

PORTER

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Summer Escape 2019
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summer
luxe
fashion

Liya Kebede photographed by Cass Bird



the beauty memo

*Your definitive health and
beauty intelligence*

Edited by Newby Hands

Hat by Sandro,
\$105, at MrPorter.
com; bikini bottoms
by Adriana Degras,
\$350, at Net-A-
Porter.com

SUNSHINE
state of
MIND

Ever wished you could hold on to that post-vacation vitality? Lock in a lighter mood with natural ways to feel more at ease – or, if you’re seeking a deeper change, a sabbatical could be the reset button you need. So sit back, relax and enjoy the fruits of a summer well spent. You’ve got this

Photographer Jean Pierrot Fashion Editor Helen Broadfoot

PRESS PAUS

In today's always-on culture, it often feels like we spend every waking moment in motion – making meetings, juggling family, hitting deadlines – all the while convincing ourselves we're coping just fine. (Who are we kidding?)

But hurtling through life like this is a recipe for burnout, which is something LUPE PUERTA, global director of VIP client relations at Net-A-Porter, was all too aware of. So, with a plan to find her joy and rediscover what she *really* wanted, she took a sabbatical...

As told to *Suzanne Scott*

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"I'd been thinking about taking a sabbatical for at least two years before I finally decided to make it happen. For the past 15 years I've been working at Net-A-Porter, and my job is fast-paced, involving a lot of travel and constantly meeting and talking to people. It's extremely social, and my personal life is wrapped up with it. I love my job, but I'd reached a point where I had no thinking space. It wasn't so much that I was stressed or exhausted, more that I felt I'd lost any connection with who I was or what I wanted. There was never that quiet moment. As women, it's easy to get caught up in life and forget about our own needs.

"With my company's support, I started planning some time away. December is a quiet time for us, so I knew I could take a few weeks then without it being too disruptive. If you want to take a sabbatical, you need to plan to perfection. I did handovers and put everything in place to ensure that work would run smoothly in my absence, as I'd made it clear I wouldn't be contactable. Almost two months later, having disconnected my work

phone and email (if you are going to do it, do it properly), I walked out of the office with seven weeks' leave ahead of me.

"I hadn't planned to do too much, but I began with a week in Tulum to decompress. I'd recommend a bit of a treat or vacation at first, so you don't end up watching Netflix all day. Then I went to an intense Panchakarma retreat in Sri Lanka, where I found myself in a jungle in almost total silence. There was yoga at 6.30am, treatments during the day, and by 7.30pm everyone was in bed. It couldn't have been further removed from my life; the change of pace was challenging, as typically I find it difficult to stop. My adrenaline was running high and I wanted to talk to everyone, as if it were a social thing, and everyone was telling me I needed to calm down. Then, on day five, it hit me; I saw the Ayurvedic doctor and just started crying. It felt like an emotional detox – one I really needed, as I hadn't checked in with myself for a long time. We are all so used to powering through that we lose sight of what we actually want. But something had shifted, and from then on I started to reconnect with myself, reflecting on why I was there and what I needed to put right in my own head.

"I'd set aside a few days at the end of my retreat for sightseeing, but I realized what I needed most was to be home, so I brought my flight forward. My life involves constant travel and I didn't need to see more of the world. I needed

to be at home on the sofa, or meeting up with friends for coffee. One of the best parts of my sabbatical was seeing others go to work while I went to yoga. It felt like such a luxury not to be at an airport or commuting and instead taking time to do things more slowly.

"As the days and weeks went by, I started making changes in my life and within myself. At last I found I had the time and space in my head to feel calm, to slow down, reflect and make some big decisions. People assume a sabbatical should be long – over a number of months at least – but, for me, seven weeks was perfect. Our twenties are about discovery and seeing the world, we then spend our thirties working like crazy, and I think our forties are when we stop and check in with ourselves. I had worked hard for a number of years and had reached a point where it was time to stop, reward myself for my work and allow myself the space I needed to think about my future. Taking this time away was the best decision I could have made; it was amazing because I was investing in myself. In having that time to pause, I could put *my* needs first and have the breathing space to make changes. I joined a choir and now do yoga three times a week, and finally have a work and non-work life. Now, I try to pass it on. I tell everyone they should take a sabbatical, and when friends say they feel inspired to do so, I tell them to stop thinking about it and just do it!" >

"I had reached a point where it was time to stop and allow myself the space I needed to think about my future"

how to plan a sabbatical

Taking time out of your everyday life may not be easy, but it's definitely doable – with the correct motives and mindset. Here's how to get it right

“Women are better at dealing with ongoing stress than men, but there is also a social expectation for us to multitask and nurture others,” says Dr Tara Swart, a London-based neuroscientist and author of *The Source*. “This impacts our brains, and sadly it often takes a crisis for us to stop.” But rather than working ourselves into a physical and mental burnout, shouldn't we try to stage some kind of intervention before things become so dire? According to Swart, a sabbatical “can be the proactive way of avoiding a health crisis caused by not having enough downtime”.

