

A woman with long dark hair is lying on her back in a shallow, circular stone basin filled with water. She is surrounded by a large quantity of pink and white rose petals and green foliage. She is holding a small bouquet of green herbs near her face. The basin is set on a green lawn. The entire image is framed by a thin gold border.

# HOW TO FIND THE RIGHT WELLNESS RETREAT FOR YOU?

BY TERRY CUMES

DIRECTOR OF WILLKA T'IKA WELLNESS

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

# SEVEN SAGE SUGGESTIONS FOR A WELLNESS RETREAT IN PERU

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**WILLKA T'IKA**

Wellness Retreat in Peru's Sacred Valley

CREATOR-IN-CHIEF | Sandy Viteri

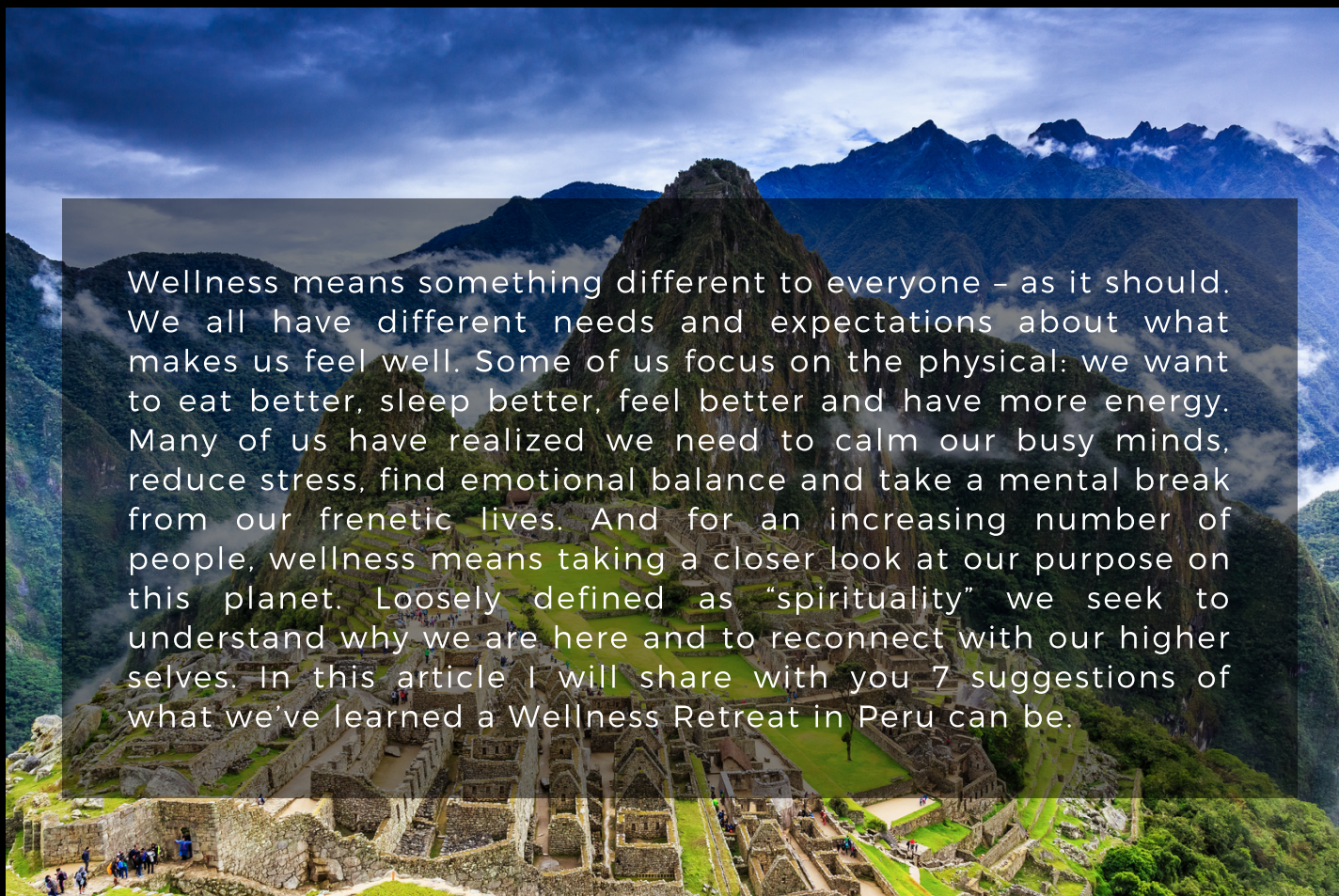
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# Seven Sage Suggestions for a Wellness Retreat in Peru.

