

# Natural state of being

In a rewilding adventure rippling through the body, mind and spirit, we allow the Cornish coast and countryside to return us to our natural state of being.

Words ALLY MCMANUS Photography BEN HARRIS

*"Forget not that the earth delights to feel your bare feet and the winds long to play with your hair." – Kahlil Gibran*

Aligning with the rhythms of nature and tapping into its wisdom – namely its power to heal mind, body and energetic ailments – takes time. Nature has its own pace and nothing seems to happen in a hurry. Some months ago I asked myself if this same approach could be explored in the context

of travel, which is where I find myself today on the other side of the world. Along for the ride is my friend and photographer, Ben Harris, as we embark on a rewilding journey through Cornwall in southwest England.

Any experience that reconnects you with nature is going to involve the traditional elements – fire, wind, earth and water – alongside the opposing forces of yin and yang. I was able to witness, feel and embody

these notions as they weaved and worked their way into me for a complete rewild of my system during this five-day adventure.

But, as the famous naturalist and explorer John Muir so wisely reminds, "In every walk with nature one receives far more than he seeks." Little to my knowledge at the time but acutely present at the end of my adventure was the realisation that I had returned to my natural state of being.



### Yang: where fire meets wind

Even though thick, lush trees and the aftermath of heavy rain surround us, the salty air I'm breathing in indicates that we're close to the sea. We're spending the next 72 hours in the 45 acres of wilderness that makes up Kudhva on the north coast of Cornwall. Translated to "hideout" in Cornish, Kudhva is an environmentally friendly commune set on a disused quarry that founder Louise Middleton bought and repurposed in 2016.

The free-spirited yet grounded and driven entrepreneur hails from neighbouring region Devon, but has spent many of her laps around the sun globetrotting. Now living in a converted chapel down the road with her three sons, Louise exudes a '90s rock 'n' roll aesthetic that has no doubt influenced the rugged and wild edginess of Kudhva. Attracting a following from surfers to musicians to writers, it's a destination that lends itself to creativity and connection. "Friendships are made. Business happens. A lot of people keep in touch," she reveals.

The wind is howling and waves are crashing in the distance as we walk up to our Kudhva cabin, which is located off the main slate track at the top of a hill looking down the valley and out to the sea. "This bit of coastline is really untouched," Louise explains as we navigate the muddy, wet terrain. Our small-scale architectural hideout is standing above the ground on wooden legs, which allows nature to keep growing underneath. "New flora comes every two weeks," she says, which adds a regenerative layer to the design and function. The elevated cabins include a built-in sofa, floor-to-ceiling windows and a comfy mezzanine bed.

To settle myself fully into the environment, I take off my boots and walk barefoot as we explore the rest of the space. Connecting with the Cornish land in this way is a form of "earthing" – tapping into the electrical energy of the earth. "I call that 'going to ground'," Louise reveals. "And then life somehow becomes easier."

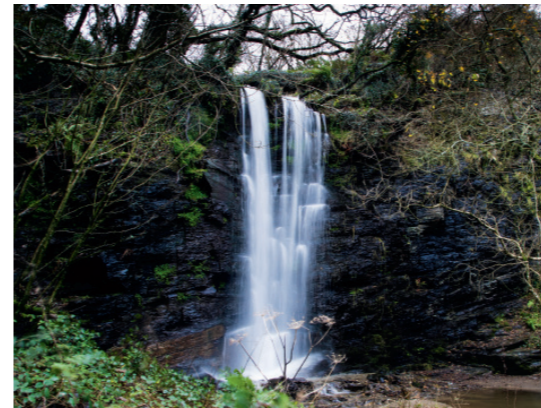
Louise has coined a term for the rewilding approach at play during a stay at Kudhva: "bio time". "Slowing down to nature's time. It's a very subtle approach," she explains as she changes a gas bottle on the outdoor stove in the wide, open and expansive kitchen/dining area that doubles as a meeting space. There's a cosy atmosphere, with a long, wooden dining table taking

centre stage, dotted with quartz stones. I imagine the table holds many outdoor feasts in the warmer months. "A lot of people really want to be off-grid," she continues, which is made effortlessly possible as phone reception and charging points are minimal.

