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## *the* Night Heron takes flight

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photo courtesy Loveology Retreat



Dr. Ava Cadell is a world-renowned love guru, relationship expert, author, therapist and lecturer.

# Loveology Retreat



by **PERRY  
VAN HOUTEN**

**I**n fall 2022, on the site of a former Buddhist temple, Cadell opened the Loveology Retreat, an awe-inspiring 45-acre property in Maricopa, about an hour's drive north of Ojai. "When I saw this magnificent place I realized that it was meant to be mine, so that I could share it with other people and help them heal or connect or just rejuvenate their mind, body and spirit," she said.

For more than two decades, "Dr. Ava" has trained students to become certified love coaches — much like how Tony Robbins trains life coaches — through her online program Loveology University®. "I wanted to share all the information that I learned as a therapist specializing in love and human sexuality," she said.

The new retreat is a real-life, in-person extension of the online university, and it's something she's dreamed of opening for years. "This manifestation took a little longer than I expected," said Dr. Ava, "but it happened and I am just so happy that I found this place, purely by chance."

Left, Dr. Ava Cadell, who opened her Loveology Retreat last fall on the former site of the Pine Mountain Buddhist Temple Retreat. Also pictured is Marley, one of two cats who live there

Right, one of dozens of Buddha statues scattered throughout the Loveology Retreat.

In late 2021, she phoned a pair of monks at the Pine Mountain Buddhist Temple Retreat, who for two decades had been teaching Zen meditation and Zen Buddhism, and told them she was interested in

doing some meditation there.

The property had just fallen out of escrow, so the monks, determined to sell the property, invited Dr. Ava for a visit. "They were sad to leave but they said they were also ready to leave," she said. "They wanted to downsize." She instantly fell in love with the desert landscape, the surrounding mountains, the trees, the wildflowers and the many Buddha statues.

Among the goals of the Loveology Retreat is attracting positive energy. "People who want to escape from reality, where there's stress, where there are distractions, where there's too much work," said Dr. Ava. "So they can come here and they can be one with nature. They can come for yoga, meditation, hiking, stargazing, healing and great food."

Yoga — good for fitness, balance, strength and flexibility — can also boost intimacy when done by partners, according to Dr. Ava, who created the program "Sexycises by Sexperts: Yin Yang Yoga for Intimacy." The retreat also offers a restorative yoga program that teaches relaxation through gentle stretching.

Nigerian dwarf goats could be the next addition at the Loveology Retreat.

"I've heard that they love yoga, so I'm planning on goat yoga," said Dr. Ava.

In addition to yoga, nine forms of meditation she developed are offered at the retreat.

