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—ELINOR FISH, FOUNDER OF RUN WILD RETREATS

The Moab Mindful Running Retreat, \$1,995 to \$2,395, is slated for several dates this year, including Oct. 8 to 11.

ADVENTURE

Run Wild Retreats' next Ireland retreat, \$4,300 to \$4,800 per person, sets off Sept. 13 to 19.



PHOTO COURTESY OF RUN WILD RETREATS

RUNNING WITH A PURPOSE

LESSEN STRESS WHILE LOGGING MILES ALL OVER THE WORLD ON THESE WOMEN-ONLY RETREATS.

BY ASHLEY MATEO

WHEN THINGS ARE TOUGH, RUNNING CAN FEEL LIKE AN ESCAPE. Run Wild Retreats (runwildretreats.com) takes it a step further, combining running's emotional escapism with once-in-a-lifetime travel experiences.

The Carbondale-based travel company brings runners to trails in Telluride and Iceland, Moab and Spain, and the Canadian Rockies and the Italian Dolomites. But those scenic locations merely serve as a backdrop for the retreats' true purpose: to better manage stress through mindful running.

"Mindful running is the practice of being fully present in your body when you're running, rather than being caught up in a never-ending stream of thoughts, worries and fears," says Elinor Fish, founder of Run Wild Retreats and former competitive ultrarunner. "It helps us physically relax so we can slow that negative stream and eventually tap into a higher degree of stress reduction."

Running has long been associated with stress reduction. In a recent study, researchers at the University of Roehampton in the U.K. found that outdoor sports—including running—made people feel more relaxed than indoor activities. Those who worked out outside lowered their stress levels by 13%, compared to 8% for indoor exercises. Running also tamps down the part of your brain where your inner monologue—that little voice that perpetuates self-doubts and negative self-talk—comes from, according to a study published in *Frontiers in Human Neuroscience*. Mindful running is a tool for bringing yourself out of a stress-induced state, so you can control your thoughts and emotions.

But in today's data-obsessed society, where runners track and share everything from distance covered and time on feet to heart rate and calories, it can be hard not to get caught up in comparing

yourself to other runners—and spiralling into the cycle of stress and negativity that can inspire.

Run Wild Retreats are designed to help women remove their own limiting beliefs for a more empowering internal journey. Fish founded the company after realizing chasing PRs was no longer supporting her well-being. Drawing on an experience she had on a running vacation in Patagonia, she organized her first trail-running weekend retreat 10 years ago. "I initially thought what was bringing us together was our curiosity about running on trails, but what really brought us together was the connection we built in talking about what we wanted to improve or change or shift in our lives," she remembers.

With that in mind, she designed four- to seven-day retreats (there are three levels, with level three being the most advanced) that include luxury hotel accommodations; gourmet meals; activities like restorative yoga classes, soaking in hot springs and massages; wellness workshops; and run coaching by professional trail-running guides.

Runners are asked to power down GPS watches and phones on the retreats. "Those are distractions from tuning in to what's going on internally and how you're feeling in your body, which is what you need to be focused on in order to achieve that highest degree of stress reduction," she explains. Besides, the pace is about socializing, sightseeing and picture taking—not PRing. And that makes the retreats (which include 3 to 11 miles of running per day) accessible for newer runners as well as runners who aren't used to logging back-to-back running days.

"Running is the primary activity around which each day is organized," says Fish, "but the idea is to provide the space and opportunity for something deeper to occur." ♦

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—ELINOR FISH