743-7115, aerie.ca

Offered year-round. 2131 Lake Placid Rd., Whistler, 604-935-5652, lokawellnessandyoga.com

THE AERIE RESORT AND SPA
Malahat, B.C.

PACKAGE The Girlfriends' Yoga and Spa Package (\$195 per person, based on two participants) is a day trip of *om* and *ah*. Lit by delicately scented soy candles in a studio overlooking the Saanich Inlet, yoga guru Nicola Cusi teaches a 90-minute yoga and meditation class, followed by a healthy ladies-who-lunch midday meal. Cap off the afternoon with your choice of a one-hour facial or massage at one of the best spas on the island.

LOCATION The resort is situated near Malahat on Vancouver Island, which is a 35-minute drive from Victoria.

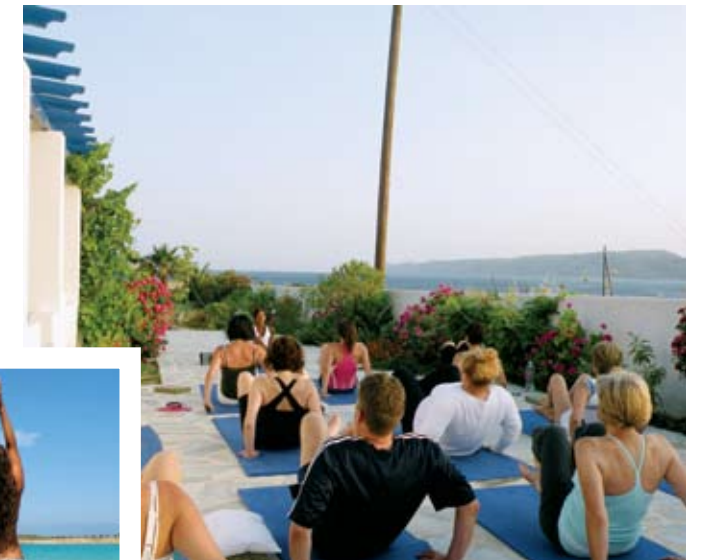
COOL PERK To make your day trip even more special, add a spiritual hike in a sacred First Nations rainforest, complete with sage smudging and meditations with a singing bowl. Legend Excursions (legendexcursions.ca) partners with The Aerie to offer this and other Cowichan Valley tours.—C.D.

SEMPERVIVA YOGA RETREATS
Galiano Island, B.C.

PACKAGE Offered in April and October, Semperviva Yoga Retreats on Galiano Island include yoga, hiking, meditation, vegetarian meals and kayaking, plus two nights at Bodega Resort (\$445 per person, based on triple occupancy in three-bedroom cabins).

Semperviva also offers six-night yoga retreats (in June and in September) on the island of Kythira, one of the most isolated and still-authentic islands in Greece, for \$1,995 per person. These retreats include sunrise meditation, outdoor yoga classes, and plenty of time to explore the island.

LOCATION Galiano Island is one of the prettiest of the Gulf Islands, and host Bodega Resort has 25 acres of stunning scenery. Don't expect luxury, but the cabins are cozy and comfortable, complete with wood stoves and outdoor decks where you'll witness some of the best sunsets on the West Coast. Three expert yoga instructors (drawn from Semperviva's Vancouver-based yoga studio chain) ensure that you are exposed to a variety of styles of practice, from hatha to kundalini to yin yoga.



Vancouver's Semperviva Yoga specializes in island retreats, on the Gulf Island of Galiano and Kythira, in Greece (above and left).



COOL PERK Galiano's resident monk leads the morning meditation classes, and bakes divine bread, too.—C.D.
Galiano Island, October 2-4 and April 24-26. Greece, August 29-September 4 and June 8-14, 2010; 877-730-5522, semperviva.com, yogaretreatgreece.com

HELI-YOGA SPIRITUAL RETREAT

Mount Cline, Alberta

PACKAGE The Breathe Deep Three-Day Hiking and Yoga Adventure includes three hikes, hatha yoga, meditation, tent camping, vegetarian meals and jaw-dropping helicopter flights in and out of the mountains (\$699 per person, based on groups of 4 to 10 people).

LOCATION Icefield Helicopter Tours has its heliport base at Cline River in the Rockies, on the David Thompson Highway, two hours from Banff. Helicopters fly up the Cline River valley and drop guests on the north and east alpine meadow slopes of Mt. Cline.



Heli-yoga (above) takes your poses to entirely new heights. Mountain Escape at Lake Louise Inn (right) is a women's retreat with a 30-year history.

COOL PERK Icefield Helicopter Tours partners with local yogi Martha McCallum (of Martha's Heli Hikes), an ACMG certified hiking guide, hatha yoga instructor, herbalist and wildlife biologist. We'd say you're in expert hands.—C.D.

Offered upon request for groups. 888-844-3514, icefieldheli.com; 403-609-0824, marthashelihikes.com



RIGHT: COURTESY LAKE LOUISE INN

MOUNTAIN ESCAPE AT LAKE LOUISE INN

Lake Louise, Alberta

PACKAGE The Women's Retreat, which is celebrating its 30th anniversary this year, includes two nights' accommodation, three meals per day, yoga instruction, guided mountain hikes and inspirational guest speakers (from \$520 per person). Naturalist Brian Keating, for instance, speaks on topics like the global environmental crisis and endangered species. Choose from a two- or five-day retreat package.

LOCATION On the shores of Lake Louise, in Banff National Park, the Inn has Rocky Mountain views that might just inspire some of your best fireside drumming.

COOL PERK This season marks the return of program director, founder and veteran fitness instructor Riki Jager, who describes the location as "some of the most spectacular mountain scenery in the world."—C.D.

September 18–20, 20–25, 25–27, September 27–October 2 and October 2–6. 403-522-3791, lakelouiseinn.com; 800-661-9237, mountainescape.ca

TOM BARWICK

CAVE B INN AT SAGECLIFFE

Quincy, Washington

PACKAGE This three-day Yoga Weekend (from \$625, based on double occupancy) offers a little something extra: food and wine, including tastings with Sagecliffe Winery's winemaker and a cooking class with chef Shauna Scriver. The



Cozy up in your own private casita at Cave B Inn at Sagecliffe near Quincy, Washington.

inn's 12 cavern-style rooms are built into the adjacent cliffs, with basalt hallways so that you feel as if you're burrowing right into the rocks. The other 15 rooms, or cliff houses, are real showstoppers: they are individual casitas overlooking the 900-foot drop down to the Columbia River. All of the Inn's rooms have private balconies, soaker tubs and luxe linens to induce the deepest of sleeps.

LOCATION Two-and-a-half-hour drive from the Seattle airport through the Cascades.

COOL PERK The spa offers vinotherapy and wine-inspired treatments like a chardonnay sugar scrub.—A.B.

October 23–25. 344 Silica Rd. NW, Quincy, Washington, 888-785-2283, sagecliffe.com

For yoga retreats offered by Canadian Rocky Mountain Resorts, visit crmr.com. w1