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5 Places Guaranteed to Restore Your Soul

From a bungalow in Thailand to a spa in the Ritz-Carlton, expert globetrotter Barbara Weibel shares the top destinations to revitalize the body and mind.

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After years of pursuing successful careers, which paid the bills but brought no joy, I was consumed with a spiritual emptiness that made me question the purpose of life. In 2007, following a long recovery from a stress-related illness, I fled corporate life. I was determined to pursue my true passions of travel, photography and writing. I had always traveled – spending a month overseas each year helped me regain my sanity after a year of working 80 hours per week – but this time was different. This would be permanent "vacation." I packed a 22-inch rolling case, crammed my valuable items into a backpack, closed up my house and traveled around the world solo for six months, chronicling the journey on my blog, holeinthedonut.com. Before long, I was hooked; travel had become a way of life. Still on the road much of each year, I search for *undiscovered gems* – those special places that magically push your reset button. Whether you yearn for the ultimate in pampering at one of the most luxurious resort spas in the country or hanker for a remote getaway in an exotic paradise, the following five places are guaranteed to restore your soul.



Editor's Note: In 2007, author Barbara Ann Weibel left corporate life to backpack around the world for six months and pursue a career in travel writing. Since, she hasn't been back to the nine-to-five world. Wherever she goes, she seeks out yoga retreats, workshops and classes. Read about her world travels at holeinthedonut.com.

Read more about: **Adventure, Barbara Weibel, Travel**



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1. Ha Roi Rai Floating Bungalows at the Khlong Saeng Wildlife Sanctuary, Southern Thailand
Wake up before sunrise in a bungalow floating on a lake. This remote wildlife sanctuary on Thailand's southern peninsula is home to one of the world's most unique Yoga venues: Ha Roi Rai Floating Bungalows. After an early-morning practice, the rest of the day is free to explore. Grab a kayak and

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Another view of the Khlong Saeng Wildlife
Sanctuary in Southern Thailand

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Another view of the Khlong Saeng Wildlife Sanctuary in Southern Thailand

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2. Byron Bay, New South Wales, Australia

Byron Bay has an abundance of beautiful scenery but its history as a surfer enclave is what qualifies it as a soul-restoring destination. In the 1960s, word got out that Byron Bay had perfectly formed, glassy waves, so surfers descended upon the town, bringing with them an alternative lifestyle. The hippies are mostly gone now (or grown up), but

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Another view of Byron Bay, New South Wales, Australia

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Courtesy of The Ritz-Carlton

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3. Eau Spa at The Ritz-Carlton, Palm Beach (No Whispering Necessary)

Every woman loves to be pampered at a spa. Now Eau Spa has made the experience even better by throwing away the rulebook that required guests to tiptoe around and speak in hushed tones. In the Self-Centered Garden, guests swing in chairs suspended over a warm pool or challenge one

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The giant chessboard at the Eau Spa at The Ritz-Carlton, Palm Beach

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4. Kendwa Beach on the Northern Tip of Zanzibar Island, Tanzania, Africa

It's not easy to get to Kendwa Beach (your teeth rattle as your driver weaves through dirt pavements), but it's definitely worth the effort. Spread before you is a sumptuous resort, framed by a glittering turquoise ocean. All resort activities revolve around this blindingly white beach that

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5. Curaçao, A Caribbean Island With Nothing But Welcome

A Curaçao resident would never say, "Have a good weekend." That would be considered rude. Instead, every Monday morning, they wish one another "*Bon Simon*" – a good week. This gentility, a hallmark of the local culture, makes Curaçao one of those rare destinations where visitors are

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Another view of Curaçao. This is a photograph of the Shete Boka National Park.