



Get Your Fix

Hooked on a few things? Here's a resort that will sort you out

WORDS DARREN HO PHOTOS THE CABIN AT CHIANG MAI - GETTY IMAGES

TO THE OUTSIDER, The Cabin at Chiang Mai is, for all intents and purposes, a modern Thai resort, with a separate lodge that houses nine standalone bungalows in a more traditional design. Complete with yoga studios, an outdoor gym, fitness sessions, meditation hours and healthy diets, it's a month-long serene getaway in a place that excludes you from the external world. A private retreat with an unlisted address ensuring privacy and quietude, The Cabin is a move away from the manic schedules of the corporate world, chock full of stresses and unhealthy lifestyle triggers. Rooms are generous, with four-poster beds, rain showers, round-the-clock services and attendees, and a mini-bar full of healthy products in case you need a nibble in the middle of the night.

In fact, it's one of a handful of retreats around the region that's designed as a rehab clinic with

international exposure, thanks to its use of Eastern and Western treatment philosophies giving it recognition in both sides of the world. Its clients here are self-enrolled, that they come here to kick process and substance habits that range from alcoholism to gambling, drugs, et cetera.

If you're scoffing at the spot, thinking there's zero connection between yourself and a Betty Ford clinic, think again. In all likelihood the majority of the population suffers from a common addiction: sugar. Possibly far more nefarious than any other drug, sugar addiction is real, and The Cabin admits clients who overeat, or over-indulge. Anorexia and bulimia aren't addressed as yet, but there are plans.

NOT THE STEREOTYPE

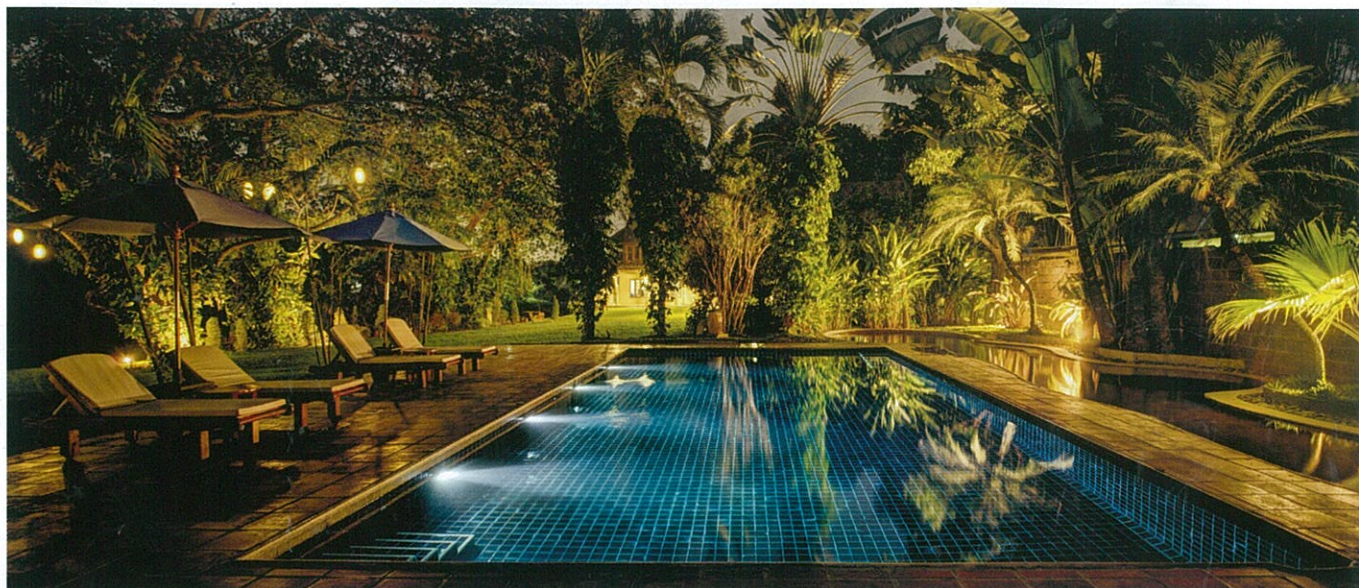
Its most prevalent clients are what is termed the "high-functioning addict", or HFA in rehab terms. Think Jordan

Belfort- and Patrick Bateman-types, sans the chainsaw and nail gun murders of random people. These are corporate ladder men and women who may appear to be perfectly fine on the outside, but harbour a fondness for alcohol, benzos or methamphetamines in private. Most of the clients in The Cabin look just like average Joes, some sharper-dressed than others, and many high-profile individuals from the celebrity set have appeared here as well. But speak to them and some eyebrow-raising stories will emerge, though it's likely that if you've lodged yourself in there, you'll have some tales to share as well.

