

retreats are a modern answer to modern living, says Stafford Whiteaker, author of *The Good Retreat Guide*. "They're a special time to give yourself some peace and calm."

Thousands of people are realising this. In 2007, the United Nations World Tourism Organisation identified "holistic tourism" as a market to watch: as stress levels increase and hectic lifestyles intensify, they reasoned that more people would be searching for holidays that would give them time to focus on their mind, body and wellbeing.

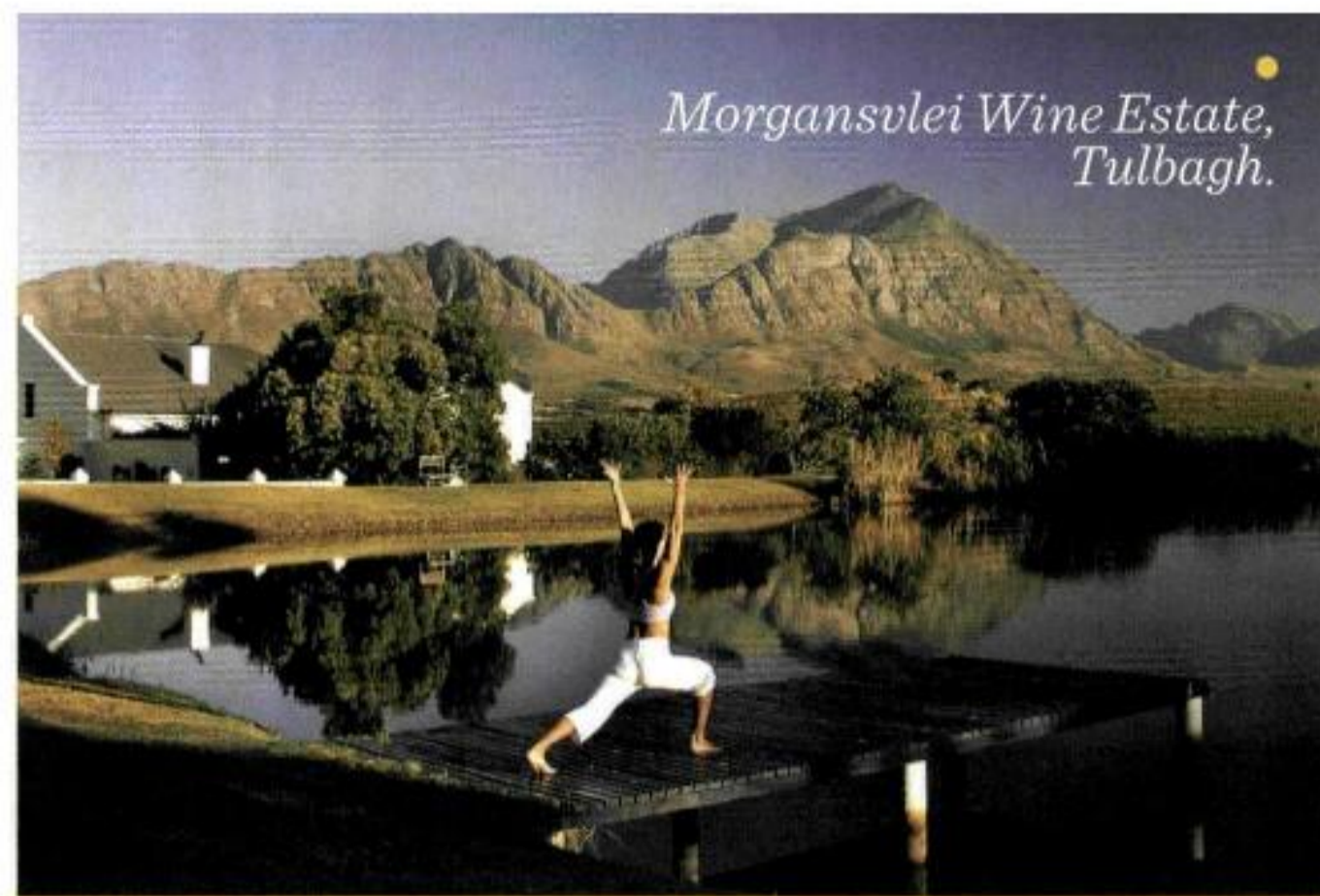
"People are realising that we're looking to the wrong things for happiness and

You don't have to be a seasoned yogi to reap the benefits of a weekend retreat

that true contentment lies in balance, in finding our connection to the earth, to ourselves and to each other," explains Cherryl Duncan, teacher and owner of Living Yoga in Joburg. "Instead of rushing off for a break in another big, bustling city where it's all about shopping, coffee and public transport, people are now opting for a week of rejuvenation, relaxation and true happiness."

We've just completed our second yoga class of the weekend. I'm feeling a little lighter and totally relaxed, while soaking up the morning sun from a deckchair outside my four-star tent. While waiting for a scheduled massage, I watch a bushbuck graze lazily around a tree stump; the pre-trip angst seems so far away.

"On a yoga retreat the focus is balance and real relaxation," says Duncan. "Practising a yogic lifestyle on holiday truly gives the mind, body and spirit a chance to rejuvenate, which is what holidays are meant to do." Observing my surroundings from that deckchair, I'm living proof of that – and it's only Saturday morning. ■



More Zen Zones

For nature lovers and foodies

Where: Thula Thula Private Game Reserve, 45 minutes from Richard's Bay, KwaZulu-Natal

It's for you if... you're longing for the peace and quiet of the bush. Between Friday afternoon and Sunday morning there are four yoga classes, a game drive, bush walk, massage and a French vegetarian cooking class. Accommodation is in a luxury tented camp (maybe you'll get to sleep in the same bed as Julio Iglesias did in 2008) on the banks of the Nseleni River. Tame bushbuck roam the camp, and elephant and other wildlife can often be seen drinking from the river.

