

Head Trip

Adventure travel isn't for the faint of heart or the faint of mind. Find out just how far you can go. by Libby Lowe

LORETTA MODERN HAS SKYDIVED, FLOWN IN acrobatic planes, spent summers in Alaska and traveled Europe on her own. Last year, she was on the hunt for a group trip to Italy. The self-described fearless traveler and adrenaline junkie was hoping for a sober experience. “I couldn’t find one Italian itinerary where they didn’t pick you up at the airport and drive you directly to a vineyard! I’m exaggerating, but only a little,” she says.

She checked out various companies, and although there were some options for travelers in recovery, she didn’t see exactly what she was looking for: a totally sober trip featuring easy access to meetings and options for adventure and volunteer work. Modern’s company, Clean Getaways, was born.

Based in Key West, Fla., Clean Getaways offers trips to get travelers out of their comfort zones. Although Key West may not be the first city that comes to mind for a sober

experience, Modern says her hometown’s sober community is active and welcoming. “The more bars, the more meetings,” she points out. Last December’s Clean Getaways trip to Key West included poolside meetings for those who chose to attend, Jet Ski tours and the opportunity to volunteer at a wildlife sanctuary. Modern also was able to arrange skydiving sessions and biplane trips for interested travelers.

Dr. John Hibscher, psychologist and director of clinical services at Hawaii Island Recovery (HIR), sees great value in pushing your limits. “Trying new things and going in the direction of the uncomfortable spreads through a person’s life, and they find they can do things they couldn’t do before. Being able to do things despite initial fear leads to a tremendous change in people and creates stronger, less fearful individuals.”

Patients at HIR experience group meetings, private sessions and even wild dolphin assisted psychotherapy out in the animals’ natural habitat. They also have access to activities that throw them out of their comfort zones—way out. On weekends, they go on excursions that might include zip-lining, deep-sea fishing, surfing or visiting volcanoes. The idea, Hibscher explains, is to help

patients embrace life in an enthusiastic way and to continue the work of facing fears and breaking out of comfort zones.

Modern’s own quest for adventure began when she was 17 and worked her way across 49 states. But she says she couldn’t fully experience the world until she got sober. “Once the party was over, I realized that most of my travel dreams were just that—dreams. Recovery has given me the freedom to really travel and have amazing experiences,” she says.



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She recently took a solo trip to Paris. “I found an English-speaking meeting, and when I walked in, someone hugged me and I knew I was in the right place,” Modern says. “About 13 of us went out for dinner afterward, and I met up with one of the other women the next day for sightseeing. It was an awesome experience.”

Although Clean Getaways is newer to the scene, Modern is planning big trips. She hopes to offer hot air ballooning in Italy in April and a chance to ride the rapids in the Wild West. She is also planning a Turkish adventure.

Those in recovery, without access to a structured program like HIR’s but considering an adventure trip, should put themselves in situations that will end with success, Hibscher says. “Sign up for something and have the idea that it will be an adventure, that it will be a good experience and something you can accomplish. Any time we anticipate being in a situation and then avoid it because of fear there is immediate relief. But the cost of that is increased fear. Success leads to exhilaration and willingness to go do things that you have always wanted to do.” ■

Visit cleangetawaytravel.com and hawaiiislandrecovery.com for more information.