

# Tibetan Caves Are Overrated



CREDIT Adam Jones

Model: Niels Alpert

I sit on my green cushion resting on my yellow rug that covers the honey-wood floor in the front room of my rented space, and close my eyes to meditate. A single thread of incense smoke, sweet and pervasive, rises as if pulled heavenward by some unseen force, like a wispy prayer into the ether. Two large candles on my alter burn a soft glow as they sit like sentinels on either side of the frantic list I've placed there, my list of nerves and worries, big hopes and sterile to-dos. I like to write it all down and put it on the alter. The list seems to be the CliffsNotes version of a prayer I hope lifts upward, like the smoke. Plus, once I've written it down, maybe it will free up my mind to not think for a while and just be present.

I am about eye level to one of the several windows in this room-that is, if my eyes were open. But they are not. I'm trying to be present. As I sit, I hear traffic pass like waves, the current of the arteries of our city. I hear a neighbor in the laundry room directly below me, stuffing wet laundry with heavy thuds into the dryer and then listen as the dryer buzzes to life and starts to breathe. Dakota, the German shepherd who lives in the apartment above me, groans and barks excitedly as the pizza deliverer searches for apartment number 1, not mine.

No, I don't live in a cave in Tibet. Nor would I want

t0—harder for the pizza delivery guys to find. These city distractions are not distractions at all but merely the environment in which I choose to live. And I guess that's the point, right? Many of us live in busy places and despite loud laundry, neighbors, barking dogs, and cars, one can find peace in the gentle hum of a city.

When I visit my family in New York, I open the window from the apartment in the high-rise and listen to the sounds of the city, one long, sustained exhale. I actually find it quite peaceful. Part of the quest for peace involves creating a comfortable tolerance for things that would otherwise create aversion. We don't have to love them, but with many things that are part of our everyday environment, we can simply be present in the moment and witness them. We are but one cell in this larger being, the community, the city, the world. We can circulate and find purpose and stillness in that motion.



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