"Kudhva is designed to be a little bit challenging," Louise explains. "Being up high, you have elevated thought patterns. It's completely raw – so stripped back. And as humans, we require a bit of bravery." It's indeed a beautifully challenging experience for the part of me that seeks safety and comfort. The rugged landscape is wild, windy and unpredictable. My unbalanced vata dosha resists the chilly autumn wind at first but once I build more fire in my body from the physical exertion required to simply be in the environment, I surrender a bit more to the windswept feeling that engulfs me. Fire is another element at play in our external world (creating fire to heat food and warm our bodies), but we're also cultivating fire within by using our bodies as a mode of transport, whether that's hiking up the hill to turn on the generator or following the steep and wet trail back down to our car.

Tintagel has been surveyed as a "dark sky" region, which means it's one of the best places in the country to stargaze. I notice this first-hand when I wake up in the middle of the night to go to the bathroom. There's only a gentle breeze in the air as I gaze in awe at the starry sky. Every step down the ladder as I make my way to the toilet block feels like an embodied experience. I walk past a running stream and feel just as intimately close to nature as I do to myself. I remember Louise's wise words from the day before: "Once you create space, you don't need to do much. Nature is our great fixer." Just before dawn a few hours later I hear owls hooting in the distance and notice that I am fully in the experience of being present simply by listening to what's around me.

Ben and I enjoy silence in the company of each other just as much as we engage in conversation. We're ebbing and flowing with each other just as much as we are with the natural surrounds. It's another deep practice of tuning in and listening. Louise calls this dynamic "off-grid conversations". It's a back-to-basics experience that allows us to cultivate an awareness and appreciation for the simple things in life: fresh air, clean water, a warm fire and connection with the earth. "It definitely feels really pure," Louise says.



## Cornwall's culinary delights

**Breakfast:** Roadside cafe Strong Adolfo's is the perfect morning pit stop with relaxed vibes. Order the delicious porridge and quench your thirst with a smoothie or flat white. W: [strongadolfos.com](http://strongadolfos.com)

**Lunch:** Temple, in the quaint seaside village of Bude, is a light-filled eatery offering modern and seasonal Cornish produce. Check it out for plant-based salads, tasty toasties and strong coffee. W: [templecornwall.com](http://templecornwall.com)

**Dinner:** The Port William (aka "Port Willie") is a picturesque pub by the sea nestled between the dramatic cliffs of Trebarwith Strand. It's a great meeting place for locals, offering pub classics and great pizza. W: [theportwilliam.co.uk](http://theportwilliam.co.uk)





## Sustainable education at Eden Project

We experience a unique immersion in nature at eco-tourism destination Eden Project, home to the world's largest rainforest in captivity. The environmental charity cross social enterprise in Bodelva, south Cornwall, provides a means of connection with the natural world through its rainforest, contemporary gardens, exhibitions, concerts and events.

Storytelling is carried throughout each section beautifully, focusing on connection, commonality and transformation. To celebrate, preserve and enhance the ecology and environment closer to home, there are plans to create an additional eco-tourist attraction along Victoria's Great Ocean Road on a former mine site, which will become Eden Project Anglesea. W: edenproject.com

During our final day at Kudhva I notice my body fully surrender to the surrounds. I'm a little less cautious on the stepping-stones and tracks and realise I've placed my trust back into nature to hold me. On the way to our next destination we make a spontaneous pit stop at Tintagel Castle, said to be the birthplace of King Arthur many moons ago. The sea is wild and rugged as waves crash along the rocky coastline surrounding the castle. The sun begins to set over the sea, bringing a magical energy to the environment that I later associate with the ley lines in Tintagel.

Ben and I can't help but feel a mystical, energetic pull to the location that encourages us to stay a little longer. We hike up a side of the mountain to nab a better view of the sunset across the Atlantic Ocean, reconnecting with the fire and wind elements once more. At the top of the mountain I ground my feet into the Cornish earth and gaze at the alluring sun as it sets before our eyes. I feel a sense of alignment and connection with myself as the healing power of nature works its way deeper into my system.

### Yin: where earth meets water

Journeying south to the inland Cornish town of Liskeard, we pull into a driveway as a tractor is coming out and exchange a smile with who I later learn is Richard Tamblyn, one of the fifth-generation farmers at the helm of Botelet, a beautiful farm with cottage accommodation, retreats and wellbeing offerings.

