

# THE PEAK

30 YEARS OF LUXURY

SINGAPORE

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## MICHAEL TAY

ACES WATCH RETAIL WITH A HEAD FOR BUSINESS AND PASSION FOR ART

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THE NEW MANTRA FOR CEOS: MINDFULNESS

HOW TOP ENTREPRENEURS MAINTAIN CLARITY

A SELF-DISCOVERY RETREAT AT ASIA'S POSHEST RESORTS



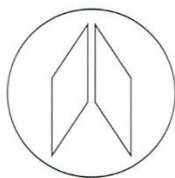


# EGO TRIP

Self-discovery and commitment to be a better person – and boss – are the key goals of an unusual East-meets-West retreat, with resort benefits on the side.

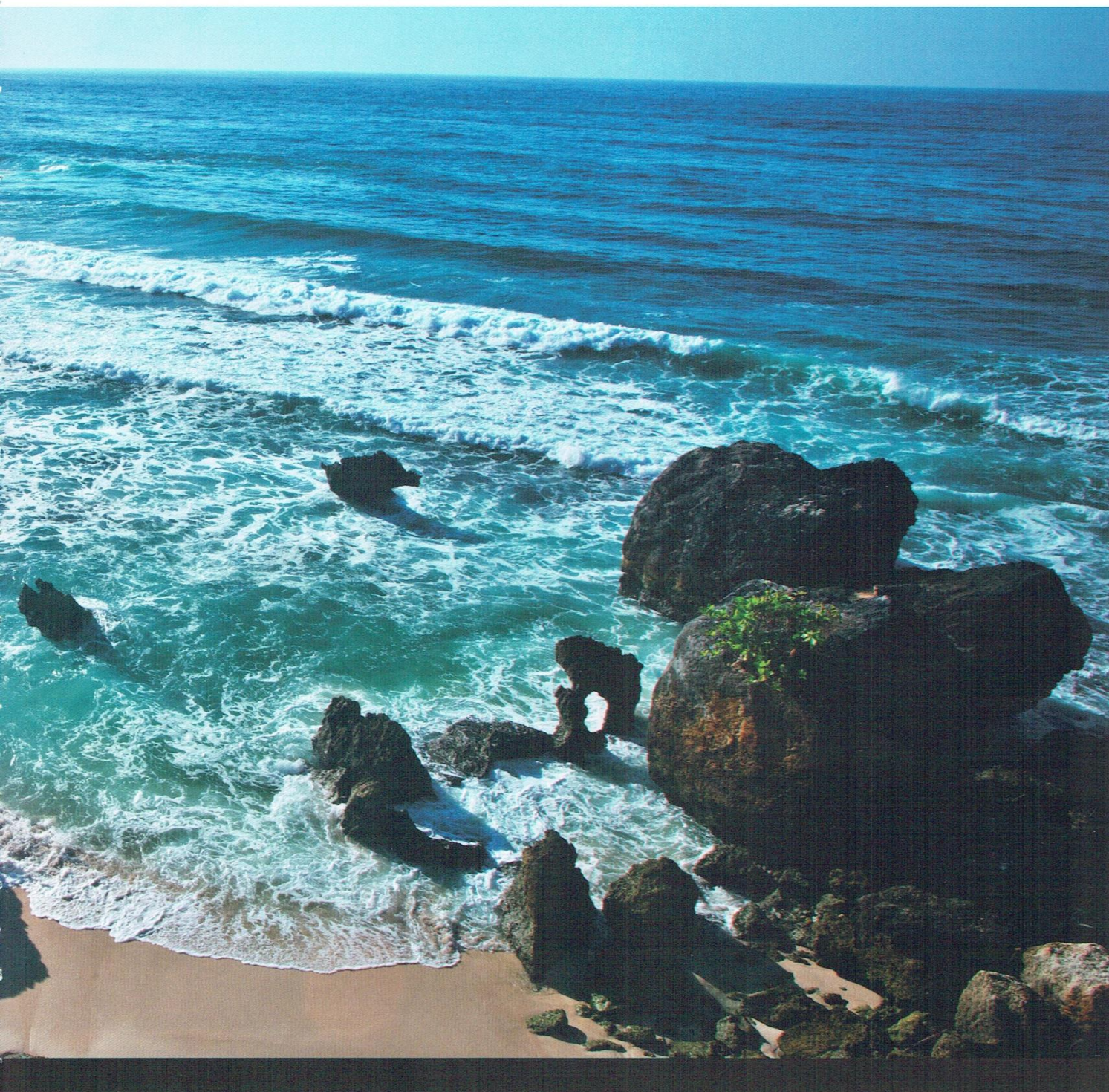
TEXT JOHN DE SOUZA





December 2014

# LIFESTYLE







So here we are, 10 strangers from different lands, sitting in a large lounge in a semi-circle facing psychotherapists Jutka Freiman and Volker Krohn, pouring our hearts out – some tearing up – about ourselves, our fears, our hopes...

