ON THE HORIZON NEWSLETTER

Thermal Horizons Yoga and Wellness Center

Newsletter – November 2026



As Ben and I reflect on our Tulum retreat, I find myself feeling a little bit of everything—gratitude, exhaustion, joy, and a whole lot of perspective. When you pour your heart and soul into creating an experience for others, you hope everyone walks away with something meaningful. But retreats, much like life, don't always unfold as planned. There are beautiful moments, unexpected challenges, different personalities, and plenty of opportunities to practice patience, compassion, and letting go. Through it all, we shared yoga, adventure, laughter, and connection in one of the most beautiful places in the world. One of our members captured her experience in a heartfelt reflection titled Embrace Me, reminding me that sometimes the greatest gift isn't becoming someone new, but learning to embrace exactly who we are. And perhaps that's the real yoga—finding grace in the messy, beautiful, imperfect moments of life.



And isn't that exactly the practice we need as we head into the holidays? If there's one thing Tulum reminded me, it's how easily we can get caught up in expectations—our own and everyone else's. The holidays have a way of magnifying all of it. The pressure to give more, do more, show up for everyone, and somehow keep smiling through the chaos. But what if this season we chose something different? What if we traded a little perfection for presence, a little obligation for intention, and a little of the noise for stillness? That's where your mat comes in. Consider this your invitation to slow down, reset, and reconnect with yourself before giving so much of yourself away. Come as you are. Move a little. Breathe deeply. Simply BE. Your mat is waiting, your community is here, and there's always room for you at Thermal Horizons. We're all just walking each other home. 🤍

With love and gratitude,



Jaime 🤍

Founder, Thermal Horizons Yoga & Wellness Center

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Embrace Me





A Thermal Horizons member's introspection on yoga, ancient mysteries, dancing monkeys, and the unexpected pleasure of coming home

There I was, a 52-year-old woman in Mexico, balancing another grown woman on the soles of my feet.

We were playing Superman.

Technically, we were practicing partner yoga, which sounds considerably more sophisticated. Elizabeth had paired us up for exercises involving physical contact, coordination, and trust. I was partnered with Sue, and although I consider myself fairly adventurous, there's something inherently awkward about being asked to establish a meaningful physical connection with someone you barely know before breakfast.

But then came Superman.

Lying on my back, I positioned my feet against Sue's hips, held her hands, and lifted her into the air. Then we switched places.

Suddenly, I was a little girl again, playing the same game with my family. Later, I would play it with my own children.

We were simply two grown women flying around like children.

And I was having an absolutely wonderful time.

A year earlier, when I committed to attending Thermal Horizons' fall yoga retreat in Tulum, Mexico, my life looked very different.

My 25-year marriage was ending. My children were growing into adulthood. I was beginning to imagine a future that didn't revolve around the roles I'd occupied for most of my adult life.

By the time I boarded the plane, I was divorced, living independently, building my career, writing, dating, and rediscovering parts of myself that had been quiet for years.

I was also asking an exhausting number of questions.

Who am I now? A mother? A writer? A professional? A creative woman? A sensual woman? Had I done enough work on myself? Was there something else I needed to understand, improve, or leave behind?

I'd spent months examining the various versions of myself, as though somewhere beneath them was a single, definitive woman waiting to be uncovered.

Naturally, I had rather high expectations for Mexico.

I imagined meditation, introspection, perhaps a few cathartic tears. I would shed whatever remnants of my old life were still clinging to me and return refreshed, enlightened, and possibly a more accomplished human being.

A modest itinerary for a vacation.

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During our opening gathering, we were asked to choose a personal mantra without thinking too much about it.

Two words came immediately.

Embrace Me.

Not Change Me. Not Improve Me. Not even Find Me.

Embrace Me.

For the three months leading up to the retreat, I'd been interviewing Thermal Horizons instructors Lauren Whempner, Elizabeth Done, and Olga Atkinson about Foundational Yoga.

Lauren spoke about understanding our individual bodies rather than trying to make them resemble someone else's idea of a perfect pose. Elizabeth emphasized slowing down, breathing, and learning when to challenge ourselves and when to modify. Olga explored yoga's deeper traditions, particularly the practice of observing ourselves without judgment.

At the time, I approached those conversations as a writer, interested in how three instructors could interpret the same practice so differently.

But their perspectives followed me to Mexico.



Years of yoga had given me strength, balance, mobility, and confidence in my body. During the retreat, those foundations accompanied me beyond the mat—into the ocean, through underground caves, and into unfamiliar experiences.

They also helped me appreciate something that doesn't come naturally to a woman who has spent much of her adult life organizing people, meeting deadlines, and generally making things happen.

Sometimes, you don't have to be in charge.

Jaime, Ben, Molly, Olga, and Elizabeth had created a week of opportunities for us to practice, explore, connect, and experience a remarkable corner of the world.

