

## Thursday, February 26, 2015

### Zen Came Tulum



**CLOCKWISE TOP LEFT: YOUR EDITOR, IN A JOYOUS MORNING STRETCH, WEARING LULULEMON STUDIO RACERBACK TOP AND PRISMSPORT DAISY CAPRI LEGGINGS; POST YOGA BREAKFAST; TWO HALVES OF A WHOLE: HALLE BECKER**

AND LOREN BASSETT; VIEW FROM THE DECK AT AMANSALA; [ROBERTA ROLLER RABBIT ETOILE PAJAMA SHIRT](#); BEACHFRONT ACCOMMODATIONS AND LOUNGE OPTIONS AT AMANSALA

There are not a lot of people who could convince this non-yogi to go on a yoga retreat but when Halle Becker — one of the things I wrote I did not hate in “[The Six Things I Hate About Yoga](#)”— told me she was leading one with Loren Basset in Tulum, Mexico, I booked my spot before you could say “ohm”.

Past the line-up of all-inclusive resort complexes on the Mayan Riviera is the still unspoiled stretch of beach of Tulum Mexico, an eco-chic holiday destination that has long been a mecca for yoga retreats. The resorts there are made up of beachfront thatched roofed huts and open air palapa studios that are the dream settings for any yoga class. Our retreat would be at the [Amansala](#), a longstanding favorite and home of the “[Bikini Bootcamp](#)“. A yoga vacation would be a better description than retreat, because although the meals were filled with deliciously fresh and healthy offerings, we would not be retreating from such guilty pleasures as chips, guacamole and margaritas. And while there was a 2 hour yoga class in the morning and 1 1/2 hour class in the afternoon, I opted for my own one class a day plan, which for 5 days in a row was more yoga than I practice in a month.

Halle Becker and Loren Basset have been friends for 8 years. Halle was originally Loren’s student at a studio called “Some Like it Hot.” I know them both from [Pure Yoga](#). On a whim, they decided to organize a retreat 4 years ago. The first year had 16 people who they begged to come and they hosted it at the remote Holbox Island resort in Mexico. Their second retreat was at Amansala, where it has been ever since, and by chance that year Drew Barrymore, Cameron Diaz, Reece Witherspoon, and Demi Moore happened to be staying. They joined Halle and Loren’s classes for fun, which you can only imagine was off the hook. The retreats have grown in size each year and been sold out ever since.





**CLOCKWISE TOP LEFT: BEACHFRONT VIEW AND HAMMOCK ON THE DECK OF MY ROOM AT AMANSALA CHICA; LOREN, LEFT, WEARING TANYA-B YOGA LIFEWEAR TIE DYE HALTER AND THREE QUARTER LEGGINGS, AND HALLE, IN SAME TANYA-B TOP AND CANDIDA MARIA LEGGINGS; MEXICAN YOGA BLANKETS; ROOFTOP BUDDHA OVERLOOKING THE SEA; YOGA IN THE OPEN AIR STUDIO AT AMANSALA**

The two are a self described “odd couple... different but similarly aligned.” While Halle has a big personality and comedic routine that does not go unnoticed, Loren has a quieter but equally forceful presence, with a cool calm not easily distracted. If it were up to Loren they would only have 40 people on the retreat, while Halle says “I’d have 5000. It would be the Superbowl of retreats!” While their style of teaching may differ, their intention is the same. Says Halle, “We teach what we need to learn.” Both have interesting stories to tell. Both have had struggles — Loren had an eating disorder, and Halle has dealt with drug addiction. Both have jammin’ playlists, which for Halle can range from Lynyrd Skynyrd to Biggie Smalls to Lauryn Hill to Nina Simone, and for Loren is a sexy Ibiza Chillout mix.

For Halle and Loren, the goal of the retreat is to take people out of their daily routine, to get a little spirituality, and have some fun. Besides yoga, each day was highlighted by a different adventure.

There was the traditional Mayan Temascal, a sweat lodge ceremony led by a shaman that was an intense 90 minute physical and spiritual cleansing experience. There was also the Mayan clay treatment consisting of the application and rinsing off of therapeutic clay in a seaside ceremony done as a group. There were also excursions to the Mayan ruins around Tulum, as well as the cenotes, the subterranean fresh water swimming holes around the area. All these activities, along with just chilling on the beach with a good book and chatting with new friends, were meant to remind us, as Halle says, “We are human beings, not human doings.”



**THE GROUP COVERED IN MAYAN CLAY; SWINGING LOUNGE BEDS; HALLE IN DOWNWARD DOG WITH LOREN IN SCORPION POSE; BIKINS FOR SALE ON THE BEACH BY [HECHO A MANO TULUM](#); THE BEACHSIDE MAYAN RUINS OF TULUM**

Despite my constant declaration of not liking yoga, it has become a regular part of my fitness routine and something I am trying to learn to enjoy. My goal for the trip was to get a little better at it, and with a headstand achieved (albeit with assistance), a crow pose held for about 3 breaths, and standing up in a bind from a lunge, I can say I did. Spending 5 days on the beach in Tulum, in the sun and the