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# ASIA'S top 10 CREATIVE RETREATS

For most people, the beauty of a holiday is the chance to slow the pace, sometimes to a crawl or even to a dead stop. We all know that sleep and rest are the great rejuvenators, but what if your creative soul is crying out for you to use your 'down-time' to ramp things up? Here we uncover some of Asia's top creative retreats that invite travellers to indulge in their creative passions and dreams, however wild they may be. Perhaps you'd love to cook up a storm, get snap-happy with your camera, paint under palm trees or write to your heart's content in a tropical paradise. Here, we've tracked down the best boutique retreats, to help you tap into your creativity.

1.

## *Travelshooters, various destinations*

Travelshooters is a tour company designed for avid photographers who get a kick out of travel. They claim to "think like photographers, not like tour guides" so they'll move heaven and earth to help you find the perfect light, ambience, vantage point and moment for your shots. Tours are offered across Asia and in 2012 include adventures in India's Rajasthan, Kerala and Ladakh regions, as well as a spiritual tour of up to 21 days through Vietnam, Myanmar, Laos, Cambodia and Thailand. Many of the tours draw upon the knowledge of local professional photographers to give participants authentic insight into their travel experiences. Expect to be part of a small group gaining practical advice on-the-go by guides who care as much about what life looks like through your lens as you do.  
[www.travelshooters.com](http://www.travelshooters.com)



2.



## *The River Garden, Cambodia*

Painting master classes and visits to local galleries and artist studios are just some of the intriguing activities you can expect on this boutique 10-day retreat hosted in July 2012 at one of Cambodia's lushest jungle resorts. The River Garden provides a peaceful backdrop to a jam-packed programme of creating, learning and exploring. Award-winning Australian artist Craig Penny guides painting classes held under the trees at the resort and also at stunning locations around the river-carved town of Siem Reap. Partners are welcome and there's plenty of time to visit local temples and cultural sites for extra inspiration.

[www.therivergarden.info](http://www.therivergarden.info)



4.

## *Bali Art Retreats, Bali*

Indulge the artist in you by signing up for one of Bali Art Retreats' seven-day drawing and painting holidays. Whether you're an established artist or a beginner, you'll learn new approaches to your own work and creativity and be guided in sketching in pen, watercolour and gouache as well as painting on canvas. Kick-start your day with a peaceful morning yoga session to calm and prepare your mind before delving into practical art classes in inspiring surroundings. The key is to have fun while drawing inspiration from Bali's authentic art culture and breathtaking landscapes. Retreats are led by accomplished Australian artist Gabrielle Jones – known for her abstract landscape works as well as figurative and still life subjects – who long ago fell in love with Bali's inherent spirituality and natural beauty. Retreats in 2012 include an April getaway at the stylish and secluded Alila Manggis seaside resort in east Bali.  
[www.baliartretreats.com](http://www.baliartretreats.com)



## *Hmong Mountain Retreat, Vietnam*

When you sign up for one of Hmong Mountain Retreat's cooking classes you won't just be learning how to cook delicious Vietnamese fare, but also how to shop for your dishes. The day starts with a trip to the nearby Sapa markets where you'll find the freshest organic fruit and vegetables grown locally in the fertile mountain soil. Amble through the markets with your chef mentor and learn how to hand-pick ingredients to be used in your cooking class. The classes are practical and fun, and at the end you get to share your creations with your fellow budding chefs at a table overlooking the beautiful Muong Hoa Valley and the terraced rice fields. The eco retreat celebrates wholesome food and tranquility – some of the essential ingredients for a rejuvenating holiday.  
[www.hmongmountainretreat.com](http://www.hmongmountainretreat.com)

5.

