



dolphin samadhi by karen grosso

in the bahamas, new friends come in different shapes

When my best friend started talking about going on a WildQuest yoga retreat in the Bahamas, where everyday you'd journey out to the open sea to encounter wild dolphins in their natural habitat, my tail started to flick as it had when I was a little girl obsessed by the mysterious beings. The journey from Ft. Lauderdale to Bimini by seaplane was just one of the many firsts during this magical week. The warm island culture embraced us the moment that we floated ashore, and our hosts welcomed us like long lost friends. We were whisked off down the solitary road that spans this seven-mile-long island –which is only fifty feet wide at some points – to our new home overlooking the sea.

The founders of WildQuest, Daya and Sandesh, along with present owners Amlas and Atmo, lived at Osho's ashram in Pune, India, for about ten years in the 70s, and have used that experience to mold their retreat into a very communal atmosphere. Everyone contributes like a family, and our first order of

business was signing up for a couple "KP" duties throughout the week. Misha was our food artist extraordinaire, and all week we feasted on a menu of healthy, organic vegetarian cuisine, with fresh fish options.

The second order was to don the bathing suit and submerge ourselves in that crystal clear, turquoise water as soon as possible. Thomas was our sea captain for the week and we were honored to set sail as guests on his magnificent forty-five-foot catamaran. There's nothing quite like the feeling of soaring over the brilliant surface of the sea, so clear you can see all the life below, including Bimini Road, the supposed site of the lost city of Atlantis. I spent much of my time sitting on the craft's trampoline, dangling my toes over the edge trying to touch the spray on our first trip out into the open blue.

We sailed out to the playground of the bottlenosed and spotted Atlantic dolphins, an area forty miles by ten miles square, far away from land, with no other boats in sight. We were guests entering the dolphins' home. Would

they invite us in? We wandered around their turf, knocking at their door, picnicking on Misha's creations, until suddenly, the door opened.

The sound of our motor was like a siren song to the creatures. They were born to play and couldn't resist the thrill of jumping the wake of our boat. We saw fins appear in the distance, racing each other to see who could get to our vessel first. Spring was coming to a close, and we witnessed the fruits of their rumored frisky and erotic behavior when we saw all of the babies leaping out of the water like overzealous, rambunctious puppies. Everyone on the boat squealed with delight and all were eager to get in the water to join them in their fun.

Following Amlas' lead, we quietly dipped down into their world. It was difficult to contain our excitement as we were surrounded by such awesome splendor, but we quickly learned not to swim toward them because they loved the game of chase. Instead, we mastered the art of free diving and would

invite them to come mirror us. They were intrigued as well. I was encircled by my new friends as they swam around and sang me their clicking songs. On one occasion, when making eye contact with one of the more mature spotted variety, I felt like I was being infused with great ancient wisdom. I felt the sacredness of the moment and was honored to have him so generously allow me into his world.

That just being the first day, I hadn't even stepped into an official yoga class yet, but this experience was to be a part of my daily practice. Here I was, submerged in water, consciously controlling my breath. I took long in-hales and exhales through the snorkel, holding it in at the top of the breath as I downward-dog dove down into the sea. I stretched my body into the beginning of a sun salutation with energy shooting through my fingertips as I did a swan dive reaching for the sandy floor. Twisting in triangle I swam under and around their fish-like bodies, dancing with fins and tails. With water-filled ears, all you can hear is the muffled sound of the sea and the chanting of the dolphins, sweet sonar lulling you into a deep open-eyed meditation.

After spending hours frolicking in the water, pushing my body to the limit, I climbed onto the boat exhausted. Claiming some space on the deck, I stretched out on my back, and in the silence of the warm wind I dissolved into the most heavenly *savasana* I've ever experienced as we sailed home.

For the rest of the journey I woke up each morning to the sound of the lapping water and stepped out my bedroom door to an east-coast sunrise over the bay. I took photos of my fellow voyagers doing tai chi silhouetted in the glow, and then relaxed into either Amlas' or Misha's gentle flow yoga class before a healthy, hearty breakfast.

In the evenings we'd reconvene as a group after dinner to share our thoughts and experiences of the day around a fire, and dance and sing to the music of John's guitar. A songwriter from New England, John and his lovely wife Susan were just two of the fabulously diverse and beautiful people with whom I was blessed to share this incredible week.

To my fellow retreat mates, WildQuest crew and new dolphin friends, I say a big thank you, for an absolutely unforgettable and life-changing week.

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