

Be wild at HEART

Journeys of
DISCOVERY



Love animals? There are now lots of breaks where you can connect with the creature kingdom and reap the spiritual rewards

Animals live in the moment and as nature intended, and part of the reason we are attracted to them is because there's a bit of us that would love to live that way too.

Life is complicated and full of responsibilities, tricky situations and tough emotions like guilt, disappointment, jealousy, anger...

A connection with animals takes us back to our true self, simple beings connected to planet earth.

As well as being exceptional companions and loyal friends, animals also have the ability to help us heal and rediscover our inner selves; many people allow themselves to open up emotionally to an animal, where they may not for another person. Perhaps this is because we know that animals do not judge us.

Not only that, animals have the ability to 'read' us and connect with us. Horses, in particular, have a highly developed ability to respond to our energies and emotions.

While we often cannot explain this incredible

equine perception, just being in the company of horses can help us feel happier and even more grounded.

Intuitive healer Sarah Jones believes that interacting with animals can increase levels of the 'happy hormone' oxytocin.

'Oxytocin has some powerful effects on us, for instance, helping us be in a state of mindfulness during which we physically heal and even regenerate new cells.'

There are many retreats and workshops in the UK and overseas which give you the opportunity to connect with animals in beautiful, peaceful locations, and get those oxytocin levels flowing.

No matter what your budget, whether you want to experience a life-changing spiritual swim with dolphins in the Bahamas, immerse yourself in nature in the Amazon or simply strengthen the bond you have with your own beloved pooch in the Welsh countryside, we've put together a few ideas for where you can find some soul-healing creature comfort. ➤

Bond with birds in the Peruvian rainforest

It's not just furry beasts that encourage the feel-good factor, our feathered friends do too. At the Strip Back and Rebuild wellness retreat in the rainforest of Peru, you can enjoy the company of more than 800 exotic birds including hummingbirds. This retreat is all about stripping back the material baggage and stresses of life, leaving you free to rebuild your appreciation for the natural world. Stay at four different locations, including a tree house in the rainforest and the Inkaterra Machu Picchu Pueblo Hotel, set in a native orchid garden. Prices for the seven-night full-board retreat including accommodation start at £3,927, excluding flights. Visit inkaterra.com/en

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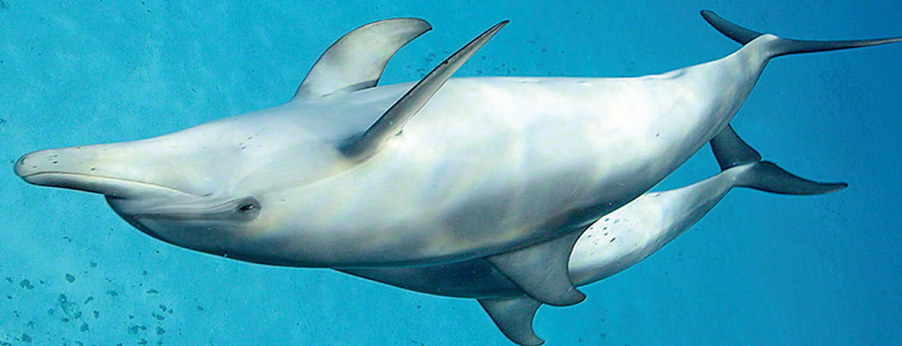


Make a canine connection in Wales

The Spiritual Dog Trainer retreats in the beautiful countryside of south west Wales will help you strengthen your loving bond with your dog. Take part in a Reach Your Pawtential seminar, gain guidance on your dog's diet and nutrition, enjoy dog walks through the countryside and experience a guided meditation with your pup. Your canine companion will also get to enjoy a relaxing treatment. The four-night retreat, full board, for you and your dog (with your pooch sharing your room) costs £595. Visit thespiritualdogtrainer.com/retreats

Swim with wild dolphins in the Bahamas

The healing benefits of spending time with these sensitive and friendly marine mammals have long been lauded, including helping us humans experience a greater sense of physical and emotional wellbeing and even combating depression. The beautiful island of Bimini in the Bahamas is home to WildQuest, a retreat centre dedicated to the magical human-dolphin connection in a natural environment. Week-long breaks include boat trips on DolphinQuest, a 14ft sailing catamaran, which sails guests out into the Caribbean waters to swim with up to 25 wild dolphins at a time. A six-night retreat costs from £1,200 per person (April - November 2017), including five boat trips, meals and group activities such as snorkelling, yoga and meditation. Visit nealsyardholidays.com

