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THE BEST **HEALING RETREATS** OF 2017

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@KIKISUNSHINE; BRIANA MARIE PHOTOGRAPHY;
GOIN' OFF SAFARIS

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KEEP OPENING TO EXPERIENCE

WELCOME to the second annual *Journey to Renewal*. If you're reading this, chances are you're looking for (or dreaming about) some precious time-out—a getaway that leaves you feeling restored, empowered, and back in touch with your essence.

As it becomes more and more difficult to unplug from a 24/7 world that appears to be losing its humanity, we need solace and silence—the sanctuary and sanctity that the natural world provides. We need to return to our senses, to find a new appreciation in being—and to remember that we are connected, viscerally not virtually. To remember what real farm-grown food tastes like, to recall the touch of warm water on your skin, to absorb the silence of the mountains, and to play with other creatures.

This guide is about staying open to new experiences. It is a celebration of the natural world and all its inhabitants—special places that allow you to unplug and restore your natural rhythms.

Enjoy the journey,
Mary Bemis
Editor in Chief



CHRISTOPHER BRISCOE



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TRAVEL WISDOM

The wellness journey of 1,000 miles begins with four steps

REFLECTION

True wellness is a reflection of the unfolding dance of life in which the energies of our body, mind, and spirit are in balance with each other. Once this occurs, the immense power of our own natural healing force (also called chi or prana) begins flowing freely to nurture and nourish our whole being. Wellness is our body's true north, our inner compass that exists even behind the veils of aging and illness, always attempting to restore balance and maintain life to preserve and protect us. Thus, it's always possible to experience meaningful breakthroughs to wellness. Just begin your journey with this reflection, and revisit this eternal truth throughout your travel.

REJUVENATION

Our lifestyle choices help balance our energy via rejuvenation, thus helping us attain wellness—or else they tend to deplete our energy, which can leave us feeling stressed-out, tired, and disappointed. Therefore, it's important to always keep your journey's goal in mind—which should be feeling better, less stressed, and experiencing more of a sense of aliveness and vitality than at its beginning.

The wellness goal is best ensured by having fun and adventure, immersing yourself in nature, and perhaps even tending to your bucket list—while also eating healthfully, exercising regularly, meditating regularly, getting sufficient rest, and not drinking excessive alcohol. After all, your body, mind, and spirit comprise a unified energy system, which means they are a complete ensemble, so that what affects one immediately affects the others.

REALIZATION

It's really true that "what goes around comes around." Therefore, make a concerted effort to be kind, compassionate, and empathetic with others whom you meet in your travels. Following "The Golden Rule," especially in your wellness travel, helps prepare you for the ultimate test in life—for human beings to love one another. This realization deepens and flourishes simply by making a conscious effort to start your day with love, fill your day with love, and end your day with love.



REPLENISHMENT

The Universal Source of Good Will is everywhere. It infuses every living thing and works in unknown ways to create solar systems and frame oceans with mountains. It determines our essence and destiny, and offers constant replenishment of our natural healing force. How best to tap into the source of replenishment? Just be open to it. The wonderment that naturally occurs with wellness travel is a perfect catalyst for openness to happen. Also, it's a lovely irony that as a good Jewish doctor, I'm reminded of this basic tenet of Christianity: "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you."