All we had to do was show up.

Well, that and occasionally contend with what appeared to be a tropical monsoon.

During one yoga practice, rain came down so violently that we crowded into a corner of the palapa, trying to keep our belongings from blowing away while maintaining some semblance of dryness.

There we were, practicing the ancient art of finding inner peace while Mother Nature attempted to rearrange the furniture.

The weather was not interested in our itinerary.

And yet the retreat continued, with adjustments, laughter, and the occasional surrender to circumstances beyond anyone's control.

One of our excursions took us to the ancient Mayan ruins at Tulum, perched above the Caribbean Sea.

Our guide spoke about women holding some of the highest positions in the community. He pointed out structures and imagery that he interpreted as representations of the womb and the life-giving relationship between masculine and feminine forces.

I was floored.



Standing among those ancient structures, listening to stories of women's leadership, creation, and spiritual power, I felt something stir within me. It wasn't so much a discovery as a

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remembrance—a recognition of something ancient and deeply feminine that existed beyond the roles I'd occupied throughout my life.

I'd studied women's history before. But surrounded by the physical remnants of another civilization, I felt its significance in a different way. It wasn't simply something to understand intellectually. It was something I felt connected to.

I left with a renewed fascination for history, spirituality, and symbolism—and a rabbit hole of research I fully intend to disappear into this fall.



I'd remembered that there were still so many wonderful things to explore.

Then there was the reef.

We had the privilege of snorkeling along a protected coral reef, entering an underwater world more astonishing than anything I'd seen before.

Coral formations stretched beneath us, alive with extraordinary shapes and textures. Fish moved through the water in every direction. There were sea turtles and a stingray.

I could hardly believe what I was seeing.

Beneath all that beauty was something formidable. The ocean has currents strong enough to carry a person far from shore, indifferent to our expectations or how well we think we've prepared.

Yet floating above the reef, aware of my own vulnerability, I felt extraordinarily peaceful.



On a separate snorkeling excursion of my own at the resort, I ventured into deeper water where the waves were choppier than I'd anticipated. Although I could have continued, I wasn't particularly enjoying myself.

So I returned to the shallows.

There, floating comfortably and watching smaller fish, I suddenly found myself surrounded by an enormous school of larger fish moving together through the water.

I settled into the shallow water, and they swirled around me, dozens of bodies moving in a beautiful, coordinated dance.

It felt like a hug.

I hadn't gone searching for them. In fact, I'd stopped searching for anything particularly spectacular.

And there they were.

Perhaps years of yoga had given me something beyond strength and balance: the ability to recognize when to challenge myself and when to ease back. It was something Olga often reminded us in class, but here I was, practicing it in the Caribbean Sea.

The ocean didn't need me to prove anything.

I could simply float.

One of the extraordinary things about attending a retreat with Thermal Horizons is spending time with people you might otherwise know only from the brief moments before or after class.

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Our group included people of different ages, backgrounds, personalities, and levels of experience.

And then there was me, a lifelong people-watcher with a journalist's curiosity and a novelist's imagination.

I found the group endlessly fascinating.

During an excursion to the cenotes—underground freshwater pools surrounded by remarkable limestone formations—I was practically beside myself with wonder.

The caves, the water, the stalactites, the sense of entering an ancient world beneath the jungle. I wanted to absorb every detail.



Not everyone shared my preferred method of appreciation.

There were conversations about logistics, water shoes, schedules, and all the ordinary things people discuss when thirty human beings attempt to do anything together.

For a while, I found myself wishing everyone would simply stop talking and look around.

Then I realized something rather amusing.

I was trying to manage how other people experienced a cave.

Apparently, even on vacation, I could find a management position nobody had offered me.

So I wandered toward quieter areas, explored at my own pace, and allowed everyone else to enjoy the cenotes however they pleased.

Olga had spoken during our interview about yoga as a practice of self-study, of observing ourselves without judgment.

It turns out that observing yourself can be considerably more challenging than holding Warrior II.



Especially when you're convinced everyone else is doing vacation incorrectly.

By the end of the week, I had stopped worrying quite so much about what the retreat was supposed to be.

I participated in yoga. I swam. I explored. I enjoyed conversations and found moments of solitude. One morning, I was tired and skipped yoga altogether, sleeping until 9:30.

Imagine that. Traveling all the way to Mexico for yoga and choosing to sleep instead.

The world continued turning as I slept.

And then there was Carnal.