*Writers Journey, various destinations*

Writer's block will hardly be an issue on a Writers Journey retreat. Whether you're following a map of Balinese cosmology around a volcano, cruising a river in Laos or exploring a heritage-listed town in the Mekong, you'll gather plenty of creative stimuli to help your words flow on the page. You'll also meet inspiring local writers and artists on your adventures. Hosted by Jan Cornall, an accomplished writer, teacher and facilitator, the Writers Journey retreats help writers spark their innate creativity and develop new skills and vigor for their work. Whether you already have a writing project on the go or are seeking inspiration to start a project afresh, Jan will guide your creative journey.

[www.writersjourney.com.au](http://www.writersjourney.com.au)



*Creative Escapes, Cambodia and India*

Food and photographs are an essential part of every great holiday but Creative Escapes takes these everyday travel experiences to an inspiring new level. Established in 2007, this boutique retreat company hosts a range of intimate getaways around the world, including photography retreats in Cambodia and gourmet journeys in India. Whether you're a professional or a beginner, you'll learn new creative skills, meet like-minded folk and traipse off the beaten path for a holiday to remember. The experienced guides are photography gurus, culinary stars and passionate travellers who will lead you to the hippest hotels and prettiest locations on the quirkiest of adventures. Fun is foremost so there's never a dull moment.

[www.creative-escapes.co.uk](http://www.creative-escapes.co.uk)



*Editing in Paradise, various destinations*

Editing in Paradise retreats invite people with a passion for writing and travel to embark on adventures to Bali, Australia and Sri Lanka, to name a few destinations. Hosted by freelance editor, writer and trainer Shelley Kenigsberg and editor and author Selena Hanet-Hutchins, the retreats are designed to help participants develop and fine-tune their manuscript or writing project and learn new skills in self-editing, while also having a relaxing holiday and meeting like-minded folk. The retreats provide all the essentials for a productive writing experience – such as good desk space, lamps, computer points and Wi-Fi – while also leaving ample time for exploring the local area, indulging in spa pampering and, of course, lazing by the pool. The goal is to reinvigorate your writing and your soul.

[www.editinginparadise.com](http://www.editinginparadise.com)

7.



8.

*Gecko Workshops, India*

If you love the art of travel as much as the art of photography you'll find kindred spirits on a Gecko Workshops retreat. With years of travel research under their belts, your Gecko tour guides will introduce you to people and places you'll never forget. Whether you journey to the lush rainforest of Kerala in the south-west, the shifting dunes in the heart of the Great Indian Desert or to Buddhist monasteries in Ladakh in the north, your lens will capture a vibrant mix of cultures and diverse landscapes. The intensive retreats usually last for 12 days and are often timed to coincide with cultural or natural events such as the annual camel festival or the arrival of the monsoon.

[www.geckoworkshops.co.uk](http://www.geckoworkshops.co.uk)



*Bayan Indah, Malaysia*

A cooking retreat holiday at Malaysia's stylish culinary school, Bayan Indah, is a must for food lovers, whether professional chefs or home cooks. The luxurious resort is perched on a lush tropical rainforest and classes are held in a modern, breezy and squeaky-clean kitchen. Passionate chef and food writer Rohani Jelani shares her love of cooking with all participants. Ingredients are fresh and mostly organic (many of the herbs and veggies are plucked from the resort's thriving kitchen gardens) while the diverse workshop themes include Malaysian, Chinese, Japanese and Thai fare, as well as some European classics.

[www.bayanindah.com](http://www.bayanindah.com)

9.



*One World Retreats, Bali*

Discover your inner voice and capture it on the page with the 'Write for your Life' One World Retreat holiday. This six-day writing intensive is hosted at the holistic resort of Kumara in the jungles of Ubud, Bali. The daily programme of writing workshops will help strengthen confidence in your narrative voice to help you express your unique experiences and language. Your mentor will guide you through writing exercises, writing and re-writing, editing and constructive feedback. You'll also have time for morning yoga sessions, spa pampering and exploring local cultural sites and villages, including a pretty walk through rice fields and a delicious lunch at an organic restaurant.

[www.oneworldretreats.com](http://www.oneworldretreats.com)

10.