By Terry Cumes  
Director of Willka T'ika Wellness



Wellness means something different to everyone – as it should. We all have different needs and expectations about what makes us feel well. Some of us focus on the physical: we want to eat better, sleep better, feel better and have more energy. Many of us have realized we need to calm our busy minds, reduce stress, find emotional balance and take a mental break from our frenetic lives. And for an increasing number of people, wellness means taking a closer look at our purpose on this planet. Loosely defined as “spirituality” we seek to understand why we are here and to reconnect with our higher selves. In this article I will share with you 7 suggestions of what we’ve learned a Wellness Retreat in Peru can be.



# #1 *What Kind of Retreat Do You Want?*



## **GROUP OR PERSONAL?**

Both can be equally powerful and beautiful. Most retreat centers focus on groups but some will allow individuals who are not part of a group to stay and join in some activities. The Sacred Valley attracts many women solo travelers.



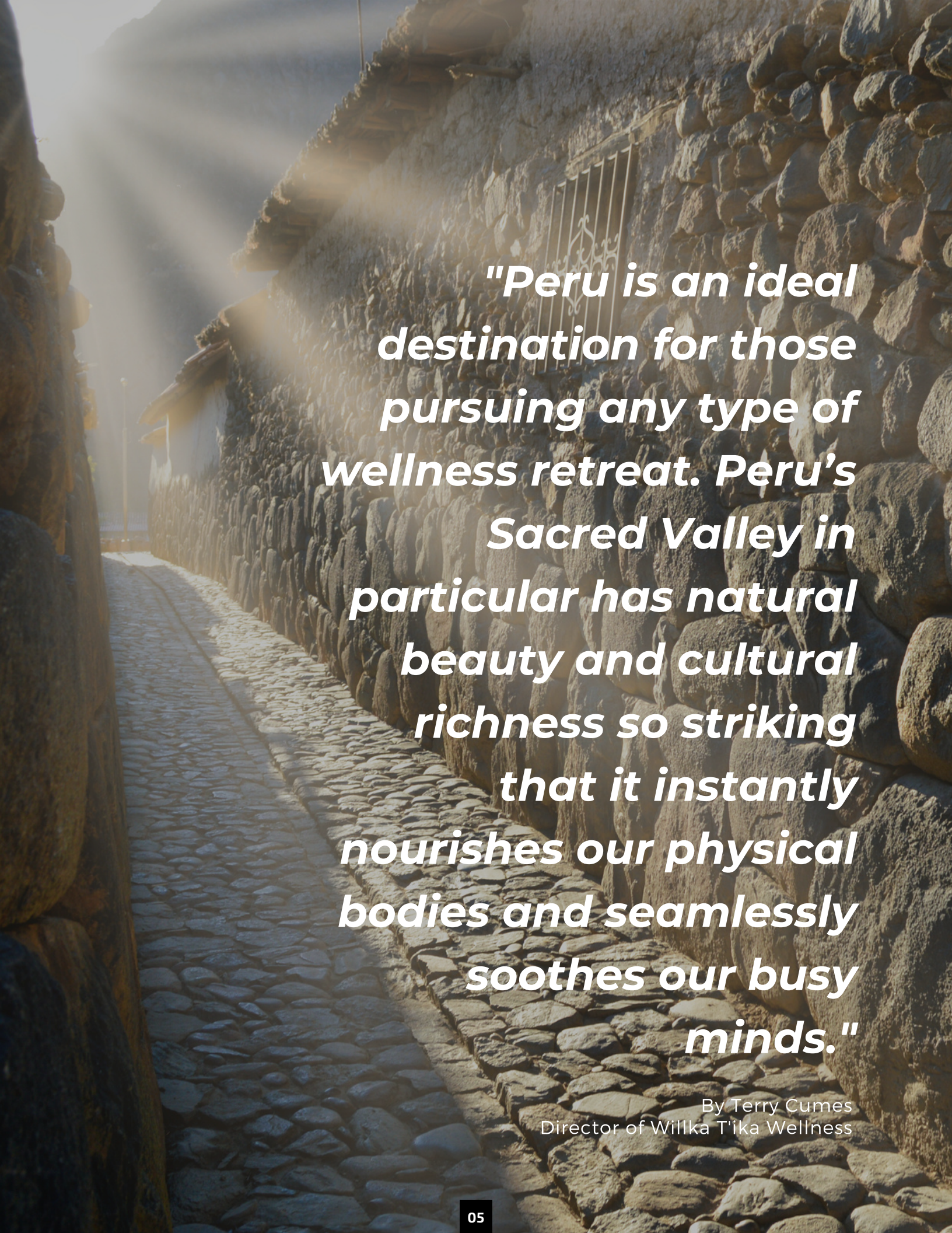
## **SEDENTARY OR ACTIVE?**

Some retreats focus on gentle yoga while others include vigorous hiking. Everyone has different levels of fitness and the altitude of the Andes can be challenging. Decide how much activity you want and pick a retreat that gives you what you need.