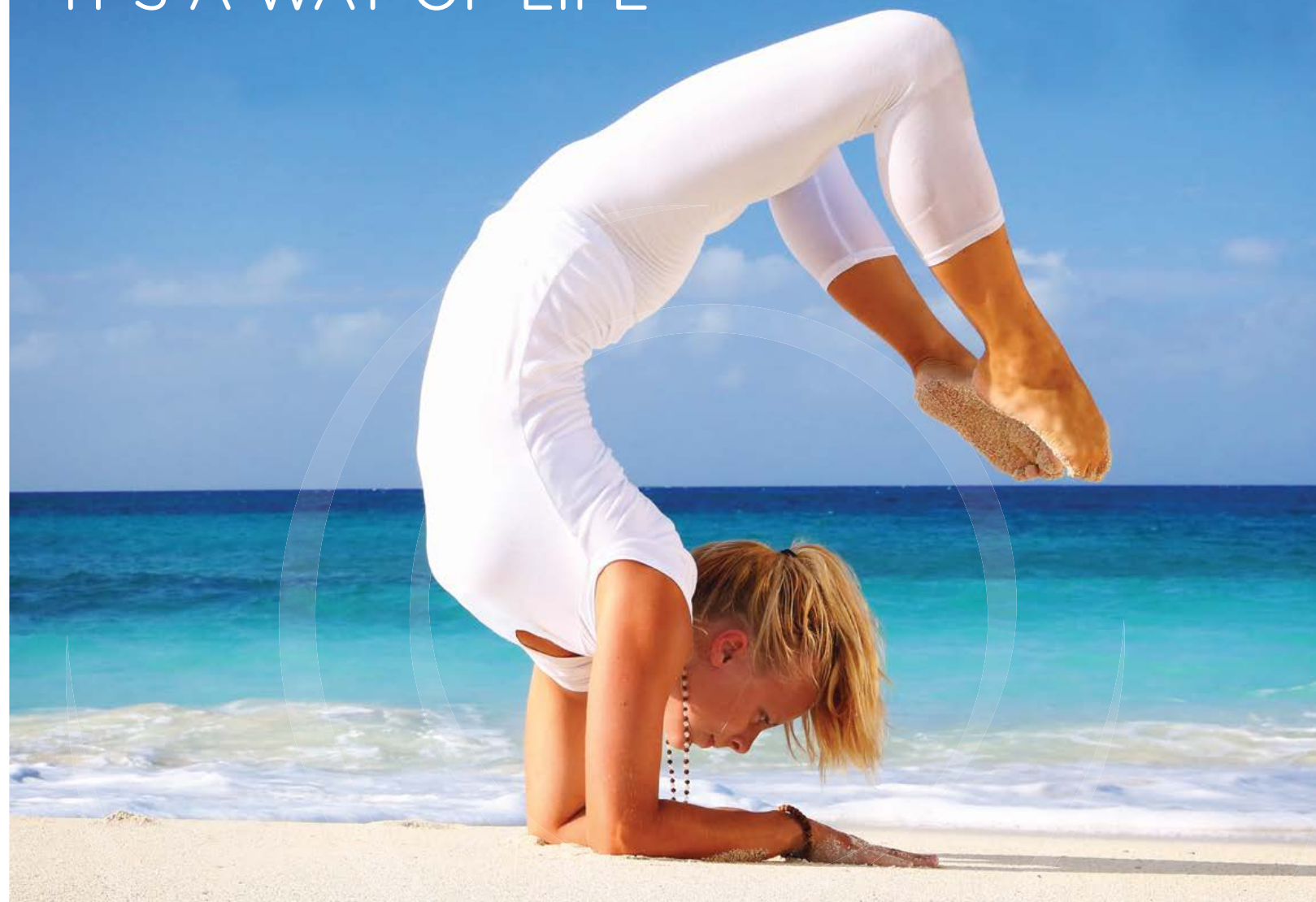
So what interferes with people of all faiths reaching out for replenishment? In a nutshell, it's stress—the voice in our mind dwelling in the past and the future where there is worry, doubt, and fear, rather than in the present where we can help determine our health destiny through personal responsibility, self-value, and reverence for life.

What else does it take during wellness travel to receive optimal replenishment from the always-present Universal Source of Good Will? Simply the faith and imagination that leads a child to be happy—because when we are happy there is just no room for worry or doubt or fear. We are simply happy! What helps us be happy? Gratitude. Faith that God is Love. Thus, the final step to your wellness travel destination is to just be happy. Where does this lead? To contentment. —EDWARD TAUB, MD, FAAP

Edward Taub, MD, FAAP, is a pioneer of integrative medicine and the author of eight books, including *The Wellness Solution* and *Balance Your Body, Balance Your Life*. He is the wellness medical advisor for InsidersGuidetoSpas.com. For more about wellness travel, go to edwardtaubmd.com.