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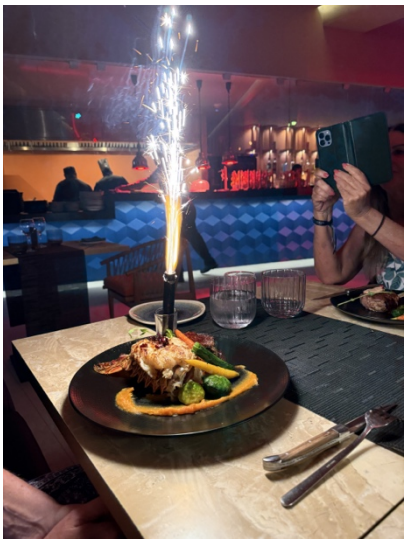
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One evening, I went to dinner with the smallest group I'd joined all week. Carnal was a restaurant that apparently had never encountered the concept of restraint.

There were dramatic lights, elaborate costumes, choreographed dance routines, Ricky Martin songs, and waiters wearing monkey masks.



Yes. Monkeys.

At first, I almost didn't know what to do with it. The spectacle was so extravagantly over the top that I found myself laughing, partly out of amusement and partly out of discomfort.



Was this really happening? Were we supposed to take this seriously?

The performers certainly did.

A woman and a man took turns singing, both remarkably talented, delivering their songs with the conviction of people performing to a sold-out arena. The dancers executed their routines with impressive precision. Even the waiters in monkey masks committed wholeheartedly to their roles.

And somewhere between the singing, the dancing, and the monkeys, something shifted.



I stopped wondering what I was supposed to think about the place and simply enjoyed it.

The talent was extraordinary. The spectacle was absurd. Both things could be true.

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I laughed. Really laughed.

For months, I'd been examining my own life with the seriousness of someone preparing a doctoral dissertation on the subject of herself.

And here were these magnificent, talented people performing their hearts out in a dark restaurant while grown adults wearing monkey heads delivered dinner.

Maybe none of this was quite as serious as I'd been making it.

Not the restaurant. Not the retreat. Not even the endless project of figuring out who I was supposed to become.

We try things. We play different roles. We change our minds. Sometimes we take ourselves terribly seriously, and sometimes we find ourselves in situations so gloriously ridiculous that the only reasonable response is to laugh.

I didn't need to decide whether Carnal was sophisticated, silly, brilliant, or completely insane.

I could appreciate the artistry and laugh at the absurdity.

I could simply be a woman at dinner in Mexico, enjoying the show.

Monkeys and all.

When I think about what made the retreat meaningful, I don't think first about the yoga, beautiful resort, or even the extraordinary places we visited.

I think about having the opportunity to step away from the routines and responsibilities of my ordinary life, surrounded by a community that made room for yoga, adventure, reflection, connection, and rest.



Jaime, Ben, Molly, Olga, and Elizabeth had created something rather extraordinary: a week of experiences, possibilities, and freedom to choose how we participated.

There was structure when I wanted it and space when I needed it.

Which was fortunate, because I'd arrived with an entirely different agenda.

I'd spent months saving for this trip, rearranging my work schedule, coordinating responsibilities at home, and making sure I could get away. Somewhere along the way, I'd turned the retreat into another project, complete with unrealistic expectations and an imaginary performance review waiting for me at the end.

Apparently, I'd assigned myself a full-time job in Mexico.

Instead, the retreat gave me space.



Space to be curious. To laugh. To try things. To change my mind. To spend time with other people or enjoy my own company. To sleep late when I was tired. To be amazed by the ocean and ancient ruins without needing to extract a life lesson from every experience.

And to discover that I didn't have to earn my rest by accomplishing something first.

That realization became clearest when I returned home and woke up the next morning.

After days of humidity, ocean water, and swimming through cenotes, the cool morning California air felt glorious. My feet were finally dry.

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Outside my condo, brown autumn leaves had appeared along the walkway while I was away.

Inside, everything was quiet.

My young adult son had cared for the house. The plants were alive. The sink was cleaner than when I'd left. My dog, Alfredo, was delighted to see me.

And there I was, back in the Femden—as I'd affectionately named my new home.

The Femden is not what anyone would describe as a restrained decorating achievement.

There's a pink velvet couch. A tiger rug. Tigers on the walls. Leopards in the bedroom.

Apparently, when given complete creative control over my living space for the first time in decades, I decided to decorate like a particularly theatrical female jungle cat.

I hadn't consciously planned it that way.

I'd simply chosen things I loved.



But standing there after a week of contemplating ancient feminine power, surrendering to the ocean, and laughing at dancing monkeys, I found my own home rather amusing.

I'd created a den for a powerful female without quite realizing that was what I was doing.

A woman with a pink velvet couch and an impressive collection of predators.

Since moving in, I'd been working to turn this condo into a home for a changed life. Decorating, organizing, arranging, imagining what it might become. I'd spent so much time building a new life that I'd barely allowed myself to enjoy living it.

But that morning, the Femden felt like an old friend I hadn't seen in a while.

I looked around at the velvet, the tigers, the leopards, and all the gloriously ridiculous things I'd chosen simply because they made me happy.

And for the first time in a long while, I wasn't thinking about what came next.

I was ready to embrace me.



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