## **TOURIST OR TRAVELER?**

Wellness Retreats require the participant to be grounded in one place where you can focus on a healthy routine. Pick a retreat that includes “some” tourist activities or allow extra time before or after the retreat to do sightseeing.

A narrow cobblestone street in a village with stone walls and mountains in the background. The street is paved with smooth, rounded stones and is flanked by high, rustic stone walls. In the distance, a mountain range is visible under a hazy sky. The lighting suggests a warm, golden hour, with soft light filtering through the air.

***"Peru is an ideal destination for those pursuing any type of wellness retreat. Peru's Sacred Valley in particular has natural beauty and cultural richness so striking that it instantly nourishes our physical bodies and seamlessly soothes our busy minds."***

By Terry Cumes  
Director of Willka T'ika Wellness

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# #2 *What Does Your Body Need?*



## **NUTRITION**

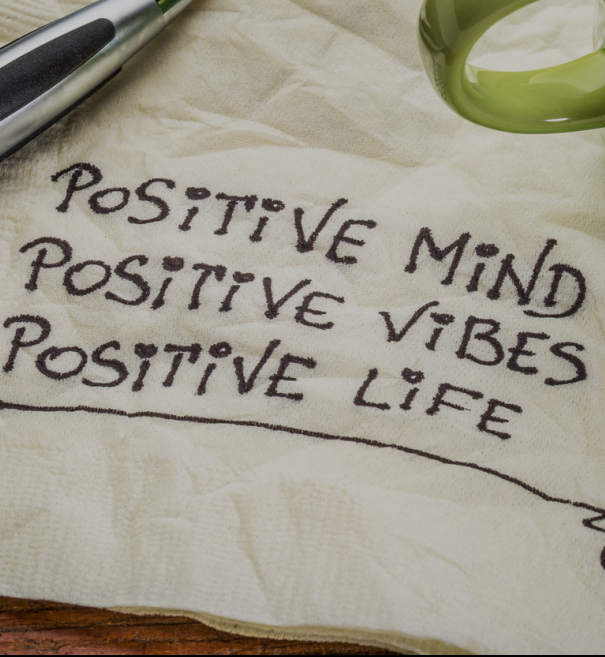
Food is a big part of any wellness retreat. The retreat center should be happy to provide vegetarian and gluten-free diet modifications. Check that there is filtered water and whether the food is being sourced sustainably and ideally organically.

## **MOVEMENT**

Are you looking for a yoga retreat? Remember there are dozens of yoga styles, so make sure you know in advance who is teaching and what their style is. The most important thing is to feel comfortable and safe with your teacher.

