



Leap founders Mandy Davis and Sally Doherty (on right). Desa Seni retreat in Canggu, Bali. Pictures / Supplied

# A TROPICAL OASIS OF CALM

Amanda Linnell visits a retreat that goes beyond the boundaries and inspires change

**J**ust do it. Seize the moment. Put yourself first. Forget about those deadlines, the work commitments, the family commitments. Just. Step. Outside. The. Square. Take. The. Leap.

So I did. Quite literally. Sign up for Leap — a five-day course in Bali, staying at the gorgeous Desa Seni, eating organic food, practicing yoga, swimming, having massages and, above all, taking part in a series of workshops designed to help clarify what's really important to you.

This wasn't going to be just any "relax, set a few goals, forget-them-when-you-get-home" type of retreat. Its leaders, New Zealanders Mandy Davis and Sally Doherty, are a combined force with more than 30 years' experience as HR consultants and coaches of top international corporates and individuals.

Mandy, who has a masters in human resources, a degree in health sciences and is completing a diploma in positive psychology and wellbeing, has her own consulting company — Balanced Focus Consulting — and travels throughout the Pacific and Asia working with leaders, teams and organisations as a coach, facilitator and consultant.

Sally started her career as an Officer in the Royal New Zealand Air Force, before working around the globe for the likes of Coca Cola Amatil, Air New Zealand and finally Microsoft

New Zealand as the director of human resources. She now lives in Singapore where she also has her own consulting company.

This dynamic duo have set up Outside the Lines, a company with an exciting set of programmes and retreats around the globe to help others live the life they aspire to.

"We wanted to offer something different, something that really made a difference to people's lives after they return home," explains Mandy. "During our research we noticed that while retreats might be a rejuvenating and relaxing experience, they often fell short on inspiring change once the person returns to their busy life, the experience often becoming a distant holiday memory. So we decided to combine the best of a retreat and a personal development programme in our five-day residential Leap experience. The "time out" to plan and reflect that a retreat offers along with well-researched and practical workshops to build the momentum to move forward."

What also makes Leap unique, is that it begins well before the course. A few weeks out, I have a thought-provoking Skype conversation with Mandy which gets me thinking about what I want to focus on while I'm in Bali. Soon after, a notebook arrives in the mail — smelling evocatively of lemongrass — with a message handwritten inside its cover: "Your mind is a powerful thing. When you fill it with positive thoughts, your life will

start to change."

Despite the busyness around me in the office, I am immediately filled with a sense of anticipation and excitement about what my time in Bali could mean.

Location is key to the Leap concept and the tranquil Desa Seni in the Bali suburb of Canggu is the perfect place to escape the stresses of everyday life. You arrive at this eco-village resort to be greeted with big welcoming smiles and a sign reading 'inspiration starts here'.

In an oasis of calm from the hectic streets outside, a series of paths lead you through lush gardens, past the yoga and spa pavilions and a large soothing cool pool, to a series of small villas made from recycled Javanese wood. Forty per cent of the land is used to grow produce organically for the restaurant, which serves up healthy meals and drinks.

Over a delicious dinner on the first night, I meet the people I will be spending the week with. It's a small, diverse group including a New Zealand businessman based in Singapore who spends the majority of his working life travelling through Asia, an arts administrator from Belgium, executives from Sydney and Auckland, a yoga teacher and a young woman in her early twenties "looking for inspiration".

It is a rare treat for all of us to step outside our daily lives and the ongoing commitment to get through our "to do" lists and struggle

to find balance. But over the next five days, under the inspirational and gentle coaching of Mandy and Sally, we begin to shed the stress that has encompassed us all.

A pavilion with no walls becomes our base for the week. Here we lounge on giant beanbags, looking out over the lush gardens and, with the guidance and questioning of Mandy and Sally, we explore change and the barriers that stop us from creating it. We discuss asset-based thinking and positive psychology.

We explore our values, our purpose, our goals and strengths. For the first time in a long time, I start to truly feel present, to feel the warm ground under my feet, and an underlying tension eases slowly from my body.

Every day presents the opportunity to enrich the mind, body and spirit — from relaxing swims and yoga before breakfast, to meditation classes at night. Along with the workshops led by Sally and Mandy, we meet local entrepreneurs who are following their dreams, spend a morning focusing on health and what we eat, and a local Balinese healer shares his approach to life and wellbeing. Throughout the week, we also take part in individual sessions.

One afternoon, I lie on a daybed by the pool and visualise the direction I want my life to go. "How does it look?" asks Sally, before gently pushing deeper, "how does it feel?"

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MANDY DAVIS

This is the first chance I've had in a long time to truly stop and focus on what my "ideal life" would look like. Though it's not that far from where I am now, there are parts I want to re-align. In the blur of daily life, it's all too easy to miss what is, well, missing.

"In our leadership and executive coaching," says Sally, "we noticed more and more of our clients express a desire to lead a more fulfilled life. They often talk of their aspirations to be doing something other than what they are now. Yet their perceived lack of time — and often a lack of confidence — prevent them from taking steps to make changes."

"We like to help our participants explore their possibilities and aspirations and explode any self imposed boundaries," continues Mandy.

"Our programmes and coaching help people to identify what their best life looks like, what strengths they have to tap in to and what needs to happen for them to reach their

goals. We're also realists, however. We know that big ideas remain big ideas without a plan and a huge injection of courage. We want to see participants succeed, so we work on an individual level to build the motivation and the know-how to move toward whatever it is that's important."

An analysis of intrinsic and extrinsic goals, and whether we are motivated to achieve things for ourselves or for others is enlightening.

Though it is sad to leave Desa Seni, there is also a sense of excitement, as I can't wait to act on what I have learned. I have a greater understanding of who I am, what I value, my strengths and the decisions I make. I have expanded my way of thinking and how to approach things.

I feel revitalised, have a new sense of clarity and a new direction. I am also thrilled to know, as part of the programme, I have two personal training sessions with Mandy to make sure I don't fall into the old ruts I want to leave behind and to ensure I continue to live a life "outside the lines".

• Amanda Linnell flew business class to Bali with Jetstar.

**Join Mandy and Sally at Leap Singapore (22-24 Oct) and Leap Matakana (25-28 Nov). For more details, 2016 dates and locations (including Bali), go to [outsidethelines.life](http://outsidethelines.life)**