Doves are sitting on the windowsill outside as we unload our bags from the car. "It feels quite homely," reflects Ben. "It's less wild, more contained," he adds while we're welcomed into the soothing space at Manor Cottage by a warm, crackling fire. The Grade II-listed property feels rich in history and there is an eclectic yet classical style woven throughout the cosy space.

Shortly after our arrival we receive a visit from the lovely Joey Hulin (W: horizoninspired.co.uk). The writer, meditation facilitator and retreat host from Cornwall greets us with an open heart and within moments of being in her warm presence, I feel myself soften. "Botelet is such a beautiful place to really be present," Joey shares, which we experience first-hand as she takes us through a grounding meditation. "Soften and relax into a state of being," she guides as we sit beside the fire. We discover that Manor Cottage is a beautiful spot for stillness and calm as we reopen our eyes after meditation feeling settled into the space.





Ben's most profound means of connection takes place when using the farm's earthy outdoor shower. "It was an incredibly freeing experience," he says as he returns to the cottage. "It connects you to your ancestors in a way." We spend our last afternoon at Botelet taking the Bury Down walk to the Iron Age hill fort. We're told the 20-minute journey is great for an early-morning run and I can understand why as I reach the mountaintop out of breath but in awe of the 360-degree view of green patchwork fields. I lay down on the grass to soak up the restoring energy of the earth and melt effortlessly into the landscape as raindrops fall on my face. I feel a marrying between the elements of earth and water in this moment of simply being.

On our last morning at Botelet I witness Tia and Richard's children embracing the muddy, soft earth as they jump in puddles outside the cottage. As they connect with the outdoors in their playful, childlike nature, I am reminded this same, free-spirited nature that I possess myself is always available to me and acts as one of the most enjoyable journeys back to my natural state of being. 🌿

*The writer and photographer were guests of Kudhva and Botelet. For more information, visit [kudhva.com](http://kudhva.com) and [botelet.com](http://botelet.com)*

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As I sit down with Richard's wife, Tia, and his sister, Julie, in the farmhouse the family shares with Tia and Richard's three young children, I learn that Botelet farm, nestled in a lush valley, has been with the Tamblyn family since 1860. Tia has just whipped up some vegan peanut butter cookies that we enjoy over a cup of coffee. "Things evolve organically here," Tia says with a smile, with The Breakfast Club a perfect example of this. The community meet-up invites guests and locals to the Tamblyn's long farmhouse table to enjoy a nourishing, seasonal plant-based meal together once a month. Julie likens it to "a pop-up cafe at Botelet farm" as we sit at the aforementioned table together. "It's community in the countryside," she adds.

Every process at Botelet is carefully considered, with this mindful approach interwoven into their wellbeing offerings. "The energy of Botelet isn't transient. You're so held here," Joey explains, which is why she

holds meditations and retreats at Botelet in conjunction with the Tambyn family. "People are drawn to a simpler way of living," Tia shares. She offers therapeutic massage treatments to guests (W: [tiatamblyn.com](http://tiatamblyn.com)) and I'm lucky enough to experience this, feeling deeply relaxed, rejuvenated and nourished from her soft but strong approach. The nurturing body worker uses the healing sense of touch to connect with and restore the body.

Each night at Botelet I fall asleep in stillness and wake up in peace. One morning I rise particularly early and journey down the big, winding staircase to the rustic kitchen to brew some coffee. The fire is still crackling as morning light streams through the windows. I take this as an opportunity to listen to the gentle sound of birds chirping outside as chickens wander around the damp grounds dotted with autumn leaves. This calm environment lends itself so naturally to introspection.



## Relax and retreat at Boconnoc House & Estate

Just a stone's throw away (in Cornish terms) from Botelet is Boconnoc, a family-run country estate in Lostwithiel. "This place feels quite healing," Clare Fortescue explains to me as we journey through the lush, tranquil property she runs with her mother, Elizabeth. The family undertook a 12-year restoration project on the house that is now home to wellbeing retreats throughout the year. The location lends itself beautifully to mindfulness by igniting passion and creativity while encouraging stillness, space and silence.

Yoga classes take place every Thursday morning at Boconnoc House and we enjoy a gentle vinyasa session with local teacher, Annie. The walk into the Georgian country house exudes a sense of peace as the morning mist cocoons us in the soothing environment. We move and breathe with the 10 other locals who roll out their mats with us as birds sing and trees sway just outside the windows. W: [boconnoc.com](http://boconnoc.com)

