

INTRODUCING
LUXURY
travel
CRUISE

OCEAN • RIVER • EXPEDITION

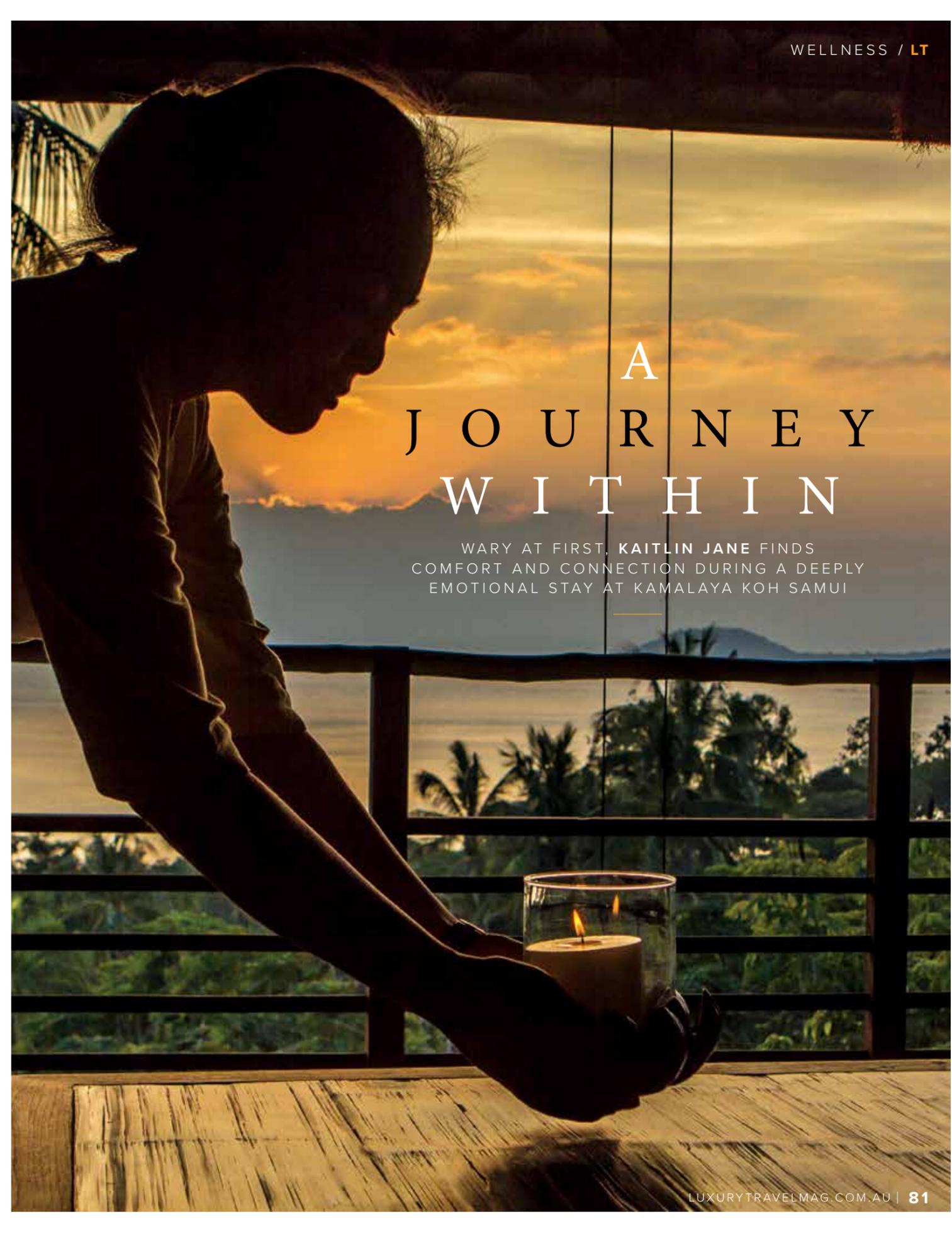
Your online port of call for the latest in luxury cruise ships, news and destinations

Discover more at
cruise.luxurytravelmag.com.au



A
JOURNEY
WITHIN

WARY AT FIRST, KAITLIN JANE FINDS COMFORT AND CONNECTION DURING A DEEPLY EMOTIONAL STAY AT KAMALAYA KOH SAMUI



THE MIND AVOIDS UNPLEASANT FEELINGS, BUT BURYING them doesn't make them go away. Instead they smoulder, making us anxious, depressed, and fearful, and it is exhausting to live this way. For growth and happiness, we need to bring attention to these emotions, feel them, and then let them go.

