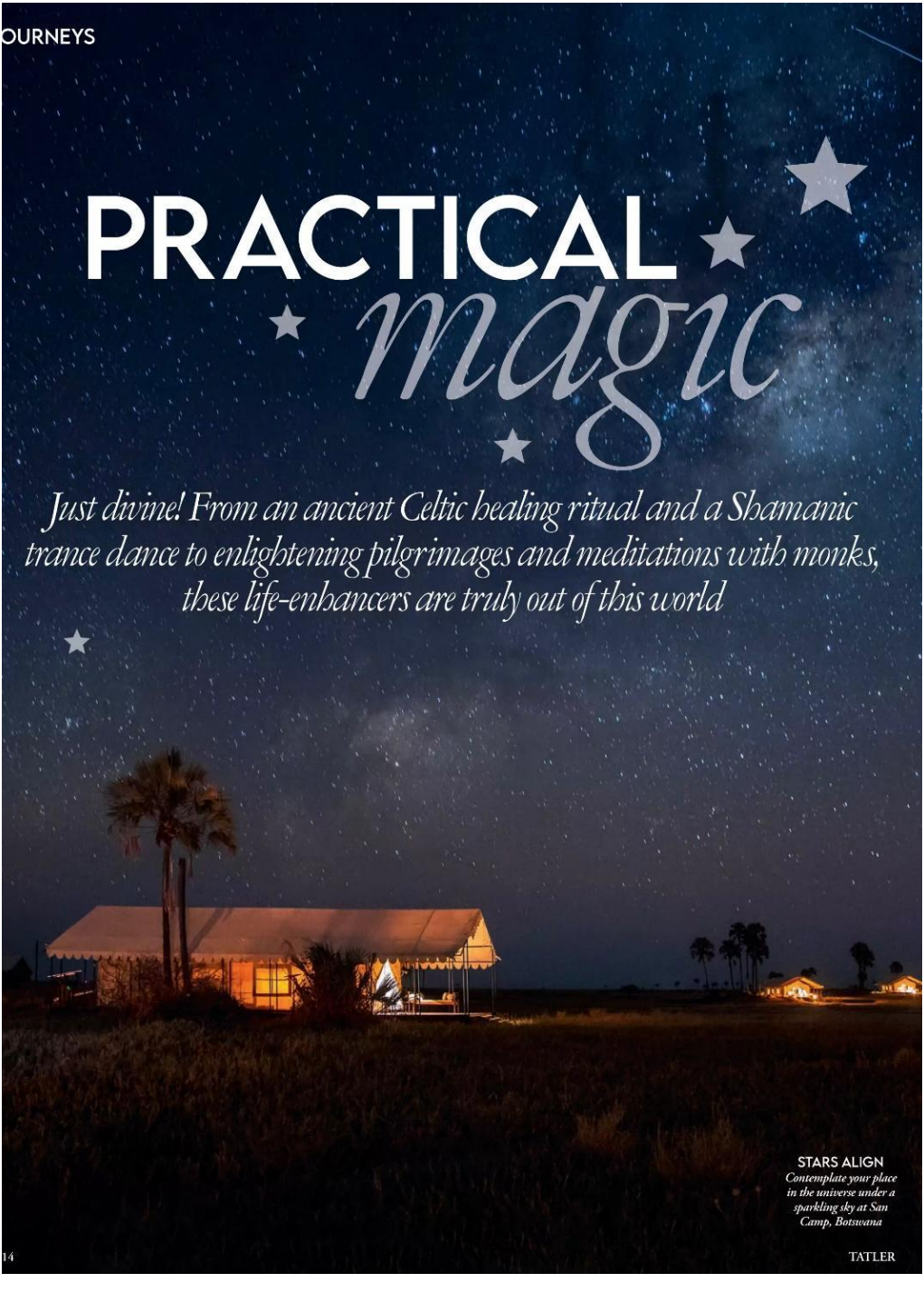

TATLER
TRAVEL GUIDE 2025
THE 101 BEST HOTELS IN THE WORLD

PRACTICAL *magic*

Just divine! From an ancient Celtic healing ritual and a Shamanic trance dance to enlightening pilgrimages and meditations with monks, these life-enhancers are truly out of this world



STARS ALIGN
Contemplate your place in the universe under a sparkling sky at San Camp, Botswana

BEST FOR OUT-OF-BODY EXPERIENCES: SAN CAMP

You want a life change? Then come to this place, set in a vast swathe of Botswanan wilderness on the edge of the Makgadikgadi salt pans. Here, because you're given an experience that's more subtle and more holistic than the typical African safari, it happens organically. Yes, there are the conventional game drives, but you also get to explore the magical landscape which cradles this romantic little settlement of 1940s-style tents. And to top it all, there's no electricity – hence, no light pollution – which makes the stargazing among the best in the world, with the heavens radiating an inexplicably therapeutic energy. Back on earth, excursions led by such legendary guides as Ralph Bousfield and Super 'Sande will take you on sensorial journeys so intense that they could be shamanic pilgrimages. And equally enlightening is the time spent with the San bushmen, especially if you join them in a trance dance. Chanting, stamping and swaying: it is an almost out-of-body experience, in which the celestial bodies twinkling above take on a whole new significance. That 'trip' is sure to imbue you with a grounded, unshakeable faith in the universe – not to mention a life-affirming high – and will ever remain one of the most visceral, exciting, powerful healings you'll ever experience in a lifetime. *naturalselection.travel*