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WHY OJAI

A Tourist Town Where Mindfulness Is the Main Attraction

Nestled in the Topatopa Mountains about 90 minutes northwest of LAX is the village of Ojai, which *The Washington Post* has called the “most desirable place to live in America,” and so I came as a guest of the Chamber of Commerce to find out why. My first scheduled stop was a facial at an herbal apothecary called EarthTonics, which proved to be one of the most pleasant hours I can remember. As I floated back out the door, I asked Daron Hope, the owner, “What just happened?” So she wrote me this note:

“Your Botanical Facial focused on relaxing the face, neck, and shoulder muscles while we used some potent herbs and superfoods to deliver nutrient-dense hydration. We began with an herbal steam to soften your skin and support a deeper state of relaxation. After cleansing and exfoliating with my Cardamom Cream Cleanser and Honey Bamboo Facial Scrub, I made you a custom mask with colostrum and goji berries. I covered your skin with hydrosol-drenched cotton (these are the floral waters I told you about, remember?)—a blend of rose, tulsi, and orange blossom which together are anti-inflammatory and very softening. These steeped your skin with antioxidants while we grounded your energy with a foot massage using my Grapefruit and Rose Body Nectar. We finished with a facial massage using my Repair Creme Concentrate, a powerful corrective cream with Tahitian tamanu oil and root herbs to heal sun damage and stimulate skin cell turnover.”

In other words, my face and feet had been immersed in herbs and flowers and berries by a native of Ojai who had gathered and mixed and applied these fresh ingredients herself—and I think that level of pure intentionality goes a long way toward explaining why Ojai is such a desirable place to be. Like the facial, it felt more than skin deep.

I stayed at the Ojai Retreat Center, a five-acre hilltop bed and breakfast overlooking the village that has 12 guest rooms, three libraries, and no televisions. The atmosphere is serene, in keeping with the energy of the manager, who came to Ojai from Switzerland, following Jiddu Krishnamurti. As you may recall, Krishnamurti was raised by the Theosophical Society in India, to be their prophesied Maitreya, or world teacher. Krishnamurti renounced his title and famously declared truth to be “a pathless land” that belongs to no creed or religion or country. Yet he became

a world spiritual teacher, and he fell in love with Ojai in 1922 and died there in 1986. In the meantime, he drew people from around the world to create lasting centers like the Oak Grove School and the Peppertree Retreat Center, where I went for yoga. Many other teachers also came and created spectacular gathering spots like Meditation Mount, where people gather to quietly watch the sunset. While Ojai now has celebrities and cars that cost as much as houses, the underlying spirit of competition is somehow to be more mindful than one’s neighbor.

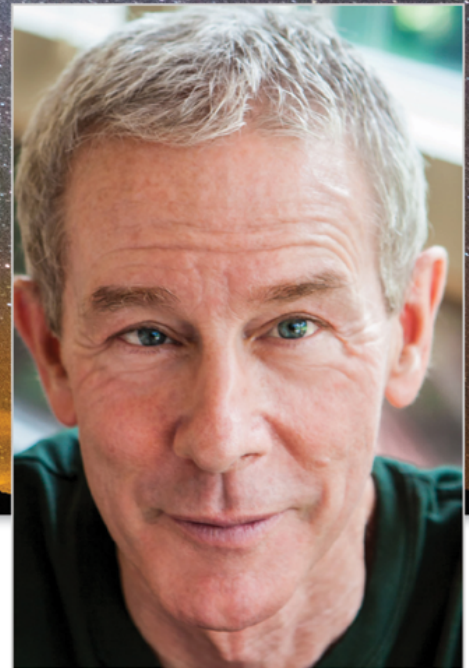
The soul of the Ojai extensive foodie scene is Farmer and the Cook. Steve is the farmer who runs a 12-acre organic farm and CSA, while Olivia is the cook who runs the restaurant/farm stand. Their food is fresh, simple, inexpensive, and wonderful—and the long tables lend themselves to long conversation among people who have just met. This is Ojai’s central kitchen where everyone comes to hang out. At night there is a thriving urban cocktail competition in the fancy village bars, but the drink they were showing off at Azu is called the Pink Moment for the light that hits the mountains at sunset. Ojai is a delightful tourist town where even the cocktails are a call to be mindful. —STEPHEN KIESLING

