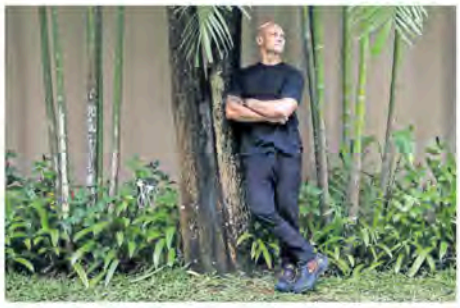

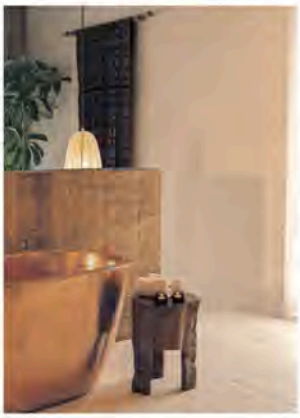

**Need to know**

**Rates** From $2995 a person twin share or $5495 for solo travellers for the all-inclusive six-night, seven-day Foundation Reset package. Mana Sanctuary opens in April.

TRAVEL INDONESIA

# All shall be well

Preventative health is this new Bali retreat's mission, writes **Ute Junker**.

**Not all Bali retreats** are created equal. When it comes to Mana Sanctuary – a co-ed retreat with an emphasis on men's health that is the most talked-about opening on the Indonesian island this year – Michael Klim, for one, is clear about what sets it apart from the competition.

"What resonated with me straight away is that Mana is aligned with the rise of preventative health," says Klim, an Olympic swimming champion now living with an autoimmune disease, chronic inflammatory demyelinating polyneuropathy or CIDP.

"It is not about waiting for something to break. It is about taking ownership early and building strength before you are forced to," says Klim, an ambassador for the 16-room property who will also run a retreat there later this year.

Some might say the island already has enough restorative retreats. Step on any plane bound for Bali and you can spot the women on their way to some tropical rejuvenation, clutching tomes on mindfulness in their yoga-toned arms.

Men, however, have been less keen to sign up for a week of wellbeing. When Mana Sanctuary opens in Canggu next month, says Klim, it will provide a different approach. Instead of "vague inspiration", he says it is built around the sort of structured activities that appeal to men. "They offer protocols. Breath sequences. Recovery pathways. Mental fitness sessions," he says.

Everyone who completes a six-night, seven-day program at Mana Sanctuary will also receive a 21-day take-home program to help lock in lasting change.

Clockwise from main: Mana is designed around structured activities that appeal to men; Olympian Michael Klim is an ambassador; copper bath tubs encourage a pre-bedtime soak. PHOTO: BEYOND THAT WALL

"There is a lot of science around the building of habits, and we want to make a real impact in helping people live better, to give them the tools for a long and healthy life," says Janine Cottle, who founded the retreat with her husband, Trent.

"The narrative around health has changed. Instead of outsourcing their health, simply going to a doctor to be told what to do, people want to track their own health markers, to help transform not just their lifespan but their health span."

The Cottles know what they are talking about. Their nearby women's-only retreat, Escape Haven, has welcomed 10,000 guests over the past 18 years. "We have been getting so many inquiries at Escape Haven about options for men, and we also saw that the data around men's health is so dire. Men are really needing support," says Cottle.

Stressed-out executives have long formed a significant proportion of Escape Haven's clientele, and she expects that many of Mana's male guests will conform to a similar profile. Executives can be almost as obsessed with performance as athletes, so it is perhaps not surprising that Mana's approach is built around the idea of recovery.

"If you are at that level – CEO, founder, executive – in order to perform better, you have to recover better," Cottle says.

Guests can either sign up for the all-inclusive Foundation Reset program or add on one of seven tailored programs ranging from men's mental health to longevity and lifespan or mindful focus, the latter designed to help those who find it hard to unplug.

"We're in this tired and wired world where people have forgotten how to switch off, and that impacts our focus and our sleep," Cottle says. "Most of our guests talk about having three screens on the go at once, and the more we do that, we change the neural pathways in the brain. We have to relearn how to get into the flow state, whether that's through qi gong or tai chi."

Mana Retreat promises to blend spirituality with scientific rigour. The array of tech tools includes red-light therapy, oxygen optimisation, compression therapies for inflammation, and a zero-gravity cognitive recalibration chair that, Cottle predicts, will be a guest favourite.

"It can help retrain the brain around giving up smoking, reducing food noise, promoting happiness and positivity," she says.

Among her other favourite tech-powered amenities are PEMF mats, which use low-frequency pulsed electromagnetic fields that are said to stimulate cellular repair, improve circulation and reduce inflammation.

"We have them in every bedroom – each room is its own wellness site. I want you to use them every day, not wait until you have an appointment, because they support a deep sense of relaxation and are also sleep-supportive," Cottle says.

Sleep sits (or should that be, lies?) at the heart of the Mana experience. Research has shown that poor sleeps fuels disease, burnout and cognitive decline, and the entire retreat has been designed to promote a solid night's rest.

"It's about a whole lot more than providing a lavender spray and black-out curtains," says Cottle. Instead, the impact on sleep has informed every choice, from providing wearables to track data to evening rituals designed to slow you down.

This is also aided by the design of the rooms, including the use of "grounding materials" such as wood and Himalayan onyx, while the copper bathtubs lure guests into a pre-bedtime soak.

So will we see more Aussie blokes scheduling a Balinese wellness retreat into their holiday plans? The Cottles are certain that Mana will find its clientele, including couples keen on sharing a healthy escape as well as men intent on giving their bodies and brains a boost.

Klim also believes that more Australian men are ready to change their mindset towards health. "Longevity is about perspective. You stop chasing short wins and start building long-term capacity," Klim says. "My diagnosis forced me to be honest about fear and vulnerability. That shift gave me more strength, not less." L&L

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