



by Tom Mangione

# GETTING BACK TO NATURE, NATURALLY

## naked Home Village

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When hiking around the summit of Moganshan, you realize quickly that foreigners have a tradition of coming to this place. The ruins of stately Western-styled villas rise out of the forests of bamboo. French names remain etched in the stone of dilapidated archways. The high, vaulted ceiling of a forgotten church rises above a concrete floor covered in a patina of dust. Why? How there could have been so much interest in this mountain in present-day Zhejiang Province, a three-hour drive from Shanghai? The answer is all around you. The air is crisp and clean. But most of all, it's cool. At 500 meters above sea level, Moganshan boasts year-round temperatures around five degrees cooler than Shanghai. Looking out on a clear day, you see verdant tea-fields hugging the adjacent mountainsides. The peaks of far-away mountains undulate on the horizon. A pleasant, understated beauty surrounds you.

Moganshan is currently in the midst of a renaissance as a retreat for



Shanghai's foreigners. Many of its original early 20th-century villas have been or are undergoing restoration. In addition, true to the values of the 21st century, several eco-friendly accommodations have also sprung up around the mountain, the most well-known being **naked Home Village**, a resort composed of several bungalows scattered at the foot of the mountain. While its name is perfectly suited to a nudist colony, the more discreet among us can rest easy. *naked Home Village's* commitment to bareing it all is metaphorical, not literal. The resort urges its guests to "bare yourself to nature" and "live a simple, sustainable life."

This sort of rhetoric might come across to the jaded Shanghai expat as mere greenwash, however, the design of all eight of **naked Home Village's** accommodations are specifically designed to use water, heat and electricity as efficiently as possible. Waste water from the showers and sinks is stored for reuse in the toilets. Double-glazed window panes are encased in insulated walls. Skylights are strategically positioned allow for natural lighting. Cooling in the summertime is provided by screened windows and ceiling fans, not A/C. During our stay, we found that none of these changes in design caused us discomfort in any way. Although on the hottest day of the year, you might only want to appreciate the hardwood furniture and intriguing prints of these interiors from under a fan.

In addition to being "sustainable," spending time at one of **naked Home Village's** bungalows is indeed "simple". All cooking and cleaning in your living space is handled by a local ayi. During our one night stay, we enjoyed a dinner of



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nongjia cai, Chinese country cooking. Sauteed beef strips with peppers, baby cabbage with mushrooms as well as bamboo shoots. Breakfast the following morning included bacon, eggs and thick slices of homemade bread. Our own ayi courteously attempted to downplay the significance of her cooking, saying "It's simple. It's really just the same kind of food you'd get in the city." To be fair to ayi, the food was simple and straightforward, but the ingredients were still fresh and flavorful. And before or after a day of trekking around the mountain, these meals proved satisfying.

As for exploring the mountain, be prepared to hike. If you really don't like walking up stairs, then **naked Home Village** is not the place for you. Just getting to your bungalow will require you to ascend several hundred steps. When wandering around the rest of the mountain, be prepared to ask for directions frequently or face getting lost. The map provided by **naked Home Village** isn't very detailed and the paths that it describes aren't well marked. During our stay, we succeeded in getting lost four times. To be sure, these detours weren't all bad. Small clearings in the forest of bamboo revealed swarms of butterflies, flitting about in the sunlight, showing off the inspiring patterns on their wings. One narrow pathway led us into a network of tea fields on the side of the mountain. Stalking through them we were afforded breathtaking views. In a way, this is only appropriate. While **naked Home Village** does offer you a chance to get away from Shanghai in comfortable, guilt-free style, what it and all of Moganshan offers you is the same thing that it offered the denizens of Shanghai one hundred years ago - nature, pure and simple.