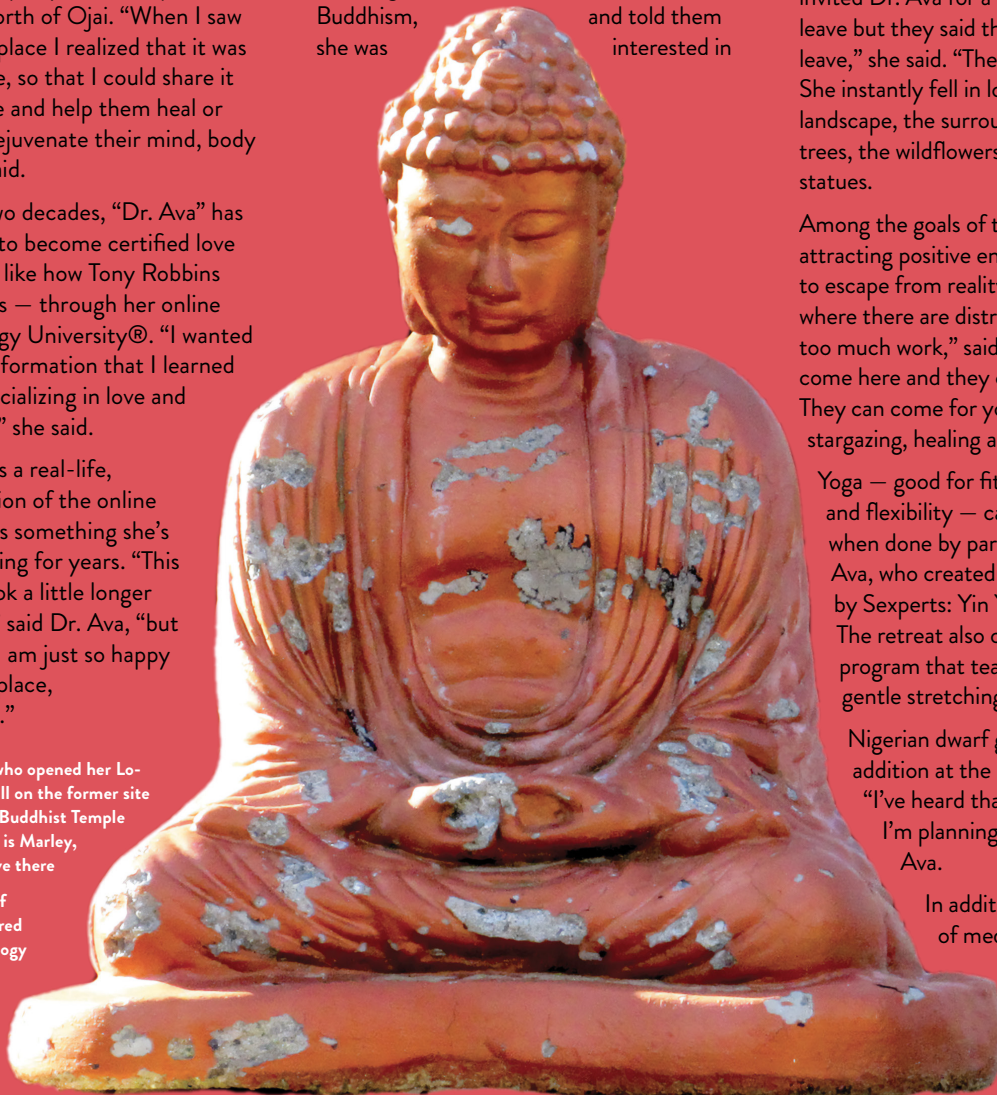


Photo by  
Perry Van Houten

The retreat's cook is Dr. Ava's partner, "Chef" Jeff Sundy. "He's an amazing chef, so I'm so excited that we can do this project together," she said.

You're sure to work up an appetite hiking the Loveology Retreat's three hiking trails, with horseback riding available upon request. There's the Faith Trail, described by Dr. Ava as "flat for half a mile and then goes way up into the mountains," and the Peaceful Trail, the easiest of the three that climbs into the mountains to a bench and an overlook with great views.

"And then there's the Compassion Trail, which actually has no compassion because it's quite difficult," said Dr. Ava, who's frequently joined on her hikes by Marley, one of two cats raised on the property that were gifts from the monks. "She looks back and she makes sure that I'm OK, so I'm convinced she's a reincarnation of a monk."

For an activity more competitive than hiking, there's a disc golf course. Some of the baskets are hidden around the mountains and in the trees. "It's not really for beginners," said Dr. Ava. "I haven't mastered it yet myself."

The retreat offers an outdoor swimming pool and the Fun House, with games for kids and adults, and movie nights.

For overnight stays, there's the Chakra House that sleeps up to 10, and the Llama House, with a meditation room and accommodations for four guests.

Or stay in one of four campers, named after flowers on the property such as poppy, bluebell, lily and lavender. "They're fun and kids love them," said Dr. Ava. The campers feature queen-sized beds, bunk beds, kitchens and bathrooms.

Buildings, signs and water tanks at the retreat were beautified by mural artist MB Hanrahan.

The pinnacle of the retreat is the 11-foot-high Stupa, a holy monument built by the monks. "As you walk around the Stupa, you can literally feel the enlightenment of every single Buddha as you walk by them," said Dr. Ava, who encourages guests to find a mantra they can connect with—that makes their heart sing.

"Live to love and love to live" is the mantra at the Loveology Retreat.



"A mantra can be a goal, but you need to think of it as if it's already happened," she said. Such a mantra could be, "I am loved, unconditionally. Isn't that something that every human being wants?" By the time you've walked around the Stupa three times, clockwise, "you are loved unconditionally, by yourself."