And this is just the first session.

Welcome to the Legacy Retreat, a four-day soul-searching and self-discovery getaway that takes busy, high-flying executives on “a journey of mindfulness, emotional clarity, spiritual awareness and body healing”, with resort activities and spa pampering as downtime benefits.

Legacy is the brainchild of husband-and-wife duo Crystal – a Singaporean – and Mark Leahy, an Irishman, both former bankers. They came up with the idea after taking a two-year sabbatical to save their marriage and settled into the 4ha wine estate they’d bought in the Mornington Peninsula of Victoria, Australia. “We wanted to live life in a meaningful and intentional way and to share that with others,” Crystal says. “We wanted to create something that nurtured all aspects of the self – body, mind, emotion and spirit – to achieve a deeper level of well-being.”

In couple and personal counselling, they’d worked with the two psychotherapists, through whom they met Sydney-based acupuncturist and

qigong exponent Mark Phillips. So they roped in the three to create Legacy in mid-2012.

It’s a “holistic escape” that integrates therapy, coaching and Oriental practices to heal and nurture, and equips participants with the tools “to better manage stress, get perspective on their lives and embrace happiness and fulfilment”, Crystal adds. To date, there have been six retreats.

#### WILD LUXURY

Legacy’s appeal is that it is held in havens of luxury, tranquillity and “spiritual energy” around Asia, away from our 24/7 connected world, like Uma Paro in the Paro valley in Bhutan and the Nam Hai Resort on Hoi Ann Beach in Vietnam. The latest retreat, from late October to early last month, was set in Nihiwatu, a resort on Sumba, an Indonesian island that’s a 50-minute flight from Bali.

Indeed, “wildness” – relatively speaking – is part of Nihiwatu’s charm. Founded in 1998 by American surfer Claude Graves who was in search of the perfect wave, the resort stretches from the blue-green sea and a 2.5km-long beach of fine white sand up into hilly areas, where the huge guest villas with their own swimming pools are sited.

The resort is set in 26ha of a total of 230ha of tropical forest. Proceeds from the resort’s earnings







and donations contribute to the resort's Sumba Foundation, which spearheads initiatives like primary schools, a malaria clinic and water projects.

Nihiwatu is not so much built on, as it is integrated into, the landscape. The signature fine sand is everywhere, from paths with their raw rock paving stones to the main Ombak restaurant, half of whose flooring is sand. It doesn't take much persuading to shuck off your shoes or sandals and go about barefoot. The sun rises at about 6am and sunsets at about 6pm are gorgeous; the villa's queen-size beds surrounded by mosquito nets are a dream; and the 24-hour sound of the surf breaking over the offshore reef is a calming antidote to city noise.

Nihiwatu's youthful staff - more than 90 per cent Sumbanese - are super friendly, helpful and efficient, from your personal butler to the room-service staff to the groundsman.

#### COMMITMENT REQUIRED

We 10 "retreat-ists" come from Australia, Singapore and Indonesia. The farthest flung: an Irishman living in Finland. Some have been on past Legacy Retreats; a few on the intense Hoffman programme, conducted by Freiman and Krohn.

We include entrepreneurs and business head honchos, a travel writer, a resort-wear designer, a jewellery maker and a doctor from Perth. Our ages range from the early 30s to the mid-60s. The youngest to date is 19; the oldest, in the mid-70s.

From the start, we commit to a few key things: Be honest (as much as you can), keep things confidential, respect privacy and personal boundaries, avoid fault-finding or stereotyping, and recognise that becoming a better person requires commitment, effort and time beyond the retreat.

Our days go like this: Qi meditation with Phillips from 6.30am to 7am, followed by his hour-long qigong session meant to stimulate our qi (life force), leaving us sweaty yet calmly energised. Then, breakfast at Ombak. From 9.15am to about 1pm, it's group sessions with Freiman and Krohn.