## **REST**

Rest and relaxation should be part of any wellness retreat. What do you need for a good night's sleep? A quality bed? A private room? Extra pillows? Essential Oils? Keep in mind that in Peru it can be challenging to sleep due to the high altitude.



# #3 *What Does Your Mind Need?*

## **MINDFULNESS**

Most retreats include some kind of mindfulness practice. This could include meditation, Yoga Nidra, mindful meals, silent walks, and nature connection. Do your best to disconnect from technology and separate from the distractions of your life back home.

## **PERSONAL SPACE**

Personal retreats are ideal if you are craving peace and quiet. Group retreats tend to have many activities and it can be disruptive to the group if you skip them. If you need more personal time on a group retreat, check with the leader in advance.

## **NATURE**

If you're traveling to Peru then you are likely coming to behold the majestic Andes. Visiting the Sacred Valley means walking in the shadows of the giant Apus or mountain deities. Even the most urban travelers cannot help but feel in awe of the surrounding glaciers and inspired by alpine scenery. Make sure you get outside and connect with the land.





# *Chakra Gardens: Opening the Senses of the Soul*

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In ancient times, people took care of their relationship to Mother Earth. Today, many have forgotten. They take but do not give back to Pachamama. As guests engage wellness at Willka T'ika, they will be inspired to move into the world of ayni. The spirit of ayni is the reciprocal exchange of living energy that occurs through giving and receiving from Mother Earth. As humans move into the practice of ayni, Pachamama will thrive again. . . . Finding a personal way to honor and care for Pachamama can restore and balance the Earth. The Andean people have had this understanding for millennia. I want this book to be a reminder of what is possible."

**Link: Chakra Gardens: Opening the Senses of the Soul**  
**Author; Carol Cumes**

# #4 *How to Connect With Your Higher Self?*

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**A**

## **RITUALS**

A Wellness Retreat can guide you gently towards your higher self. There are many local rituals that can introduce you to the spiritual world. Andean offerings or despachos allow you to give gratitude to the mountains (Apus) and Lakes (Cochas), for example. And there are countless activities being offered in retreats, including, Sweat Lodges, Cacao Ceremonies, and Sound Healing, just to mention a few.

**B**

## **SACRED CEREMONIES**

Sacred Ceremonies used to focus on the traditions of the Quechua people and especially the Q'ero elders who still honor Pachamama as the Incas did 500 years ago. However, these days, Sacred Ceremonies are often equated with Plant Medicines such as **Ayahuasca** and **San Pedro**. If you are interested in these kinds of entheogens then you especially need to do your homework to ensure you select a place that is safe.

**C**

## **LEADERSHIP**

Every retreat should have a leader who is your guide on your personal journey of discovery. Some leaders have extensive training as teachers, therapists, facilitators, and coaches. Find out what you're looking for and check the background and credentials of the leaders. If your interest is yoga, you'll want a very experienced yoga teacher. If you want to immerse yourself in the cultural traditions of the Andes, you'll want someone who has studied them extensively.

# #5 *Preparing for your trip*



## LOGISTICS • INTENTION • PREPARATION

These days, one has to be quite organized to travel. There are a few **websites** you need to check before booking your retreat. You need to be familiar with your airline policies, cancellation policies, trip insurance conditions, visa requirements, etc. Also, traveling with only carry-on luggage is a huge wellness win if you can pull it off!

Once you've taken care of the logistics, you can focus on the real juicy part of your experience: your intention. Why are you going on this retreat? What do you want to get out of it? How would you like to feel when you return? Write down a few thoughts before you arrive and revisit them during your retreat.

Reading about Peru and learning a little bit about the culture is a great start. Also, see if you can at least do a couple hikes or long walks before you travel. Your knees will thank you for it when you get to Machu Picchu! . But once you've made your decision, let go, take a breath, and let yourself be surprised by Peru.

# #6 *Contemplate your Hero's Journey*

## SEPARATION

The first phase of the journey is leaving your old life behind. This is essentially the point of a Wellness Retreat. If you bring all your gadgets, your work, and your friends with you to Peru, you won't really be on a Wellness Retreat, will you? It takes courage and some gumption to cut your ties with your life (even for a short time); so give yourself some props for doing this!

