



Find your Zen

A new wave of wellness festivals seeks to nourish both body and soul in exotic locations. So, which really are worth travelling for this year?

Words by Lisa Kjellsson
Illustrations by Miguel Montaner

13–16 February

Pachamama Spirit Festival, Thailand

Finding enlightenment in the Thai jungle

What Hippy vibes abound on Koh Phangan with the return of a four-day “collective prayer to open our spirits”. Meaning what, exactly? Ecstatic dance, cacao ceremonies, singing circles, yoga, meditation and tantra workshops – all designed to connect festival-goers with Mother Earth.

Tell me more Each day of Pachamama Spirit is themed around a different elemental force: earth, water, fire and wind.

Catch this US-based sacred chant artist Ajeet Kaur, British sound healer Nalini Blossom and soulful travelling music collective Kulam Project are among the headliners.

Oh, and don't forget Wellness doesn't necessarily mean turning in early – this festival's late-night bonfires are legendary.

– pachamamaspiritfestival.com



28 February – 1 March

MindBodySpirit, Brisbane, Australia

Oz's urban paean to New Age self-improvement

What Australia's largest (and, better yet, free) health, well-being and spirituality event roams to three major cities – first up is Brisbane.

Tell me more Get in the zone at the on-site Meditation Centre, before diving into the main stage's edifying events offering: sound healing, belly dance and chanting workshops. Over on the Soul Kitchen stage, food for thought comes courtesy of demos by health-conscious chefs and nutritionists.

Catch this Other 2020 editions include Sydney (12–15 March) and Melbourne (5–8 June).

Oh, and don't forget Therapy of the retail variety awaits with a marketplace of ethical and natural products, everything from cruelty-free cosmetics to crystals, upcycled fashion to Fair Trade foods. Time to fill your (vegan) boots.

– mbsfestival.com.au

29 March – 5 April

Bali Spirit Festival, Indonesia

Yogi paradise on Indonesia's enduring island idyll

What Hindu temples and shrines make a dreamy backdrop for world music, dance, martial arts, breathwork and personal development.

Tell me more Every type of yoga invented is on offer – yin, vinyasa flow, kundalini, hatha, jivamukti, ashtanga and even new fusion styles like, yes, heavy-metal yoga, laughter yoga and Afro flow.

Catch this Headliners this year include Balinese yin expert Eka Kailash, US bhakti yoga and kirtan teacher Govind Das and Aussie acrobatic yoga pro David Currie.

Oh, and don't forget Savour those views: surrounded by serene emerald paddy fields, it's easy to see why Ubud's known as Bali's spiritual capital.

– balispiritfestival.com



9–10 May

**WellFest,
Ireland***Skip the Guinness; Dublin hosts a wellness blockbuster*

What The grounds of the 17th-century Royal Hospital Kilmainham make a suitably grand setting for Europe's largest outdoor wellness fest.

Tell me more The sheer scale makes it unmissable – working out alongside thousands of others will give you a buzz that lasts for days. There are Pilates, spinning and TRX sessions for working up a sweat, and live cooking demonstrations to share healthy recipes.

Catch this It might be the biggest but WellFest is by no means the only event in wellness-obsessed Ireland: see also Soul Space at Claregalway Castle, Galway (usually September, *soul-space.ie*) and the seriously curative summer Earth Song camps in beautiful Glendree, County Clare (*earthsong.ie*).

Oh, and don't forget Check out the WellMind area where the best speakers in psychology and mindfulness share their wisdom.

–
wellfest.ie/festival



5–7 June

Om & Bass, Spain*Small-scale highs with a medieval backdrop*

What Not one for crowds? Try this boutique gathering, limited to just 100 participants, in Spain's Extremadura region.

Tell me more In addition to dance, chanting, tai chi, yoga, qi gong, meditation and sound bath sessions, you can try your hand at basketball and badminton, or simply chill by the pool.

Catch this Reggae DJs provide the campfire soundtrack after nightfall, but this low-key event's not about the big names – it's organised by yoga teachers from both the UK and host village Hervás.

Oh, and don't forget Take a hike: the pretty pine grove-covered landscape is well worth exploring on a trek to the local mountain springs and waterfalls, as is the delightful medieval village of Hervás.

–
omandbass.co.uk/omandbassfestivalspain2020 >

16–19 July

Wanderlust, California, USA

The Goliath of global wellness festivals returns to its roots

What Globe-hopping Wanderlust has brought the biggest names in yoga and mindfulness (plus top DJs, artists and chefs) to Chicago, London and Seoul – but Squaw Valley, CA, is its original location.

Tell me more Spread across six peaks in the Sierra Nevada mountains, Wanderlust's next iteration promises meditation, speakeasy-style talks and concerts under the stars, plus stand-up paddle board yoga on Lake Tahoe.

Catch this We love the nature yoga sessions up Shirley Canyon, and, of course, the reliably fun, hangover-free pool parties.

Oh, and don't forget The signature silent disco – who doesn't want a moonlit dance on a mountainside?

–
wanderlust.com



21–23 August

Soul Circus, UK

Say "om" in the Cotswold countryside

What If you're equal parts wellness warrior and party animal, pack your tent for west England's postcard-pretty village Elmore, where Soul Circus follows stretching in yoga teepees by day with dancing al fresco to EDM sets by night.

Tell me more Hot, dance, rocket, chakra flow, aerial – you name the yoga practice, they've got it here. Plus burlesque, sound healing and talks on self-love; not your typical weekend in quaint old Gloucestershire.

Catch this Major names include bass-heavy floor-movers Dutty Moonshine Big Band plus ska-reggae band Chainska and Brassika; add yoga stars Ana Forrest and Stewart Gilchrist for a motley – yet brilliant – crew.

Oh, and don't forget Check out the spa's pampering therapies to compliment your yoga practice.

–
soulcircus.yoga

26–27 September

***NY Fit Fest,
New York, USA***

The open-to-all ocean-front fitness weekender

What Wellness festivals aren't all about lithe yogis pulling impossible poses; Long Beach's family-friendly gathering welcomes all abilities to 50-plus fun-focused fitness classes taking place on the boardwalk or sand.

Tell me more Get into the zone with a sunrise meditation, then choose from CrossFit, booty bootcamp, kickboxing and Zumba before unwinding with a massage or beauty treatment.

Catch this Headliners are yet to be confirmed; still, this year there's overnight accommodation and morning rooftop yoga at the beachfront Allegria Hotel.

Oh, and don't forget Demos by surf pro Will Skudin will get you ready for catching some Atlantic waves.

—
nyfitfest.com



December

***Wonderfruit,
Thailand***

A sustainable pop-up city to beat the winter blues

What Semi-permanent bamboo-and-hemp pavilions transform Siam Country Club for this genre-

blending, carbon-neutral game-changer, dubbed the "Burning Man of the East".

Tell me more With street food by Michelin-starred Bangkok chefs and the see-it-to-believe-it 3D sound stage Polygon, no wonder the 20,000-strong crowd travels across the world to attend. Thai Fire Therapy and crystal gong baths lead the wellness menu, while seminar series Scratch Talks covers everything from urban farming and orangutan conservation.

Catch this The music roster is yet to drop but previous headliners have included Rudimental, De La Soul and José González.

Oh, and don't forget Watch sunset at the Solar Stage and marvel at how this ingenious wooden structure holds up hundreds of revellers without a single bolt or screw; it's travelled all the way from Burning Man, too.

—
wonderfruit.co

