

THE ULTIMATE *Fit-cation*

Embark on a Tropical Fitness Retreat with Black Sheep Studios

Written by Sarah Hodgson

While LBI is a heavenly utopia in the summer season, overflowing with warm weather attractions, extravagant cuisine and well-kempt beaches, the barrier island is not immune to the wintry atrocities that plague seasonal territories (even the most diehard, LB-Islanders need a vacation from their vacation homes come December). Fortunately for area folks, Black Sheep Studios in Haven Beach has a sunny solution to the winter blues: tropical fitness retreats. Devon Karvan opened Black Sheep Studios in 2016 with a mission to provide Long Beach Island a unique, butt-kicking workout experience. At the trendy Haven Beach space, there's a little something for everyone: kickboxing, spin, outdoor beach boot camp, barre, TRX, yoga, Halo, mat pilates. But perhaps most unique





among Black Sheep's extensive menu of offerings is the "retreat experience," now in its third year.

So what is the "retreat experience?" Simply put, Black Sheep's fitness gurus whisk clients away to a faraway paradise for over a week of rest, relaxation and exercise.

Karvan wanted to create an experience where people could enjoy Black Sheep Studios' unique workout program in an equally unique destination. Preferably someplace tropical.

"There is nothing we want more than to migrate

somewhere warm for a minute, especially in March," said Karvan. "That month offends me. Freezing, windy and grey with spring just barely on the horizon. No thanks."

Black Sheep retreats are "all inclusive." Bundles include lodging, ground transportation, excursions and healthy, gourmet meals prepped by a personal chef. And while wellness getaways with Black Sheep might incorporate lavish amenities, pricing is flexible for interested parties.

"We always accommodate by offering payment plans that are tailored specifically to your needs.



We also tend to have a number of options available such as rooms that can be shared with up to four people, which cuts the cost of the trip down significantly," said Karvan.

Accommodations are typically luxury villas or boutique hotels equipped with outdoor, often oceanfront fitness spaces so that retreat-goers can take in their surroundings while working out. For example, during the studio's 2020 trip to Belize, their poolside yoga sessions just so happened to overlook a private beach and crystal clear water.

The standard retreat day is structured to include exercise, relaxation and, perhaps most exciting, exploration. From horseback riding on the beaches of Costa Rica and snorkeling in Belize, to kayaking through mangroves and biking to a Mayan sweat lodge in Tulum, the Black Sheep retreats are the stuff of adventure novels.

"We encourage everyone to go on the excursions because the places we go are usually unique to the country," said Karvan.

While excursions are encouraged, Karvan and her team do not enforce a hard and fast itinerary by any means. When asked if a retreat-goer is bound to a mandatory fitness regime on the Black Sheep escape, Karvan gave a resounding, "Hell no!" Exercise may be the premise of the getaway, but it is certainly not a requirement.

"We stress to everyone that it's their vacation and you should do, or not do, whatever makes you happy. If you want to workout two times a day, go for it. If you want to drink aperol spritzes and nap all day, I love that for you," said Karvan. "No one cares. You do you."

Retreat benefits and takeaways will vary from person to person depending on their individual objectives. Whether you're kickstarting a healthier lifestyle, or simply forgoing March on LBI, a wellness retreat can offer the focus and inspiration you need to accomplish your mental, physical health goals.

"For some it's stepping out of their comfort zone and taking a trip where they don't know very many people. For others it's a bonding experience with friends or a family member," said Karvan. "The bonding with like-minded people is always inevitable and has led to some lasting friendships."

Who could and should attend? Karvan says anyone. Husbands, wives, friends, strangers, sisters, cousins. All are welcome.

"If you like to travel, meet really cool people and work out once in a while, you should probably sign up for 2022," said Karvan.

Exotic sights, group camaraderie, delicious cuisine and fun, high intensity workouts? Count us in. For more information about Black Sheep Studios and their fitness retreats, visit <https://blacksheepstudiosnj.com/>.