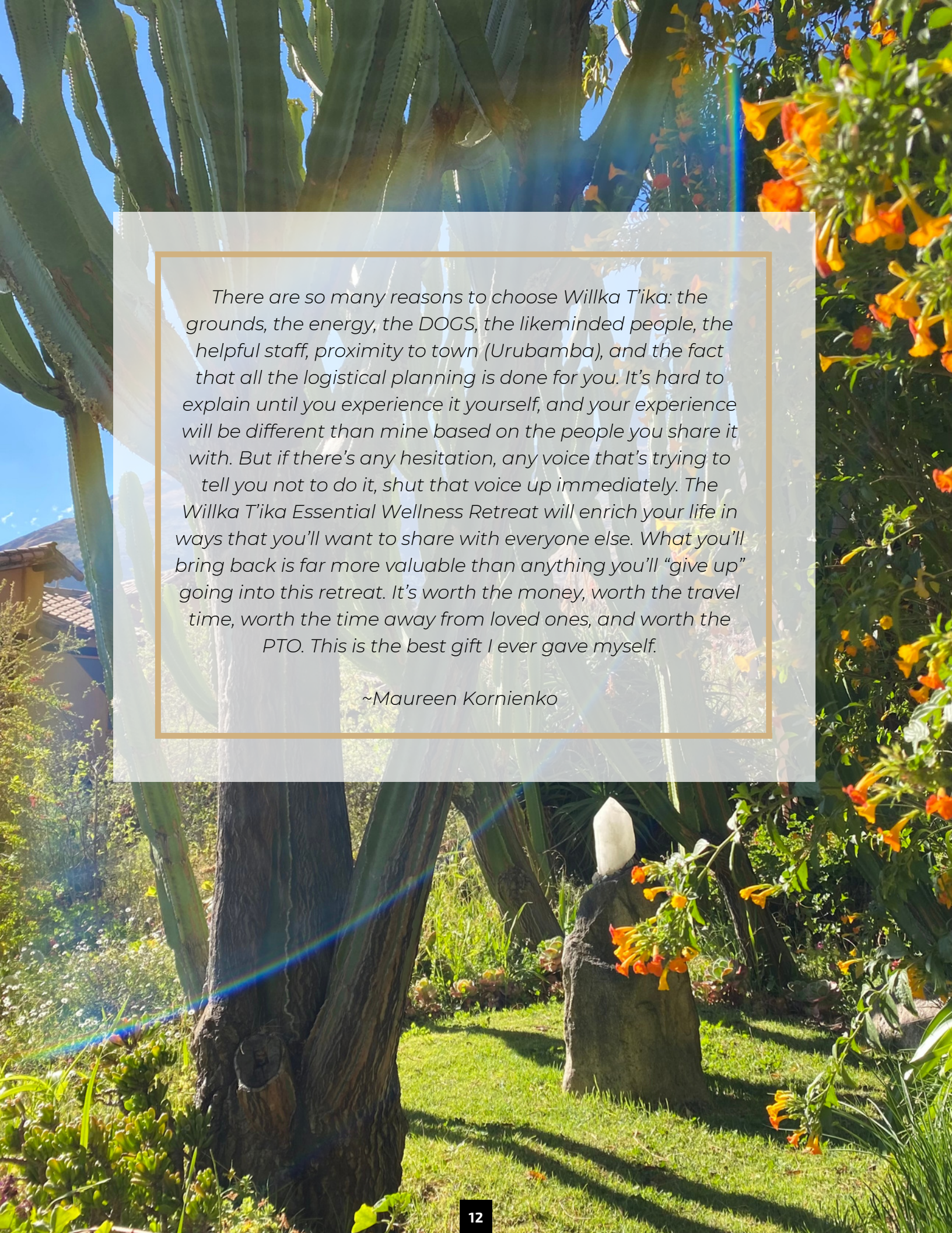
## THRESHOLD

The second stage of the journey is the most challenging, sometimes referred to as the "dark night of soul." This is when things get difficult. In Campbell's mythology, it's the equivalent of confronting your dragon or personal demons. For some people this may mean getting altitude sickness, for others it may mean having a major breakthrough that causes you to question parts of your life.

