

Artful Living

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TRAVEL THAT CHANGES US

Five globetrotters share their life-shaping journeys.

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WHAT MAKES TRAVEL TRULY TRANSFORMATIVE? IT'S NOT ENOUGH TO pack a suitcase, fly halfway around the world and simply exist in a different space. Real change is more intangible, less choreographed and almost never predictable. Our most profound trips can happen by accident. Others are born of tragedy. And sometimes, we don't even realize the impact an escape has had until we return home. Here, five everyday people — a publicist, an entrepreneur, a sailor, a chef and a musician — take us through the journeys that altered their lives in unimaginable ways. Woven throughout their stories, you'll also find more than a dozen trip ideas to inspire your future travels, from a snowshoeing gastronomy tour of Japan to a musical cruise on the Danube. What revelations await you on your next sojourn? The only way to find out is to take that first step.

HEALING ON THE TRAILS COSTA RICA

Life-Changing

GREEK YOGA

The weeklong Nefeli Nine Retreat in Dikastika, Greece, has everything you need for a detox: morning hikes through the countryside, high-intensity afternoon workouts, daily yoga sessions, nutritious organic meals, soothing massages and plenty of poolside lounging. June, September, October and November 2022. nefelinine.com

KOREAN SPAS

When you're not tucking into healthy temple cuisine or roasting your jet-lagged bones in a *jjimjilbang* (bathhouse) in Seoul, Ker & Downey's eight-day Korean Wellness Retreat has you bouncing down to Jeju, a retreat island known for its mineral-rich waters. There, you'll hike the dormant Hallasan volcano, tour herbal farms and tea plantations, and indulge in a bit of therapeutic forest bathing. Year-round departures. kerdowney.com

CALIFORNIA ESCAPIISM

Opening in early 2022 in Rancho Mirage, California, the 230-acre Sensei Porcupine Creek is an ultra luxe wellness resort with a cutting-edge diagnostic center, world-class golf course and tennis facilities, yoga and fitness pavilions, and a picturesque spa garden for facials and bodywork. In other words: a true desert oasis to unwind and reset. Year-round bookings. sensei.com

Wellness Trips

KATHERINE HAN, 53
Travel Publicist
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I had a routine mammogram in June 2020 and got my diagnosis that July: cancer. I didn't know what to expect with the double mastectomy and reconstructive surgery. I'd been so healthy and active up to that point, hiking and trail running. And now my doctors were telling me I might not walk for awhile and I wouldn't be able to lift my arms above my shoulders. It was scary.

I expected the pain and the physical recovery. But the emotional side, the depression — that's something you can't prepare for. The way I got through it was to start walking. Literally, just push myself off the couch and go for a walk, even if it was only 10 minutes.

Each day though, I'd go for a longer and longer walk. In October, my brother and I went hiking at Garden of the Gods in Colorado Springs. The weather was beautiful, the leaves were changing. I was feeling better. But it wasn't until May 2021 — eight months after my surgery — that I went to Costa Rica.

Las Catalinas is a seaside resort town on the Guanacaste coast, with the Pacific Ocean on one side and tropical rainforest on the other. I had been there for work trips and knew the weather that time of the year was great for trail running, mountain biking and kayaking. I opted to stay for a month.

The first day there, I got up at 5:30 and hit the trails. Some days I'd go longer, others shorter or hillier, but every morning I'd go. I was testing myself in a way I hadn't since my surgery.

Las Catalinas has 26 miles of amazing trails. One minute you're running along the cliffside with a sheer drop straight into the ocean, then suddenly you're running through the jungle with howler monkeys, snakes and colorful birds. I usually listen to music



or a podcast when running at home, but down there, I just listened to nature.

After my run, I'd go to an outdoor gym and alternate between cardio and weight training. I don't really lift weights, but I was trying to build back my upper body strength. I paddleboarded, too — my first attempt since the mastectomy. At first I was like, No way can I do that. But a guide helped push me out and as soon as a wave would pass, I'd get on the board and go. My mindset went from zero to *You can do this*.

When I told a trainer that I'd recently had a double mastectomy, he said, "I never would have guessed." What a vote of confidence! People didn't even know I was sick. And that's the thing: Who you were before something like this is not who you are now, but that doesn't mean the person I am now can't be just as strong — or even stronger.

On my last day in Las Catalinas, I ran 13 miles. I'd never run that far in my life. I wanted to stop so many times, but I wouldn't let myself. I just kept going until I finished. It was the turning point in my recovery, when I realized my mind and body could do anything. I was in a fragile emotional state when I arrived in Costa Rica, but this trip showed me I don't have to be defined by my cancer. I'm not scared anymore.

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