

Embarking on a different kind of journey

Stephen Scourfield

Julie Baker doesn't really deal with travel, as such. She deals with journeys. And her Journeys of the Spirit defy some of the usual definitions we are familiar with.

"I don't sit down and say, 'Where do you want to go?' I say, 'Where are you in your life and where would you like to be?' Then I match the destination to what they want to achieve and how much they can deal with.

"It is very much about dealing with the whole person."

The destination might be an ayurvedic resort in Kerala, south-west India, or a Tuscan village in Italy, Thailand, Byron Bay or the South-West of WA. The Kimberley will be a choice in future.

Wherever it is, says Ms Baker, there will be a reason for its choice.

"Why are Italians so passionate?" she asks. In addition to yoga, meditation,

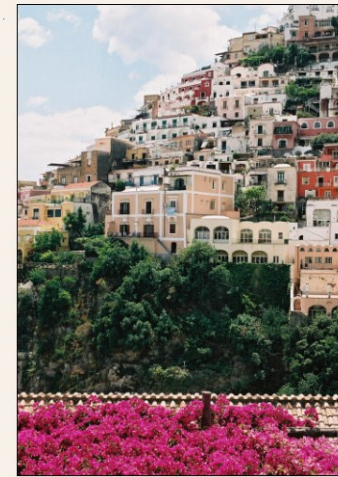
walking and visiting restaurants and vineyards in Italy, Baker's Journeys of the Spirit also delve into the attitudes of the Etruscans, who predated the Romans, and are renowned for their sense of life, religion and art.

The aim is to discover how the Etruscans of north Italy brought "connection, balance and joy to their daily lives," says Ms Baker.

It is in the Indian state of Kerala that ayurveda, the study of prolonging life, had its roots as a traditional healing method, perhaps 5000 years ago. And on the new Kimberley journey, travellers will be exposed to indigenous Australian beliefs and attitudes.

Julie Baker, who has 20 years' experience of such travel, says she has looked widely in Kerala for the most authentic ayurvedic retreat. She found the Ayurvedic Rejuvenation Retreat.

It is important to her that her travellers, who might be in small



Positano on the Amalfi coast.

groups, couples or even alone, bring something back from their journey. "These are intelligent, independent people on a path of some sort," she says. "They can bring something back for their everyday lives.

"It doesn't just stop at the travel experience. It continues after that."

FACT FILE

Journeys of the Spirit's L'Essenza d'Italia trip from May 30 to June 15 has three nights in Rome, seven in Umbria and six on the Amalfi coast.

There are breakfasts daily, dinners, treatments, optional yoga and meditation sessions, guided walks and visits to small wineries and restaurants. It is \$7770 (not including airfare).

A stay at the Ayurvedic Rejuvenation Retreat in Kerala from March 17 to 27 includes beachside cottage accommodation, a daily consultation with an ayurvedic practitioner, all vegetarian meals, all flights to Kerala via Singapore Airlines, transfers, and the guiding of Julie Baker. From \$3990 each.

For more information visit www.journeysofthespirit.com.au, email spirit@inet.com.au or call 0427 766 716.

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