The sessions revolve around the revelations of your behavioural traits according to the Enneagram system, which identifies nine types according to head, heart and gut.

#### TYPE-ING YOURSELF

"The Enneagram is a transformational system that looks at your personality and your temperament," Freiman explains. "At its basic level, it offers nine temperament styles that describe the way we experience the world, how we make sense of it and our emotional reactions to it."

She adds: "It's the most emotionally intelligent system because it doesn't give blanket statements about how to have a good life. It teaches us ways in

**01 ISLAND PALS**  
Sumba's friendly locals, especially the children, add to the island's charm. Among Nihiwatu's Sumba Foundation initiatives is a primary school.

**02 ACTIVE THERAPY**  
It's not all about soul-searching. A host of resort activities is also available.

**03 OUT AND ABOUT**  
"Retreat-ists" and Nihiwatu staff on an outing - a retreat perk.

**04 EAT, PLAY, LOVE**  
The main Ombak restaurant boasts fine white sand as flooring.



which each type can come to its own liberation.” It may all sound like psychobabble but, on a practical level, it makes sense.

Me, I’m a Type 1 – The Perfectionist. The two other Type 1s in the group are women. Our gifts: We have high standards, believe in justice, are honest, idealistic and dedicated. Our challenges: We procrastinate, are judgmental and self-critical, and more. Spot on! What we need to do is recognise our behaviours and tweak them according to our goals. The other types: the Helper, Performer, Creative, Observer, Questioner, Enthusiast, Protector and Harmoniser. Freiman and Krohn guide us in examining our behaviours and pinpointing our types, though some of us find we straddle types or are uncertain.

After lunch at the beachside cafe, we chill. We choose from spa treatments, activities like surfing, scuba diving, snorkelling, fishing or horse-riding, face-to-face talks on our progress (or lack of it) with Freiman or Krohn, or acupuncture with Phillips.

Over the four days, I opt for three sessions with Phillips. He is amazingly gentle and when he inserts needles, I don’t even feel an ant bite. He skewers

me to – among other things – detox, stimulate my circulation and minimise my daily gastric attacks. He warns me I may feel light-headed after, but I feel only aware, contented and alive.

### SETTING GOALS

On the last day, we are driven in an open-air juggernaut and air-conditioned SUVs to nearby Nihioaka beach. We slip-slide down an unpaved, gravelly road to a bamboo platform overlooking the beach, where we breakfast on fruit and open-fire-cooked scrambled eggs and bacon.

After a dip in the tidal pool, waves crashing beyond, we gather in a bamboo pavilion atop a hill for a final session with Freiman and Krohn to meditate and personally commit to goals to become better people. Among mine: Not to deny myself the full life I feel I deserve, and not to feel unworthy or guilty for wanting that fuller life.

For some of us, the Nihiwatu retreat has helped us kick-start that, be it shooting priceless photos of water buffaloes brought by local herders to bathe in the sea, getting a Padi diving certification or vowing to ditch self-defeating habits like over-drinking.

### REAL BENEFITS

All very nice. But what are the real-world Legacy Retreat benefits for the business mogul? Enneagram-wise, many, says Freiman. For one thing, “it would help them understand the gifts and challenges of their leadership style, like how to resolve conflicts, manage teams, assess risks and so on”. It would also help them understand their subordinates because they get to learn about all the types, so they can identify their strengths, challenges and how to communicate effectively with the different types, she adds.

As for qigong, it’s a “portable discipline” you can do anywhere, says Phillips. No need for a gym. “It’s a combination of movement, breath control and meditation, and can target stress, improve concentration and awareness, and impart clarity. It also increases energy rates and circulation.

“Acupuncture does the same thing. It can revive neurological connections by unblocking ‘dead zones’, and can impart relaxation, refreshment of the senses, acuity of mind and sensual perception. The result is, you perform better, have more energy and are clearer in your thinking.”

All told, the retreat’s bottom line is that we need to achieve a combination of elements for a better quality of life – not just for the body but also the mind and spirit, the essence of human life.

Me, I’ll buy that. I’ll buy it all. ☺

[www.thelegacyretreat.com](http://www.thelegacyretreat.com), [www.nihiwatu.com](http://www.nihiwatu.com)

### FIVE-STAR HAVEN

Legacy Retreat takes place at some of the poshest resorts in Asia. It was most recently held at Nihiwatu on the Indonesian island of Sumba, an hour’s flight from Bali.