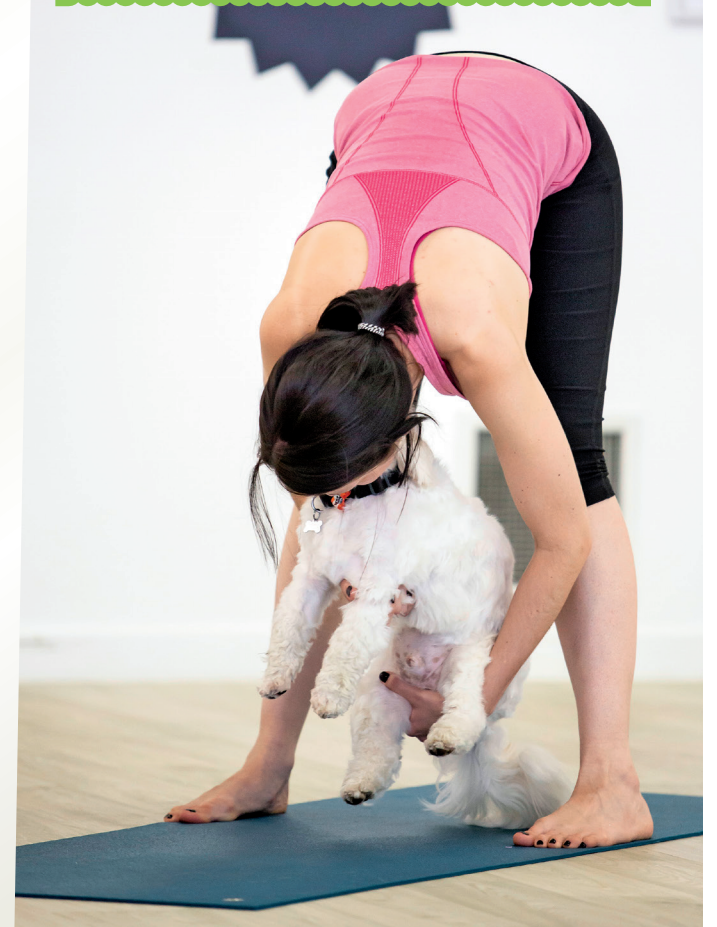


Take a leisurely walk with humming alpacas in Leicestershire

If you don't have much time on your hands but fancy a countryside day trip fuelled with healing animal energy – head to Charnwood Forest Alpacas in Leicestershire. At this working farm situated in an ancient forest, you can enjoy a day getting to know these gentle creatures and accompanying them on a walk. Alpacas are known to peacefully hum, making them the perfect beasts to be around if you're feeling low. In fact, some cancer patients have reported feeling uplifted after spending time in the company of these woolly wonders. The workshop costs from £85, which includes a two-course lunch. Visit notonthehighstreet.com

Do downward dog in London

Love yoga? Love your dog? Combine your two passions, with a Doga workshop. Wondering how on earth you can do your asanas with your pet in tow? Well, if you've got a little dog, the instructor may place your pet on you as you hold a position, to act as a weight. Got a big dog? You might stretch over him or her, to extend a pose. Or you can even incorporate a dog massage into one of your poses. Look at doga as a really relaxed bonding and petting session with your canine companion. Learn how to master this yoga discipline at Mahny Djahanguiri's one-day yoga workshop in London, for £220. Visit dogamahny.co.uk or huzurvadisi.com



Learn creature comfort with healing horses in Surrey

Want to learn how to connect with the animals in your life and give them healing? If the answer is yes, then head to a Mindfulness With Animals retreat in Surrey. You'll learn mindfulness techniques, while working with horses, which will not only leave you feeling rejuvenated and empowered, but teach you skills you can take home and use on your own pets. A two-day residential retreat costs from £280pp, including lunch, and one night's accommodation in a sumptuous Mongolian Yurt. Visit jacquihowe.com

