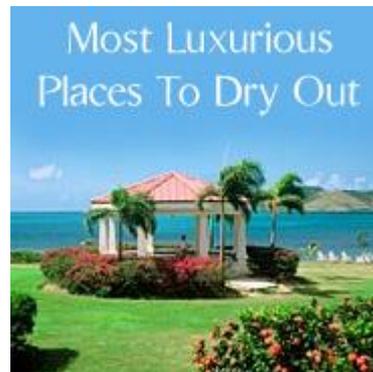


Most Luxurious Places To Dry Out

Christina Valhouli

By a certain point in one's life, most of us know at least one person who needs to break an addiction. We hear about it most when it happens to a celebrity, such as Grammy-winning singer **Whitney Houston**, who entered a rehab facility in California this week, but it is a growing concern in the lives of everyday people as well.

Fortunately, whether it's to alcohol, drugs, sex or gambling there are recovery centers out there that can help. As society's awareness and acceptance of addiction increases, so have the range of treatment programs. While some people--and their insurance companies--may opt for a more self-abnegating path to sobriety, others might choose to fight their demons with the help of gourmet meals and daily massages.



[Click here for the slide show](#)

That's because today, more and more treatment facilities resemble upscale resorts, complete with beach-side settings, fitness centers, tennis courts, fine dining (sans wine list, of course) and a list of fitness activities which could rival a luxury spa. At some centers, such as the newly-opened **Sanctuary** in Australia, patients are also provided with personal chefs, physical trainers, and daily yoga and Pilates classes, along with Shiatsu and acupuncture treatments.

Detoxing in style doesn't come cheap. Many of these programs can cost from \$14,000 to as much \$40,000 a month, and most health insurance companies will only contribute a few hundred dollars, if anything, to defray the costs. No wonder most of the centers are filled with celebrities, Hollywood producers and trustfunders.

Chris Prentiss, a former real estate developer who founded **Passages** in Malibu, Calif. in 2001, says his \$15 million dollar center's beautiful, beachside setting is part of the recovery process, and eliminates some of the shame involved with rehab. "We treat our patients with the utmost respect, and as soon as they walk through our mahogany double doors into our beautiful marble atrium, they feel the healing energy and beauty of Passages," he says.

Prentiss, who has no formal training, became involved in rehabilitation when his son, Pax, who is now a co-director at Passages, was battling heroin addiction. Prentiss feels the more spartan approach, used at older places such as **The Betty Ford Clinic** and the **Hazelden Institute** in Minnesota, is demeaning to patients. "Why should we punish someone for being an alcoholic by turning them into a cleaning person?" he asks, referring to some centers that make their patients clean bathrooms and wash dishes as part of their therapy. "You wouldn't do that to someone who checks into a hospital for diabetes." According to Prentiss, Passages boasts a 91% success rate, and does not employ the 12-step program favored by the vast majority of centers. Instead, the program relies on one-to-one therapy sessions, and all patients undergo an electroencephalogram, or brain wave analysis

"But nobody ever asks us about our treatment program," he complains. "They only focus on the poshness."

Yet all of the upscale centers unabashedly use their poshness as a key selling point, displaying images of tanned patients playing volleyball and sailing, or showcasing polished hardwood floors and ocean vistas in their brochures. This is in sharp contrast to some lower-priced centers, which are known to use methods such as toilet cleaning and floor scrubbing as part of their treatments.

"The serenity of our environment is very soothing and conducive to healing," says **Dr. Debra Bubar**, executive director of **Harmony Place**, also in Malibu. "Since most of our clients are very wealthy, we have tried to mimic the environment of their homes, to make them feel comfortable."

Today many of the most expensive rehab centers are in California, no doubt the result of the passage in 2001 of a state law that allows first- and second-time nonviolent drug offenders to receive substance-abuse treatment instead of jail time. Local residents have become increasingly more vocal in their opposition. According to the *Los Angeles Times*, in the last three years 12 new rehab facilities have opened in Malibu, a community of only 13,000 residents. That translates to one licensed residential program for every 810 residents; Los Angeles County has one for every 58,100 people. Perhaps **Peter Gallagher's** portrayal of a Hollywood shark in the **Robert Altman** film *The Player* summed it up best: His character attended Alcoholics

Anonymous meetings not because he had a drinking problem, but because "that's where all the deals are being made these days."

While there's no proof that rehab centers with 300 thread-count sheets and a personal chef is more effective than checking into a barebones facility, there is no evidence that it is not. Many of the luxury facilities employ much the same therapies and counseling services, 12-step programs, physical therapies, detox programs, psychological treatments and follow-on care from highly-trained staff as the more spartan centers do.

Nevertheless, it would be unfair to simply focus on the superficial attributes of these programs. For the patient, there is still a lack of freedom. Time is still regimented, rules are still strictly enforced and patients are still made to attend meetings and therapies. Unlike a true luxury resort, few people want to stay on once their time there is complete. If the recovery has been successful, the patient will want to get on with his life. The goal, after all, of these facilities, is the same as any other: to help the individual break the cycle of dependency that has brought him there in the first place. If that can be done with horseback riding, beach volleyball and gourmet food, then it may be an even more positive and productive experience.

[Click here for the slideshow of the most luxurious places to dry out.](#)



The Caron Foundation was launched 50 years ago by Richard J. Caron, a Pennsylvania industrialist and recovering alcoholic, and his wife Catherine. The couple used to hold meetings in their home, until they purchased a resort in Wernersville, Penn. The Caron Foundation looks like a college campus, complete with rolling fields and red brick buildings. The center also offers "life enrichment courses" such as "Self-Exploration with Horses," and there's a staff-to-patient ratio of six to one. **Liza Minnelli** checked in before her Dec. 2001 nuptials to **David Gest**, to kick a prescription painkiller habit. (Perhaps she should have signed up for a relationship course as well.)