## INTEGRATION

The final stage is arguably the most important and often the most overlooked. After you have slayed your symbolic dragon and overcome any obstacles that have come up, you now need to return home and incorporate these learnings into your "default" life. That is no small feat! You may need help from like-minded friends or professionals who can help you integrate what you have learned. Ask your Wellness Retreat Leader for advice and for tools to help you bring the grail back home.





*There are so many reasons to choose Willka T'ika: the grounds, the energy, the DOGS, the likeminded people, the helpful staff, proximity to town (Urubamba), and the fact that all the logistical planning is done for you. It's hard to explain until you experience it yourself, and your experience will be different than mine based on the people you share it with. But if there's any hesitation, any voice that's trying to tell you not to do it, shut that voice up immediately. The Willka T'ika Essential Wellness Retreat will enrich your life in ways that you'll want to share with everyone else. What you'll bring back is far more valuable than anything you'll "give up" going into this retreat. It's worth the money, worth the travel time, worth the time away from loved ones, and worth the PTO. This is the best gift I ever gave myself.*

*~Maureen Kornienko*



# #7 *Give Back*

## B. TO THE PEOPLE OF PERU

In the Andes the concept of ayni (reciprocity) is deeply ingrained in the Quechua culture. The Quechua people believe that we should help our neighbor today, knowing that tomorrow our neighbor will return the favor. We believe that travel should be as **sustainable** as possible so that future generations can continue to enjoy the wonders of Peru. This is particularly relevant for wellness retreats, where sustainability and yoga should go hand in hand. On your retreat as you interact with the locals, take a moment to consider how your visit might affect them. Are you helping them economically or just taking photos? Is there a responsible way you can help improve their health or education so that they can break the cycle of poverty and dependence on tourism?

## A. TO THE LAND

The Quechua people honor Mother Earth at every occasion. At Andean celebrations, you'll see them pour a few drops of chicha (corn beer) on the ground as a gift for Pachamama, before taking a sip. While you visit the Andes, it is important that you too show respect for Pachamama. How can you help protect this part of the world, where the stresses of tourism and economic development can be both a blessing and a curse for the environment? Consider participating in a **conservation project** to help preserve the beauty that you are blessed to witness.

## C. TO YOUR COMMUNITY

As you return from your Hero's Journey with the elixir of wisdom from your Wellness Retreat, think about how you can contribute to your family, your friends, and your community. What have you learned that you can share? May your memory of the Andes help you connect more deeply with Nature. May your Wellness Retreat experience allow you to deepen your mindfulness practice.



Peru is an ideal destination for those pursuing any type of wellness retreat. Peru's Sacred Valley in particular has natural beauty and cultural richness so striking that it instantly nourishes our physical bodies and seamlessly soothes our busy minds. And for as long as we have been living in Peru, the Sacred Valley has been a mecca for those pursuing spiritual transformation.

In 1995, our founder, Carol Cumes, published **Pachamama's Children: Mother Earth & Her Children of the Andes in Peru.**

It was based on 10 years of her research on the Quechua people's cosmology and their spiritual connection with Mother Earth. Inspired by what she learned from the gentle Quechua, Carol created the Sacred Valley's first Yoga and Wellness Center, Willka T'ika ("Sacred Flower" in Quechua). Over the last 27 years, Willka T'ika has hosted thousands of yoga and wellness retreats. We've watched the world come to Peru seeking healing, inspiration, and connection..

# ABOUT TERRY

Terry Cumes is the Director of Willka T'ika Wellness Retreat founded by his mother, Carol Cumes, in 1995. Terry has been leading yoga, wellness and adventure groups to Peru since 1997 and has worked in international education and hospitality in 4 continents over 3 decades. Terry began his yoga training in the 1980s with Sri K. Pattabhi Jois and currently oversees Willka T'ika's yoga program, which includes vinyasa, hatha and yin yoga modalities. Terry studied international relations at UC Berkeley and received his MBA from Stanford University.



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