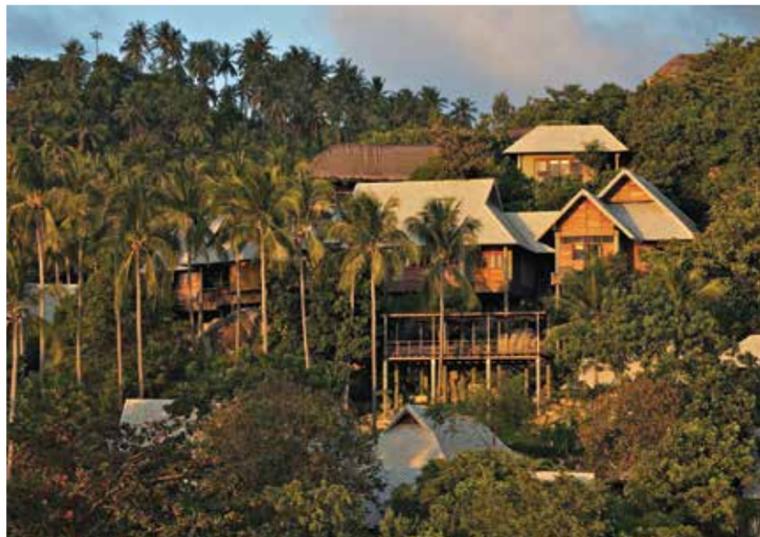
No, I am not a qualified psychologist. Nor am I a spiritual healer. But this, in a nutshell, is what I took away from my six-day retreat at Kamalaya Koh Samui.

Okay, there was a lot more to it, and the experience was confronting at times, but Kamalaya's *Finding Emotional Balance and Freedom* retreat gave me the most profound emotional shift I have ever experienced, and now I'm a bona fide convert.

Kamalaya is many things to many people. Some arrive at the wellness resort looking to get fit, some to improve their yoga practice, others wish to upgrade their diet, detox their body, or simply indulge in the spectacular spa treatments. And I know the feeling. This isn't my first visit to Kamalaya. I've experienced the variety on offer and loved every minute, but this visit was different. Instead of focusing on my physical health, I was taking a deep look at my emotional health. And I soon discovered, that's not always easy.

Kamalaya has won multiple awards and can be found at the top of numerous 'best of the best' lists. The food is outstanding, with an emphasis on healthy versions of Thai favourites, organic greens and raw dishes, but also plenty of seafood, poultry and lamb options. Meals are free from dairy, additives, refined sugar, and salt. If you get tired of pad Thai and curries, there are grilled specialties like kingfish and salmon, or you might like to try some ostrich loin. The menu is so comprehensive, I think you would need to stay at least a month to get through everything – and some people do.

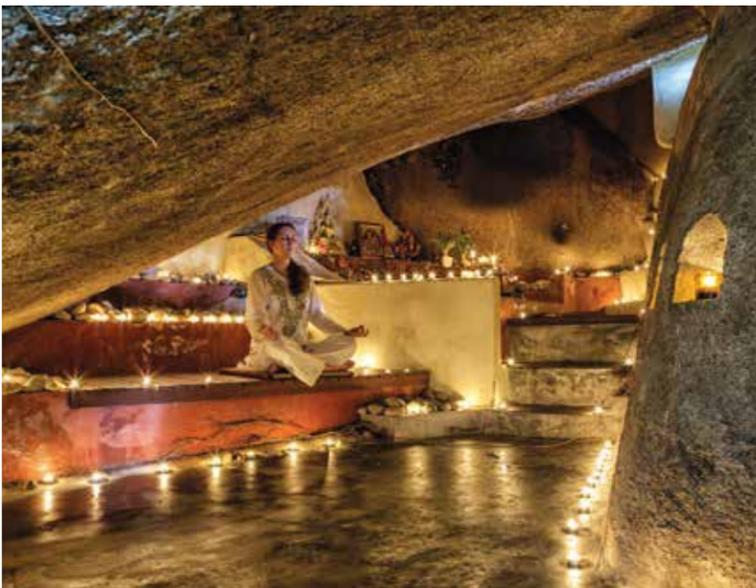
The resort's 76 rooms and villas are scattered on a hillside, hidden in jungle pockets of frangipani, bougainvillea and banana trees. Downhill there are a couple of beach villas just steps away from the sea, where you can kayak, paddleboard, or just relax with a book. Thanks to architect Robert Powell, the property



seamlessly incorporates flowing streams, giant boulders, and even trees that sprout out from roof tops.

This is the perfect place for reflection, and at its heart is Monk's Cave. Literally a former monk's cave, this centuries-old site originally confirmed to owners John and Karina Stewart that this was the property they had been searching for. John had been a monk in the Himalayas for more than 15 years and Karina, a master of traditional Chinese medicine. Through Kamalaya, they have combined their skills and, as John says, "have made contemporary what we have learned from ancient traditions." The couple has been sharing that knowledge since 2005.