Teacher: Megan Medina or Charlene Heyns

Style: Hatha

When: One weekend a month; see the website for dates

What it costs: R3 300 per person sharing, all-inclusive

More info at: www.thulathula.com

For wine lovers

Where: Morgansvlei Wine Estate, Tulbagh

It's for you if... you love the idea of welcoming in the New Year and preparing for 2011 with six days of Vinyasa classes, wine tasting and contemplation. Morgansvlei lies in the Tulbagh Valley in the Western Cape and is open during this time only to people on the retreat. There will be two yoga classes each day, and plenty of time for you to wander through the vineyards. Wine tastings and food pairings are also a part of the retreat.

Teacher: Clara Woodburn

Style: Vinyasa

When: 1 to 6 January 2011

What it costs: From R3 650 per person

More info at: www.yogawarrior.co.za

For bush babes

Where: Timbavati, near Hoedspruit

It's for you if... the promise of practising yoga in the middle of a Big Five reserve inspires you. The retreat will be held at a private game reserve in the heart of Timbavati, and combines Jivamukti yoga practice with meditation, music and game drives. Two teachers lead the retreat, which is open to all levels of experience. Living Yoga usually organises two retreats a year, to different destinations. See the website for more details.

Teachers: Cherryl Duncan and Sarah Bentz

Style: Jivamukti

When: 10 to 12 December

What it costs: From R4 125 per person

More info at: www.livingyoga.co.za

For couples

Where: Le Franschoek Hotel and Spa, Franschoek

It's for you if... you and your partner need some chill-out time together, or to reconnect. The classes are based on couples working with each other, using postures and breathing techniques to realign their energies. It's suitable for all levels of yoga experience. Be sure to take a romantic stroll through the hotel's property – it has beautiful views across vineyards to the Franschoek mountains. Shades of Yoga holds retreats around Southern Africa – check out the website for more options.

Teacher: Tracey Rohan-Irwin

Style: Hatha flow

When: One weekend a month; see website for dates

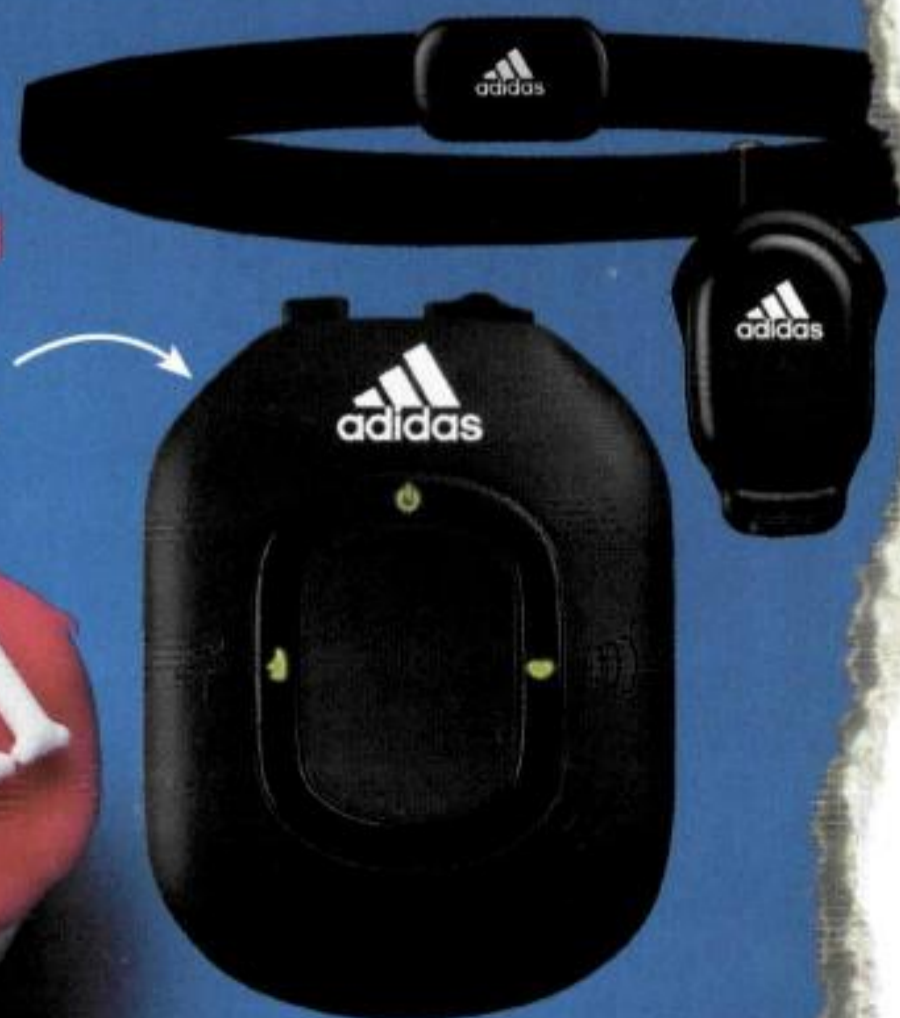
What it costs: R6 600 per couple

More info at: www.shadesofyoga.co.za

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