



Stroll on the beach in-between sessions.



Ocean-view villa.

STARTING OVER

Is a holiday where you **unpack your emotional baggage** along with your Missoni kaftans the solution to the mid-year crisis? Alison Tay finds out.



Beach-front villa.



Transformational life expert Rajesh Ramani.

As a style editor and red-carpet stylist based in London, any observer would think I was living the dream. In reality, I was exhausted from chasing the dream, running on adrenaline and refined sugar. If your life is shaped by the choices you make, it was time to question my decisions and give myself space to find the answers.

Soul-searching on a beach in Thailand had long been on my to-do list, and two people I know serendipitously revealed that Kamalaya Wellness Sanctuary, a holistic luxury spa resort in Koh Samui, was their dream destination for its Detox, Yoga, Ideal Weight, Optimal Fitness and Sleep Enhancement programmes — lasting from three to 14 nights — run by a team of specialists in their given fields of therapy.

Shifting pounds was less important than losing limitations, so as part of the “Gimme More” generation, Kamalaya’s seven-day Stress and Adrenal Burn-Out programme had my name on it.

As soon as I arrived at Kamalaya I knew this was my best decision ever.

HEALING HIDEAWAY

Hidden in a hillside on the coast of Koh Samui, Kamalaya is a peaceful, palm-fringed paradise. So when I checked into the Wellness Sanctuary the next day, I wasn’t expecting to be greeted with, “The nurse will see you now.” Luckily, after my weigh-in and body composition analysis, she swiftly diagnosed me with supermodel-slim statistics, and I gleefully sashayed to my consultation.

Then came the reality check: “This must be a mistake,” frowned naturopath Laurel Barron studying my body-mass ratio. “There’s no way you could have such a high percentage of fat?” Until I came clean about my bacon-and-eggs cholesterol-fest breakfast every morning. But thanks to Kamalaya’s organic detox menu of delicately flavoured cucumber *gazpacho*, pumpkin curry and baked snow fish, I wouldn’t be seeing any fried food again — or at least for the next week.

Kamalaya’s therapies are tailored to soothe stress and reverse the effects of burn-out, including *Shirodhara* where oil is poured over your third eye and

Reiki, Taoist abdominal massage *Chi Nei Tsang* and Traditional Chinese Medicine, practised by acupuncturist Sandi Hagel.

“Here’s a lesson in energy,” Hagel began while ping-pong away the tension from my tortured trapezius with a deftly placed pin-prick. “What you direct energy into gains momentum. You’ve been directing energy into your career, so you’re secure of your value in that area. When you start to direct energy into yourself and your relationships, you’ll see the changes you’ve dreamt of.”

With that thought in mind, I joined the full-moon meditation session that night on the beach, hosted by California-born, Bali-based energy healer Michele Cempaka. I’ve never meditated before, and I’m not entirely convinced I was meditating then. But while I may not have neared nirvana, what I was gradually learning at Kamalaya was that sitting on a moonlit shore in Koh Samui was close enough, especially since the usually busy me would’ve beaten myself up for doing, essentially, nothing. But the new me was cool about it.

4 WAYS TO DETOX YOUR LIFE NOW

1 SKYPE Michele Cempaka offers energy healing, hypnotherapy, transformational coaching and guided meditation. "Our point of view creates our reality, so if you think 'my life is chaotic' or 'I'm a failure at relationships' that's what you will create. I help clear those points of view that aren't making you happy." *www.spiritweaverjourneys.com*

2 READ "Following the simple meditation practices in *The Joy of Living: Unlocking The Secret and Science of Happiness* by Yongey Mingyur Rinpoche has greatly increased my levels of awareness and acceptance," says transformational life expert Rajesh Ramani.

3 EAT Naturopath Laurel Barron advises, "A blood sugar-stabilising diet can support your body during stressful situations and promote recovery from adrenal burn-out. Choose organic protein, limit red meat, shellfish and fish with elevated mercury levels (such as king mackerel, shark and swordfish) and steer clear of farm-raised fish. Enjoy your meal in relaxed surroundings and avoid rushing your food."

4 DELETE A digital detox is just as liberating. "All addictions including the socially acceptable ones, such as computers and work, are a distraction to avoid being with ourselves," explains Wayne Walker, an expert on releasing the past. While sticking to one hour of Wifi per week may be challenging, spending an evening without Instagramming every glass of champagne would be a good place to start.



You'll never fight for space in the spacious villas.



Dip into the lower pool on a scorching afternoon.

RELATIONSHIP REVELATIONS

Typically goal-driven, I turned up at my transformational-coaching session with a bullet-pointed list of what I haven't been achieving in my life — from my career crossroads to dating the wrong men.

We weren't far into my list before Cempaka observed, "What I'm getting is you're in a polarity consciousness with these two characters — which you've created, by the way." To test my "limiting beliefs", Cempaka performed a muscle-testing exercise where I had to stand up, raise my dominant hand and repeat a statement while resisting as she tried to push my arm down. Starting from "My name is Alison" to "I know it's safe to love and accept myself". If your subconscious believes it, you'll stay strong. If you're lying to yourself, you won't have the strength to resist the pressure. Try it!

Cempaka then created some clearing sentences to blast out the beliefs that are no longer serving me, such as, "Are you willing to uncreate the conflictual reality of the performer versus the part of you that's holding onto these feelings, when you could just be choosing the greatness of who you are?"

As it turns out, my work persona was affecting my love life in ways I never imagined, as I sat with transformational life expert Rajesh Ramani. The thing is, I only date the super-sexy and super-talented — which I call "having standards" — but was I mistaking their celebrated CVs for strength of character? Listening patiently to the roll call of rock stars, male models and assorted international jetsetters, Ramani confirmed, "Your relationships mirror you. You choose those men because that's how you see yourself, and that's the part of yourself you respect. You also

have the other part that wants to be loved that you're not focused on."

Rajesh probed, "Imagine you're sitting across from yourself on a date, how are you handling it?" In that moment, I saw a terrifying female equivalent of all those top-of-their-game, career-obsessed guys that never worked out for me. Which

means I'm not relationship material, either. His advice? "Don't let your past exploits be a projection of your future. Appreciate and respect your softer side that's seeking love and stability — so that part becomes equal, or it grows to such an extent it brings such people."

It had been a week of "Wow!" moments, and I cried when I left Kamalaya. The "honeymoon" I'd taken myself on was over, but the promises I made to love, honour and accept myself are mine to take with me on my journey back home. **ELLE**

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Lightfoot Travel is offering ELLE readers one of three packages — Intro to Detox, Relax & Renew or Yoga Synergy — at a special rate. From 39,000++ baht (\$1,600) for a three-night package or 57,000++ baht for a five-night package in a hillside room with a complimentary upgrade to the next available room category at time of booking, plus complimentary 60-minute Vital Essence Oil Massage. Quote the promo code **LF-ELLE-Kamalaya** when booking. *Valid till 15 December 2013, www.lightfoottravel.com, 6438-4091.*