Finding Emotional Balance and Freedom is a six-day program in an intimate group setting led by three of Kamalaya's life enhancement mentors. Smitha, Sujay and Rajesh have each spent at least a decade living a monastic lifestyle in India. They are incredibly easy to talk to and have a strong knowledge of Asian philosophy, with a focus on Buddhist teachings. >>



"The resort's 76 rooms and villas are scattered on a hillside, hidden in jungle pockets of frangipani, bougainvillea and banana trees...thanks to architect Robert Powell, the property seamlessly incorporates flowing streams, giant boulders, and even trees that sprout out from roof tops."



They are nurturing and have an uncanny ability to help you see things from a different perspective. Spending an hour with them is like having an awakening. You leave the conversation thinking, “Why haven’t I ever seen it that way before?”

Our group of seven was made up of men and women of different ages and backgrounds, but we had a common goal. We were all ready to let go of what was holding us back. Whether it was a relationship, the loss of a loved one, or even a traumatic event we had kept buried for too long, we were looking for the freedom and relief of moving on.

Through different techniques, we learned how to shed old thought patterns, let go of grudges, and use new coping mechanisms in order to be more flexible in response to life’s challenges.

It’s not uncommon to feel reluctant about sharing personal stories or thoughts with complete strangers. In fact, that’s exactly how I felt before I arrived on Kamalaya’s doorstep. But I was quickly comforted. You can share as much or as little as you like, but I soon felt at ease talking in front of my companions as there was never any judgement. The group sessions provide



a unique opportunity to get greater insight and gain another perspective. We were all in the same boat, and that enabled us to grow close across the week.

While most of the time was spent in a group setting – in a sprawling villa with a pool and outdoor yoga/meditation deck, no less – there were also two private sessions with our mentors, along with daily massages and treatments specifically chosen to support us. My favourite treatment was Chi Nei Tsang, an ancient Taoist abdominal massage that promotes digestion. A specially trained practitioner spends an hour gently massaging your abdomen in a clockwise direction, taking the time getting into each area. Best performed on an empty stomach, the massage was completely relaxing and did help things...well, errr, ‘move along’.

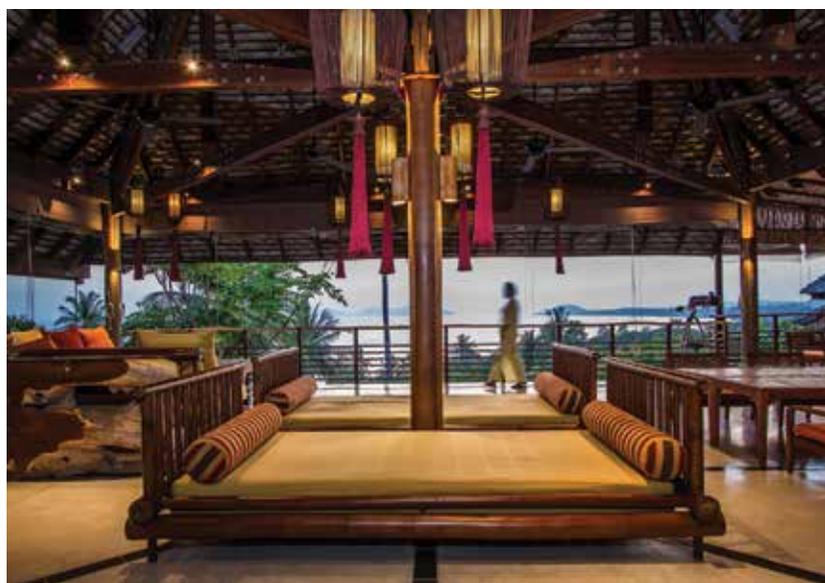
As with all Kamalaya programs, your stay starts with a personalised health analysis and consultation with the naturopath. Days are busy, with an hour each morning learning a new meditation or breathing technique, followed by breakfast. A two-hour group session follows and there is another group session in the afternoon. Meals and spa treatments are scattered in between.

While there wasn’t a lot of free time, I was still able to do a few yoga classes and enjoy the steam cavern and cold plunge every day.

Evening dinners at the communal table are full of laughter and interesting conversation as new friendships develop while discussing sore muscles and must-try treatments.

Guests come from all over the globe and about 40 per cent are repeat visitors. Despite the healthy atmosphere, you won’t be admonished for enjoying a glass of wine or a cold beer. Even coffee and desserts are allowed.

By the end of the week, we all agreed our transformations were much bigger than we had expected. Life is always changing, and it will be challenging at times, but if we can be flexible in the way we respond, it will be a much easier journey. ✨



The Details

Rates for the six-night *Finding Emotional Balance and Freedom* retreat start at 137,230 Thai Bhat (about A\$6070), inclusive of taxes. kamalaya.com