

Finding balance

A new wellness retreat in Lanzarote offers the perfect chance to slow down and escape everyday stress, finds **Katie McGonagle**

People are staring, and in any other circumstances I'd probably feel self-conscious. But right now, with the soothing tones of Kundalini yoga tutor Mariana guiding our sunrise meditation, it doesn't bother me.

We line up on yoga mats just a stone's throw from the golden-sand beach of Playa de los Charcos, where early-rising guests and local dog walkers pass to and fro, casting the occasional curious glance our way as they enjoy a morning stroll.

Mariana leads us through a number of deep-breathing exercises, swirling our arms through the air to a mesmerising drumbeat and repeating ancient mantras in unison until they take on a trance-like quality.

Then, we lie back and listen to the waves lapping rhythmically at the shore as palm fronds rustle gently overhead and a breeze rolls in across the Atlantic Ocean, bringing with it a sense of peace.

It might not be everyone's cup of tea, but this brief introduction was enough to convince even a complete Kundalini novice like me of its benefits. Whether it was the quiet setting, the feeling of connection to centuries of yogic tradition, or simply a chance to start the

day with an hour of total tranquillity, the experience is guaranteed to leave guests feeling grounded, calmer and more composed.

This early-morning session at the rebranded and revamped Paradisus Salinas Lanzarote offered a taste of a new series of wellness retreats being rolled out across Meliá properties in Europe and Mexico this year. With big names at the helm, including Ayurvedic expert Deepak Chopra and Spanish yoga studio Sadhana Works founder Mariana Salinas, the retreats promise to be as much about motivation as meditation. I headed to the shores of Lanzarote's Costa Teguise to find out what clients in search of a wellness escape can expect.

The 282-room adult-only resort reopened last year under luxury all-inclusive brand Paradisus by Meliá, becoming its second property in Europe (after Gran Canaria) and following the model of sister resorts in Mexico and the Dominican Republic. The revamp added an exclusive area called The Reserve, which features a separate pool, restaurant and bar, a series of private beachfront villas, plus a range of 'destination inclusive' experiences around the island visiting local landmarks, wineries and art studios. ➤

Pool designed by artist Manrique, Paradisus Salinas Lanzarote

DESTINATIONS

WELLNESS HOLIDAYS | LANZAROTE



WELLNESS WORLDWIDE

Eight wellness retreats are scheduled at Meliá properties in 2024. Focusing on 'inner peace', 'soul of leadership' and 'radical love', each will feature morning yoga, meditation, conscious-eating breakfasts, sound baths and daily teaching sessions. They will take place at Meliá resorts in Madrid (February 15-18), Milan (April 11-14), London (May 23-26), Berlin (June 13-16), Los Cabos (July 25-29), New York (September 19-22), Lanzarote (November 7-10) and Barcelona (December 5-8).

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: Yoga teacher Mariana Salinas; ocean views from The Reserve Penthouse Suite; the César Manrique-designed hotel interior **PICTURE:** Olga Poppius

STYLE ICON

However, the resort's roots actually go back much further, to Lanzarote's origins as a holiday destination. Built in 1977 by renowned Spanish architect Fernando Higueras and featuring artworks, gardens and a pool designed by influential Lanzarote artist César Manrique, the hotel is a local design icon and is listed among the island's most important artistic and cultural heritage sites.

The interior is as creative as its modular bright-white exterior, with five floors arranged around a jungle-like array of palm trees, ferns and succulents set between gurgling waterfalls and black volcanic soil.

Manrique's influence is woven into the hotel's fabric, from an impressive mural that dominates the Ginger Lobby Bar to photos of the artist and other influential figures in their 1970s and 1980s heydays on the walls. There are further nods to the island's architectural traditions in restaurant La Graciosa, designed in the classic blue-and-white style of village houses and serving up dishes that celebrate local Canarian cuisine.

SLOW TRAVEL

This is a peaceful location, not only for morning yoga in the outdoor fitness area, but also for the meditation

and teaching sessions that form the cornerstones of the new wellness retreats. During a 'conscious eating' breakfast, meditation expert Gabriella Wright – the co-founder of mental health and suicide prevention initiative Never Alone – prompted us to slow down and truly take in each moment of the experience, from the views of our beachfront surroundings to each bite of food on the plate in front of us. That might sound like a simple thing to do, but it was truly effective in quietening our minds from the rapid-fire thoughts and always-on lifestyle that many of us now have.

Although a short wellness escape might not promise the answer to all of life's problems, it's a welcome reminder that taking time to disconnect and destress offers a much-needed antidote to our modern lives – and that feeling lasted long after leaving the shores of Lanzarote behind. **TW**

BOOK IT

A three-night retreat at **Paradisus Salinas Lanzarote**, led by Sadhana Works' Mariana Salinas and The Chopra Foundation chief executive Poonacha Machaiah, starts from €900 per person plus accommodation, which costs £630.50 per person based on two sharing a Premium Room with Garden View on an all-inclusive basis from November 7-10. melia.com



LANZAROTE LANDMARKS

El Grifo winery

Lanzarote's oldest winery dates from 1775. The island cultivates vines by digging hollows in the volcanic soil and building tiny crescent-shaped walls around each vine to protect them from the wind, producing signature whites including the endemic malvasia volcanica grape.



Los Jameos del Agua

Inside a lava-carved tunnel, this site is part natural landmark, part cultural highlight. Steps descend to a lake filled with tiny albino crabs, where a light-filled cave opening makes the water sparkle bright blue. The path leads out to a quirky Manrique-designed swimming pool and a huge auditorium, where concerts make the most of the incredible acoustics.

César Manrique Foundation

The artist's former home – from 1968 to 1988 – is a tribute to his radical vision. On a site formed by 18th-century volcanic eruptions, he took lava 'bubbles' and transformed them into a creative haven that now displays artworks, sculptures, photos and more.