A one-month program costs \$21,000.

For more information, call (800) 678-2332.

Most Luxurious Places To Dry Out



Cottonwood de Tucson, Tucson, Arizona

Opened in 1999, Cottonwood de Tucson is spread over a 25-acre former dude ranch. The programs focus on treating drug and alcohol addiction, as well as eating disorders and gambling. Treatment involves a mix of therapy, detox and fitness. The Challenge Course was originally conceived and designed for military officers, and is used at the Center to help give patients insight into themselves. There's also tai chi, yoga and martial arts.

The cost is \$890 per day.

For more information, call (800) 877-4520.

Most Luxurious Places To Dry Out



Crossroads, Antigua

Guitarist **Eric Clapton**, no stranger to drugs and alcohol problems himself, opened Crossroads in 1998. The Slowhand man chose the island of Antigua because he's spent years vacationing there. The 29-day program follows a traditional 12-step recovery method, but unlike most centers, the settings are superb. There's a meditation gazebo where patients meet each morning as well as an indoor/outdoor dining room which overlooks Willoughby Bay. The in-house private chef uses local fish, vegetables and meats. Treatments combine detox with individual therapy, and Eastern and Western medicines.

The program costs \$14,500.

For more information, call (888) 452-0091.

Most Luxurious Places To Dry Out

Courtesy: Harmony Place



Harmony Place, Malibu, California

Harmony Place is located above the Pacific Ocean in Malibu. Opened two years ago, the campus looks like an elegant ranch, complete with white picket fences, plenty of potted plants and a horse corral. The main building is a weathered, shingle-style home on a bluff, and patient bedrooms have fluffy white duvets, hardwood floors and fireplaces. The alcohol and drug program relies on a 12-step recovery program, and there's also "Equine Assisted Psychotherapy." There's a gym on-site.

The program costs \$40,000 per month.

For more information, call (310) 457-9674.

Most Luxurious Places To Dry Out

Courtesy: The Meadows



The Meadows, Wickenburg, Arizona

Located in the Sonoran desert, the 26-year-old Meadows treats addictions such as alcohol, drugs, sex, gambling and yes, even work addictions, along with psychological conditions including post-traumatic stress disorder and obsessive-compulsive disorder. Therapies involve a 12-step program, and only 70 patients are admitted at a time. Patients stay in adobe-style buildings and there's an outdoor pool and deck area for tanning.

The program costs \$1,000 a day.

For more information, call 800 MEADOWS (800 632-3697).

Most Luxurious Places To Dry Out



Passages, Malibu, California

Passages was launched in 2001 by Chris Prentiss, after watching his son battle a heroin addiction. Prentiss created an upscale rehabilitation center which caters to a wealthy clientele, and his son Pax is now co-director. Passages only accommodates 12 patients at a time, who have a private chef at their disposal. Facilities include a juice bar, library and media room with flat screen TVs. Unlike other programs, Passages does not rely on a 12-step AA type program and instead stresses one-on-one therapy. Patients at Passages can also participate in yoga, reflexology and massage.

The program costs \$40,000 a month.

For more information, call (310) 589-2880.

Most Luxurious Places To Dry Out



Promises, Malibu, California

When celebrities need to dry out, the first place on their speed dial is Promises, perhaps the quintessential California rehab center. The estate in the Santa Monica Mountains overlooks the Pacific Ocean, and opened in 1997. (There's also a West LA location.) Promises only accommodates 15 patients at a time, who stay in one of three houses. Days start at 7am, with meditation and a mix of group and private therapy. There's a private chef, plenty of gym time and also equine therapy for those who would like it. **Diana Ross**, **Paula Poundstone** and **Ben Affleck** have all checked in.

A one-month stay is \$33,000.

For more information, call (866) 390-2340.

Most Luxurious Places To Dry Out

Courtesy, The Sanctuary



The Sanctuary, Byron Bay, Australia

The Sanctuary, which opened its doors in late 2003, is located on the most easterly end of Australia. All patients stay in beachfront bungalows with verandahs, kitchens and private chefs. The treatment for drug and alcohol addiction combines Eastern and Western medicine, so patients combine therapy with reflexology, yoga and massage. Each patient is assigned an acupuncturist and personal fitness instructor, as well as a yoga and meditation teacher. Shiatsu is an integral part of the program, and there's also an around-the-clock medical staff.

The program costs \$25,000 AUD a week (\$18,500 USD).

For more information, call 61-2-6685-4000.

Most Luxurious Places To Dry Out

Courtesy, Silver Hill Hospital



Silver Hill Hospital, New Canaan, Connecticut

This rehab center looks like an idyllic New England boarding school campus, with colonial style buildings, meadows and brooks. Silver Hill opened in 1931, and has grown to 60 acres, with a Palladian style chapel, riding stables and a fitness center for hydrotherapy, exercise and gymnastics, as well as a glass-enclosed swimming pool. Many of the buildings have been designed by top Manhattan and Greenwich, Conn. interior designers and architects. Billy Joel and Mariah Carey are among the famous alums.

The program costs \$1,200 a day.

For more information, call (800) 899-4455.

Most Luxurious Places To Dry Out

Courtesy: Sober Living



Sober Living by the Sea, Newport Beach, California

Established in 1986, Sober Living by the Sea treats alcohol and drug addiction as well as eating disorders right on the shores of Newport Beach. Patients stay in a Spanish Mediterranean ranch house, and there's a big emphasis on fitness. There's surfing, sailing and beach volleyball, as well as excursions to Catalina Island and nearby museums. Sober Living by the Sea also organizes hiking retreats. The program uses a 12-step method.

A one-month stay costs \$25,000.

For more information, call (800) 647-0042.