BEST FOR NATURAL HIGHS: SHAKTI HIMALAYA ADVENTURE

Prepare to be permanently changed by this trip, and to be strengthened mentally and physically as well. Not only by the hiking and yoga, but by the meditating and praying with monks; and also by simply passing the hours with Pujan, an incredible guide who plans your trek from homestay to homestay. (They're models of low-key luxe and are provided with plenty of cashmere, canopied beds and hot showers.) Days here begin with yoga, meditation and chanting, followed by study with Champola Pemba, a Lama from the Enchey monastery who can accompany you as you dive into the countryside – a patchwork of paddy fields studded with turquoise-timbered cottages – or beyond, into forests of chestnut trees. It's the most healing landscape conceivable; over the six allotted days, as you cross a series of valleys where prayer flags flutter above ancient monasteries, it will bestow on you freedom from all your worldly cares. One highlight that will stay with you is an encounter with Gautam Guruji, a medicine man who can truly instil belief in the power of the mind – and in his 'gift'. He's the real deal. *shaktihimalaya.com*

BEST FOR TRANSFORMATION: LANSERHOF LANS, AUSTRIA

The authentic, indisputable OG, Lans is the mothership of the Lanserhof group, which is well known for its extraordinary ability to instil change. The kilos drop off and complexions are transformed, in part through a well-managed regime of fasting that cleans the gut and neutralises acids in the body. But no one really talks about the emotional release, and the deep spiritual enlightenment, engendered by the latter. Sure, when you're in a healing crisis, the first few days of the Cure cannot be described as pleasurable. But at least you're in the best possible hands, and the team not only bristles with Austrian efficiency but also radiates real kindness. (Ask for Dr Walser, who will guide you through the programme with grace and wisdom.) Plus, you can always take your mind off the hunger – and quieten racing thoughts – with a craniosacral session from Alexander Kolerus, whose deft touch will restore you to physical and mental equilibrium. Nonetheless, do muster the energy to Nordic-walk along the dappled woodland trails or to simply forest bathe. And whatever you do, make sure you make a pilgrimage to the storybook Baroque Heiligwasser church, perched on the side of the Patscherkofel mountain: this chapel is a place of true contemplation, with its healing spring said to have the most miraculous powers. And it's this potent mix of science and spirituality that delivers such significant changes. You'll emerge from Lans crackling with energy, possessed of that elusive inner glow and gifted with a profound sense of peace. And not to mention the flattest stomach. *healingholidays.com*

BEST FOR BREAKTHROUGHS: GOLDEN DOOR, CALIFORNIA

Step through its eponymous portal, studded with lapis lazuli, amethyst and rose quartz, and you'll find yourself somewhere that works wonders for those going through bereavement or a break-up. Way before 'holistic' became the buzzword of choice for every spa, founder Deborah Szekely – affectionately known as the 'godmother of wellness' – created this groundbreaking retreat, which balances body, mind and soul to an extraordinary degree. And it must be said, there's a particular ease to becoming 'aligned' here. Your stay lingers in the memory as a series of transformative sensations: perceiving the glow of orange groves and cacti on a silent meditation hike, as they spill across the hills at daybreak; or performing a barefoot labyrinth ritual in the dead of night, following a candlelit yoga nidra session. The therapists here are exceptional. Patsy is a real-deal healer whose daily Swedish massage is the best you've ever had. PT Scotty can be both kind and gentle, while simultaneously whipping you into shape with heart-racing treadmill sprints (all the while delivering some major life lessons). And psychotherapist Danielle Hering's profoundly mystical approach will help you to shed years of baggage: as she guides you through a holotropic breathwork session, you'll find yourself falling into another dimension. *healingholidays.com*

BEST FOR PURIFICATION: THE GAINSBOROUGH BATH SPA

The hot springs of Bath have long been renowned for their cleansing and restorative properties. On their account, the Celts worshipped the god Sulis here – the Romans acknowledged the significance of the site in the name of Aquae Sulis – and there's a special magic at play in their three locations. Who knows if that's thanks to the ley lines running through this Unesco World Heritage Site, or to the mineral-rich waters so revered by the Georgians? But to really imbibe and honour it, you should stay at The Gainsborough Bath Spa. Ensconced in its Grade II-listed townhouse, you can properly get under the skin of your myth-saturated surroundings. And mere steps away is the town's holiest healing spring, the Cross Bath, a steaming open-air thermal pool on the site of a Celtic shrine. Today, it's still a powerful vortex, reverberating with a special energy, and to bathe here in a private after-hours ritual (meticulously arranged by the hotel) bestows a peace that passeth understanding. Your mind stops whirring, your spirits feel lighter and you emerge with a rediscovered spring in your step. That night, you'll sleep like never before. *thegainsboroughbathspa.co.uk*

BEST FOR FINE-TUNING: LILY OF THE VALLEY, ST TROPEZ

Though this elegant establishment, hidden in pine-forested hills overlooking wild and unspoilt Gigaro Beach, certainly repairs the body, it doesn't ignore the spirit. But first things first. If you're looking to slim down and shape up, it offers an optional low-calorie menu curated by nutritionist Jacques Fricker; and you won't notice the restricted carb-count when the food – say, grilled lobster with almonds and coral vinaigrette, and the most sensational egg-white omelette – is so indescribably delicious. Then there is the Shape Club, a Philippe Starck-designed homage to health, ▷