

# PEACE



## AND THE *city*

The endeavour of finding a quiet retreat in the city is much less of a challenge than you would think. The overworked, extra-busy, super-dynamo seeker of wellness has as much of a chance these days to find peace, restoration and health. Whether you're in Manhattan, Johannesburg or Beaufort West, just opening your eyes and looking up from your iPhone is a start. Manhattan, although the smallest of the boroughs, is the most densely populated – think about it vertically. Not only do two million people live on the island, but a further estimated six million commute into the city daily. No wonder it has the highest noise-level readings, showing above 70 decibels throughout the city. With all the noise, pollution, chaos, and all the people (let's not even mention the electric energy New York is known for), it does seem that finding some quiet and tranquility could be tricky.

But the wellness trend that has spread across the world in a big way has swept through the capital of the world too. Health stores, ashrams, mediation centres, gyms, specialised gyms, Soul Cycles, tiny hidden places to exercise, yoga studios, pilates centres, health restaurants (all delicious, some vegan, others Ayurvedic or downright macrobiotic) and hundreds of juice cleanse bars have opened everywhere. Not to mention the spas, with their new focus on holistic wellness. I say new, but

it's back to prehistoric times really, when wellness infused every aspect of daily life. Maybe not exactly idyllic Adam and Eve, but at least the ancient Aztecs. Gone are the days of just popping over to your nearest spa for a quick massage or eating an apple to keep the doctor away – now it's a regimented series of measures.

It's no good just to do an isolated treatment, the Espa Life experts (London's most exclusive spa) say; it's all about the whole caboodle. From fitness and exercise to diet and nutrition, to treatments and healthcare. If Madonna can do it, well then I guess we can all follow suit. The spa is no longer just to relax; it's to change everything (well everything that needs changing) about you. It's the new buzzword and it's all about holistic health.

Walking down the avenue with my kombucha, I got to thinking about wellness. Echoing in my head was my grandmother's voice telling me never to smoke as it will age me faster than the sun, and my almost-too-good-looking yoga teacher who pushed me to do more sun salutations.

Then I overheard some "Sex in the City" girls on the subway saying that too much juicing destroys the good bacteria. And of course, my trusted Kindle, with its plethora of latest releases, reveals that nutrition promotes balanced eating above everything else. To me, it is that simple. Wellness is like dating: you can't just consider one aspect; it's the whole that counts. ■

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*An international travel writer offers a peek into the world he views through his camera lens*