Sabbaticals (derived from the word “sabbath”, which means to rest) are becoming increasingly normal, with many companies offering a month or so of leave (sometimes paid) for every five years of service. Far from an excuse to extend a vacation, catch up with life admin or take a “grown-up gap year”, a sabbatical is an opportunity to reassess your current course in life and bring your mind back into a state of equilibrium. “Don't conflate sabbaticals with vacations,” says Halelly Azulay, founder of Talent Grow, a management consulting firm in Los Angeles. “They should have a clearly defined purpose.”

However, recognizing you need a sabbatical and actually organizing one are two different things. Research shows that, unlike men, women are reticent when it comes to asking for more than they already have. “Women are less likely to assert their value or negotiate for what they deserve,” says Azulay. “This is such a shame: if the value of taking time away exceeds the negatives, you should go for it.”

Of course, a sabbatical is not possible in every situation, nor is it ideal for everyone, so timing is key. “For employers, a sabbatical is an investment, so they're more suitable for employees who are considered high-performing contributors and more appropriate for someone who's been on their career path for some time,”

“Far from an excuse to catch up with life admin, a sabbatical is an opportunity to reassess your course in life”

explains Azulay. Be realistic in your expectations: if you have recently returned to work after an extended leave, now is probably not the right time to ask for more time away.

Proper planning is vital, from how long you can afford to be away to how best to negotiate that time with your employer. “Create a business case and outline how both you and your organization will benefit from it and describe in detail how others will cover your responsibilities to ensure that no losses are experienced to the business,” Azulay advises. As for ensuring that your team can easily forge on without you, she says, “Ensure your current job responsibilities are smoothly delegated. You want those staying behind to be able and willing to support your absence, which takes considerable thought and should not be left to the last minute.” You also need to be realistic about how long you can afford to stay away from work – and budget accordingly.

As for what to do with your time away: “A sabbatical must be taken mindfully so we don't just end up filling time and not getting the benefits of personal evolution through self-reflection,” explains Dr Swart. “A combination of relaxing activities, self-reflection, potentially learning something new or doing something creative are all good ideas,” she says. Travel if you wish, but if your career consists of excessive time abroad, you may prefer to stay closer to home. Either way, research shows that when we stop focusing on work and have the time to allow our mind to wander, our brain begins to behave differently; we discover an untapped source of creativity. It explains why we often have our

best ideas in the shower or on a walk, and why focused brainstorming rarely yields great results. As Dr Swart explains: “Alone time, where your mind can wander and engage default-mode brain activity, can spark new ideas and allow us to strategize what we want to do differently in our lives.” *Suzanne Scott*

Where to go

Get your re-boot off to an immersive start in a place where it's all about you...

Don't do, just be... AT SANLUIS, SOUTH TYROL, ITALY

Forget orchestrated days of activities: the *only* things you are required to do at San Luis are those you *want* to do. The expansive views (mountains to one side and big sky on the other) are very special, as is the general vibe; there's no compulsion to do anything besides relax. Time behaves differently here, and you'll find hours slipping by while you quietly contemplate or hike the alpine trails. The spa and location, together with its unique pace, are the perfect antidote to frenetic city life.

sanluis-hotel.com

Learn something new... AT SHOU SUGI BAN HOUSE, THE HAMPTONS, US

Despite best intentions, not everyone can “switch off” on command, in which case a week spent at Shou Sugi Ban House, with a structured daily itinerary of guided walks, spa treatments, meditations and neuroacoustic sound experiences (for better sleep), can be therapeutic and somewhere to channel your focus. The culinary program is particularly impressive – the chef and resident nutritionist will familiarize you with preparing healthy, delicious, plant-based meals that will nourish you long after your return to real life. shousugibanhouse.com

Off the beaten track... AT VANA, DEHRADUN, INDIA

The Vana ashram offers an opportunity to bring life to a complete standstill. A week here is spent in quiet meditation, without wifi or social media, practicing yoga and reacquainting yourself with nature. The curated program of slow activities helps you get a handle on life and equips you with the skills to cope better with emotional upheaval back in the real world. vana.co.in