

HELLO! WORLD
SPA SPECIAL

HEALING HOTELS

It's not only your body that will return rejuvenated from a trip to these far-flung luxury hideaways – spirit and soul will feel rested and renewed, too

Mexico's Chablé Yucatán, where each casita has its own private pool and terrace

If you haven't spotted "shaman" on a spa menu recently, you're going to the wrong places. According to a recent national census, shamanism is one of the fastest-growing belief systems in the UK, fuelled in part by the psilocybin trend (a naturally occurring psychedelic compound produced by some mushrooms), but also by rising disconnection and the desire for spiritual connection.

But far from a fleeting trend, shamanism has been around for thousands of years. Although it was originally a way for indigenous tribes to connect with the spirits of their ancestors through ceremonies involving trance-like rituals, modern-day shamanism is less about altered states of consciousness and more about inner healing: letting go of stale emotions and tapping into the healing forces of nature.

Said to help with issues from anxiety and grief to depression and stress, it's energy healing that works on a deep spiritual level.

Johnson Chong, who leads retreats worldwide, is part of a growing wave of modern shamans responding to the surge in interest.

"Most of the people who come to me are at a personal crossroads, searching for clarity. That clarity could be finding purpose or moving through grief, coping with addiction or healing from disease," he says.

"My main objective is to remind them of their inherent connection with nature and the universe."

Although shamanic practices vary by region, consistent features include chanting, drumming, exposure to extreme heat and the use of medicinal plants.

Intrigued? Here are four of the best places to give it a try...

The stunning pool area; and (below) the beautifully renovated 19th-century hacienda terrace

CHABLE YUCATAN, MEXICO

Shamanic healing is a central pillar of this heart-stoppingly beautiful renovated 19th-century hacienda in the Yucatán jungle. Humming with natural vibrations (and iguanas), 12 spa cabins overlook a sacred *cenote* believed by the Mayans to be a portal to the underworld.

Start gently by blending your own herbal compresses from seed pods grown on the estate, alongside the hotel's "grandmother healer" (keeper of ancestral wisdom), before graduating to a *temazcal* ceremony in an igloo-like steam house tucked among giant fern fronds.

Hosted by a local shaman, the ceremony involves drumming, chanting and dizzyingly high temperatures created by volcanic stones bathed in medicinal teas. Out of the darkness and frenzy comes cleansing on a deep spiritual level, often – be warned – accompanied by some kind of emotional outpouring.

And when you're ready, Isi'im restaurant calls, with its collection of tequila, which it calls "the world's largest". Rooms from £882, including breakfast. Visit chablehotels.com.

The luxurious rooms at Chablé Yucatán boast tantalising glimpses of the jungle, which surrounds this hidden gem of a hotel (right)

Rooms come with private decks – and the ocean views can also be enjoyed from one of the heated infinity spa pools overlooking the Pacific (right)



POST RANCH INN, CALIFORNIA

Thanks to its unique energy, Big Sur, famed for its plunging coastlines and circling condors, has long been a magnet for artists, writers and musicians (Hollywood stars Anne Hathaway and Natalie Portman both chose it for their nuptials).

With its cliff-hugging modern-luxe cabins and fine wines, the Post Ranch Inn might not shout shamanism – yet, proving itself to be a trailblazer in almost every way, it's had a shaman in residence since 2003.

Shaman Rob learned everything he knows from a group of indigenous practitioners living in the Peruvian Amazon, where he returns every year to strengthen his wisdom, ensuring his sessions are the real deal.

Designed to release unwanted energy, restore vitality and help reset body and mind to a natural state of wellbeing – or “healed state”, as Shaman Rob calls it – the options for your spiritual stay include fire ceremonies under a full moon, “power animal” drum ceremonies designed to connect you with your spirit animal and “herbal spiritual journeys” using native plants grown on the property.

Rooms from £1,450. Visit postranchinn.com.



TIERRA SANTA HEALING HOUSE, FAENA MIAMI

Believe it or not, Miami's sexiest South Beach hang-out is as famous for its shamanic-inspired treatments as its celebrity clientele. With nothing too extreme on the menu, this ocean-facing spa provides the perfect toe-dip into the art of healing – think hand-blended sacred oils, resins and poultices made from South American ingredients and therapists who've lived enough years to dispense valuable wisdom.

Here, it's all about good vibrations. Everything from the palo santo-scented air to the colourful, artsy decor is designed to vanquish physical and emotional impurities. **HELLO!** recommends the Sol en Espiral Ultimate Healing Ritual (100 minutes), combining pranic healing (which works on the principle that the body can heal itself), deep-tissue massage and shamanic chanting by female spiritual guide and wellness expert Agustina Caminos.

In true Miami style, make-up artist Daniela Gozlan, whose clients include actress Kate Bosworth and model Elle Macpherson, is on hand afterwards for a full glam-squad service. **Rooms from £1,233. Visit faena.com.**

Picturesque Miami Beach is a stunning backdrop to your escape to this healing hideaway (right)



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HELLO! WORLD SPA SPECIAL

CAP KAROSO, SUMBA, INDONESIA

Located on the unspoilt island of Sumba, just an hour's flight from tourist hotspot Bali, this wild-around-the-edges beach refuge – Sumba is also a surfer's paradise – is attracting the spa-curious with its week-long shamanic wellness retreats.

Harnessing knowledge from the indigenous Marapu belief system, the idea resulted from co-founder Eve Ivara's encounter, prompted by an injury, with a shaman from a nearby village. The meeting had a profound impact on her. In the process of healing a ligament tear in her ankle, her soul was, in her words, “in some way healed, too”.

What to expect? An unscripted mix of movement, meditation and medicinal plants, culminating with a meeting with a local shaman. To avoid overexposure for these gentle practitioners, only three sessions are carried out each month.

Shamanic wellness journeys start from £12,000 per couple, including seven nights full-board. Visit capkaroso.com.



The stunning surrounds at Cap Karoso include its pool; modern sustainable villas (left and above); and spectacular views of this unspoilt stretch of island coast (top)