Some of the clients at The Cabin are self-enrolled, others by family request or even company request. Confidentiality is a key part of the resort's success, and guests only use and give first names. Of the 10 counsellors who work at The Cabin,

CELEBRITY CONNECTION

Perhaps the most well-known client of The Cabin, is the former co-frontman of The Libertines and the lead of Babyshambles, Pete Doherty. Notorious for his love of crack and his relationship with Kate Moss, Doherty enrolled himself into The Cabin two years ago but was discharged for being disruptive to guests.



many have had personal experiences with addictions. It helps them to relate better to the clients' difficulties when it comes to breaking out of their habits and patterns without judgment of any sort. The programme, which has had one of the highest success rates in the world, is intensive, beginning with hourly sessions that range from fitness programmes with a trainer to mindfulness meditation, group sharing sessions, cognitive behaviour therapy and some pampering as well. Excursions are organised each week, and guests frequently use the opportunity to take travel photos if they've used the "gone for a sabbatical holiday" excuse to get into rehab. They do follow the standard 12-steps, but combine it with vinyasa yoga and meditation to give a more rounded and comprehensive experience. Naturally, there are restrictions: a 9.30pm room curfew, limited internet access and

The Cabin has treated hundreds of clients, and only a dozen or so have not completed their treatment

phone usage once a week for a few hours. Guests are recommended to stay for a minimum of a month, though most stay longer. The all-inclusive pricing of The Cabin, at US\$12,900 a month, is fairly reasonable compared with others.

According to Alastair, the program director, the reason for the all-around involvement is that "addicts frequently suffer from a lack of ability to connect with themselves and others around them, which leads them to their addiction in order to feed their minds with dopamine and endorphins, and this eventually becomes the primary way they can feel pleasure and joy,





The online support system is an innovation by The Cabin for post-treatment help

whether it's a process abuse like sex or gambling or a substance abuse such as alcohol, heroin or mephedrone. Group responsibility and accountability helps them to reconnect with others."

DAY CARE

In Singapore, The Cabin has an affiliate partner in Promises Clinic, which offers evaluation and support for clients who have completed their treatments or pre-treatment assessments to determine their issues. However, in Hong Kong and Sydney, it is establishing what's known as day-hab. Simon, the director and founder of The Cabin, explains that this has come about to provide assistance to addicts "who cannot afford to spend a month or two away from work, but would still like to seek treatment". These day-programmes are run daily after work, and clients can choose to attend on available days. It's focused on those who are seeking help early before they hit rock bottom.

EXITING THE CABIN

After-care is also excellent. Post-Cabin recovery, guests who wish to do so can stay at Sober House, which handles up to 12 guests and is essentially a guest-house where they continue to

participate in group sessions, guest activities but are otherwise free to do what they wish, as long as they stay sober. Marcel, the head of the guest house, a recovering addict as well and a firm hand with the guests, plans daily engagements with the people staying there ranging from outdoor cycling to waterfall climbing, weekly Narcotics Anonymous meetings and more. The Cabin helps those assimilating themselves back into society to locate sponsors and also runs an online sharing platform where they can log in and talk, "in case they face their triggers and can't cope". They also work with several partners around the world as well as hospitals in Thailand when necessary, either to intervene and bring in guests or help family members deal with addiction both pre- and post-recovery. Rory, head counsellor at The Cabin, explains that "sometimes family members and people around addicts need to understand that tough love is necessary for them as well. Addiction is manipulative, and addicts know how to exploit others to feed their own habits. There have been times when we've advised the families of clients to cut any sort of financial assistance to them, to push them to come in for rehab."

Alastair's advice for addicts? "It's easier to fix your fixations before you hit rock bottom, before your addiction causes significant trauma in your life." So if you think you have a problem, or know you have one, maybe it's time to get it fixed before it runs out of control. **A**

PRIVATE LUXURY REHABS LOCATED AROUND THE WORLD

Luxe rehabilitation is less like a "tough love" environment and more of a detox and orientation experience that pays attention to the client's needs rather than wants. Most do not offer withdrawal care, but once you've dried out, they are ready to help. Here are some of the famous rehab centres around the world that offer comfort, counselling and care.

SIERRA TUCSON

Perhaps the best known of all facilities in the world apart from the one that made Betty Ford famous, Sierra Tucson has 160 acres in Arizona with an excellent environment and staff to assist addicts to recover in comfort. It's famed for its celebrity connection, and other public figures who have checked themselves in for help.

THE SANCTUARY, BYRON BAY

Australia's leading rehab centre is known throughout the world and recommended for its services, located in a stunning spot that's scenic and perfect for recovery. Unlike other centres, The Sanctuary exclusively practices one-to-one treatment programs, which garners both benefits (privacy) and disadvantages (social connections with other clients). However, it does mean that you can have complete confidentiality.

PRIORY GROUP

With 250 spots all over the United Kingdom, the Priory Group has been around for over three decades, and provides care not only for addiction issues but neuro-rehabilitation and care homes as well. It has a broad range of services and treatment options that are tailored for each individual, and it also offers a free confidential assessment for all sorts of addictions.