

Balancing ACT

Kiwi entrepreneur Janine Hall tells Shelley Ferguson how a change in both career and mindset has improved her health and wellbeing



PHOTOGRAPHY: JACQUELINE WOODS



Janine Hall's Balinese retreat reflects her newfound serenity and commitment to nurturing the soul.

"To the Balinese life is about slowing down and smelling the roses"

Have you ever driven home from work then wondered how you got there? Kiwi Janine Hall was all too familiar with the state she refers to as 'waking sleep', brought about by her stressful corporate career. "I'd disconnected from doing the things I truly loved," she admits. "I'm a very social person but after working six days a week, 12 hours a day, seeing friends and family fell to the bottom of the list, along with looking after my wellbeing," she remembers. "As a consequence I was very out of balance, and the positivity I'd always had in bounds was ebbing away." So, this 37-year-old Auckland entrepreneur decided to do something about it.

Drawing on her travelling experiences and passion for water sports, Hall created Surf Haven Bali, a boutique active wellbeing retreat set in the lush surrounds of Seminyak, on Bali's west coast.

"When I was 30 and based in London, I took a year off and sailed around the world doing dive courses, sailing certificates, wakeboarding, kite surfing and surfing," Hall explains. "I fell in love with water sports and realised that barefoot, beach, bohemian lifestyle truly made me happy."

Surf Haven Bali reflects Hall's idea of the perfect retreat – surfing, yoga and meditation, spa treatments and nutritious food are combined with luxury villa living and five-star service.

But like many good things, Hall's journey has taken time. "I'm a risk-taker by nature, but making this move

still took me three years," she reveals. "I talked about my idea to anyone that would listen and there were definitely people who called me crazy," she laughs.

"Change can create a feeling of fear, but it's how you deal with the fear that's important. I was more fearful of feeling the same way in five years – I think the biggest wasteful emotion is regret."

So after she decided failure wasn't an option, Hall harnessed that positivity and took control of her future. "I believe you can turn your passion into a career, so I never once entertained the idea that this wouldn't work," she says. "Often the biggest lessons you learn in life are when you're outside of your comfort zone and exposed, and having a new challenge was the thrill that I needed."

However when she finally made the move to Bali, Hall discovered building her dream wouldn't be smooth sailing. ►

“Doing business in a third world country can be difficult. At first I’d come at negotiations from a western approach and wonder why I wasn’t getting what I wanted when I wanted it,” Hall recalls. “I soon learned that in Bali, relationships come first, and business comes second, so I had to leave my western thinking behind.”

Yin and yang

The Balinese people believe in yin and yang, the concept that opposites interact as part of a dynamic system to form a greater whole. At the core of this ancient Chinese philosophy is the belief that balance, health and wellbeing form the basis of happiness. Since she’s been living in Bali, Hall has learned valuable lessons about being truly connected and living more of a conscious life.

“A beautiful thing the Balinese have taught me is about living in the moment and forgetting about all the balls I’ve got in the air,” Hall comments. “It’s about focusing on the one thing you’re doing, doing it slowly and doing it well.”

Perhaps this explains her affinity with surfing and yoga – if you’re not connected and in the moment you’ll fall off the wave or lose your balance.

Hall’s advice to women who find their wellbeing has waned is to make balance a priority.

“Ask yourself if you’re doing the things you really love, and if you’re not, figure out a way to adjust your routine so you can,” she recommends.

“Everyone has a different path – for some it’s just about making some minor adjustments, rather than uprooting your life like I did,” she says.

“Balance can come through many different forms – yoga, walking the dog and reading are all restorative activities that bring more Zen to your life.”

All about location

Bali’s powder-soft beaches, balmy climate and floral-infused air instantly soothe the soul, massaging away the effects of an overactive mind. As well as providing the picture-perfect



Surfing requires absolute focus – a refreshing mindset shift for women used to multi-tasking.



backdrop, Bali also proved the ideal cultural partner to Hall’s desire for a more balanced life.

“To the Balinese, life is about slowing down and smelling the roses,” she explains. “As a result, they’re incredibly happy people and smiles are never far from their lips. They have so little, but so much more than so many people I know because of the way they choose to live.”

And the island’s reputation as a health, wellness and spa destination meant that the best practitioners in the business were at her fingertips. Hall’s team includes retreat leaders, a yoga

instructor and renowned therapeutic chef Samantha Gowing, who has designed menus based on nourishing foods that make you feel good inside and out. The menus are all based on whole foods and are largely gluten-free and pescetarian, with flavours designed to make your taste buds dance.

Guests can also work with healing practitioners depending on what they want to get out of their stay. And that's the difference – Surf Haven Bali isn't a one-size-fits-all approach to wellbeing. "Because everyone has a different goal, the programmes are tweaked to cater to individual needs," says Hall. "There's something for everyone but the end benefit is the same – that women leave feeling confident and reconnected with themselves after also having a lot of fun."

One of the biggest benefits of Surf Haven Bali's week-long programmes is relaxation, pure and simple. "I think it's rare for women to invest a whole week in themselves, because they have so many roles and responsibilities back in their real life," she says. "So when they leave they look physically different – they appear glowing, lighter and so much more present," she says.

Finding peace

So with a growing business to run and so much on the go, how does Hall ensure that her old stress levels don't come back to haunt her?

"I'm really mindful that that ambition is still there, so I'm careful about how it manifests," she reveals. "At the basis of anything has to be your health and wellbeing, so I focus a lot of time and effort making that my priority."

"And it's hard not to be happy when you're doing what you love."

What she loves is creating the perfect platform for like-minded women to kick-start the same changes she so badly needed. "I experience lots of moments in Bali when I feel so happy because I feel so content," she says.

"There's no better feeling than knowing you're exactly where you're supposed to be. That's the definition of success to me, it doesn't matter what form it comes in."



The women who stay at Surf Haven Bali leave glowing, looking lighter and "more present".

"It's about focusing on the one thing you are doing, doing it slowly and doing it well"



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