The Stupa sits on a square base with the four sides representing north, south, east and west. A spire at the top symbolizes a line through the Earth's center that the universe is thought to revolve around. "It's a special place that I really want to share and have it as part of my legacy," said Dr. Ava.

Watch the sunrise, stargaze or meditate at the Stupa, or simply take in the view of 7,500-foot Pine Mountain. "It's just superlative," said Dr. Ava. "I've never seen anything more beautiful, ever in my life."

You may be lucky enough to find a crystal while exploring the retreat, she added.

"Which is uncanny but magical."

Born in Hungary and raised by nuns at an Austrian orphanage, Dr. Ava believes becoming a love guru was her destiny, but it all came out of adversity. "I had a lot of negative programming about love and intimacy," she said. "And so consequently I had difficult relationships when I was young. When I hit rock bottom I decided I was going to make it my mission to find out everything I could about love and romance, relationships, intimacy and human sexuality."

She earned two doctorates, one in human sexuality and another in human behavior. "Then I realized that I wanted to help people and share everything that I had learned," said Dr. Ava, whose latest course is a seven-and-a-half hour class on healing, "which I give away, because I think the world needs a lot of healing." Along with being a love guru, she wants to become more of a healing guru.



*Left: The 11-foot-tall Stupa built on-site by monks so that all beings may attain enlightenment, according to Loveology Retreat founder Dr. Ava Cadell.  
Photo courtesy Loveology Retreat*

actions speak louder than their words. A lot of people are extremely self-destructive,” Dr. Ava said.

The Loveology Retreat helps people avoid the obstacles and find their passion without suffering. “Why go through the pain if you don’t have to?” asked Dr. Ava. Opening the retreat helped her achieve something she was always looking for but never found — peace of mind.

Not everyone who visits the retreat comes for healing. Weddings, birthday parties, movie shoots and other events are all possibilities. “Any kind of celebration. We would be delighted to have them come here,” said Dr. Ava, who last year hosted an Easter egg hunt that she hopes will become an annual event. “You can come on your own and we’ll take good care of you.”

Even the drive from Ojai will put you in relaxation mode. “It’s a beautiful drive,” Dr. Ava said. “The scenery is phenomenal. You really feel like you’re on vacation.”

According to Dr. Ava, all humankind can benefit from a visit to the Loveology Retreat. “Just the energy when you get here is magical and it is rejuvenating,” she said. “You’ll come here to de-stress, and I think you’ll leave having learned something new about yourself.”

For information on accommodations and rates, visit [www.loveologyretreat.com](http://www.loveologyretreat.com)

The front porch of Dr. Ava’s house at the Loveology Retreat, the Loveology House. Guest accommodations include the Lama House, the Chakra House and four state-of-the-art campers. Photo by Perry Van Houten

Some of Dr. Ava’s clients say they feel broken, so she asks them what their goals are. “Most of the time it’s something very special. It’s forgiveness, compassion, finding the compassion to forgive themselves for allowing other people to abuse them. And sometimes it’s a couple who are going through a crisis, who did love each other at some point but have since grown apart,” she said.

Broken couples often hold lots of resentment, which builds up when they find it hard to say they’re sorry. “I often say, ‘do you want to be right, or do you want to be in love and enjoy your relationship, mentally, physically, spiritually, sexually, emotionally, all of that?’” Dr. Ava said. “I help them to fall back in love with each other and forgive each other and have deeper intimacy than they ever thought possible. It’s very, very fulfilling for me.” What the Loveology Retreat offers is not

taught in schools. “They don’t teach us how to give love, how to receive love, how to overcome difficult emotions, so you can come here and learn all of that.” Plus there are workshops, “to help you with whatever is going on in your life,” said Dr. Ava.

Before guests arrive at the retreat they receive a questionnaire about their expectations. “I want to find out who they are, what it is they’re looking for,” said Dr. Ava. The questionnaire asks if they’ve been to other retreats; what they liked and didn’t like.

Some people have unrealistic expectations and say they want help, but really don’t. “Their