Where to Wander

- **AZU RESTAURANT & BAR** for a glass of wine azuojai.com
- **EARTHTONICS**, for natural skincare earthtonicsskincare.com
- **FARMER AND THE COOK** for fresh organic produce and farm-to-fork vegetarian fare farmerandcook.com
- **MEDITATION MOUNT**, for sunsets and special programs meditationmount.org
- **OJAI RETREAT CENTER**, for writing your memoir ojairetreat.com
- **OJAI ROCK CLIMBING**, for outdoor adventure ojairockclimbing.com
- **OSTERIA MONTE GRAPPA**, for fine dining omgojai.com
- **PEPPERTREE RETREAT CENTER**, for Krishnamurti’s legacy peppertreeretreat.com

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TRAVEL ESSENTIALS

Smart Items for the Savvy Traveler

BY MARY BEMIS



A welcome travel set if there ever was one, this **Four Piece Organic Suncare Travel Set** from Coola comes with TSA-approved carry-on sizes of Body SPF 30 Pina Colada Sunscreen Spray, ER+ Radical Recovery After-Sun Lotion, Classic Face SPF 30 Cucumber Moisturizer, and a Liplux SPF 30. (\$39.99) coolasuncare.com



We've watched **Anatomie**, a women's travel clothing company, grow beautifully since its inception 10 years ago, and love it for its effortless style and easy care (lightweight and wrinkle-free!). Order three pieces or more, and receive a free packing cube (while supplies last) that's designed to hold three pairs of pants, two tops, and two jackets. When full, the cube weighs a mere four pounds and takes up hardly any space in your carry-on. Bonus: the pieces can be hand washed in the hotel sink and hang dry in 20 minutes. Popular styles include the Skyler pant and the Merika jacket. Prices range from \$45 for a top to \$425 for a jacket. anatomie.com



The classic lace-up style of these hiking boots from Forsake caught our eye. **The Loop**, shown here, is referred to as a "sneakerboot," and features waterproof leather uppers and great traction that will carry you across many terrains. Nice and lightweight, choose from Tan/Ocean or Black/Periwinkle. (\$129.95) forsake.com



Don't forget to pack a water bottle. The **Fixed Temperature** model from MiiR is vacuum insulated and keeps your hot beverages hot and your cold ones cold. Best of all, your purchase helps fund clean water projects. A 23-ounce bottle is available in three colors. (\$29.95) miir.com

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– Patty Gorder

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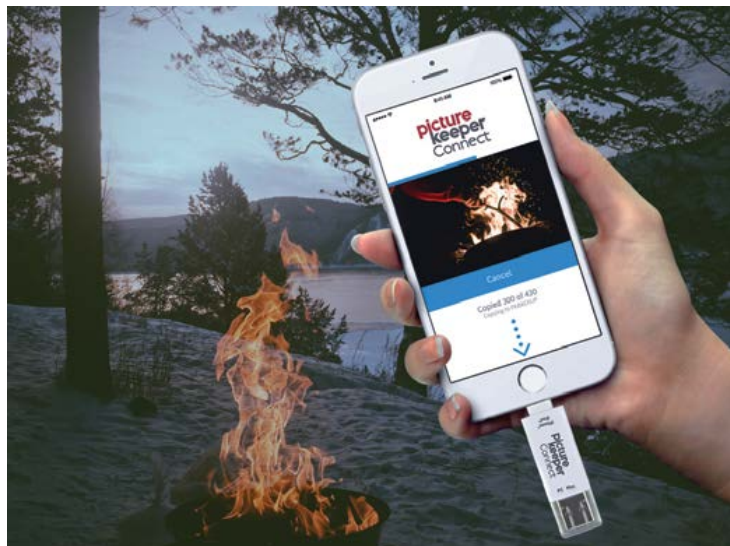
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TRAVEL ESSENTIALS



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Running out of space on your smartphone and want to snap a bunch of photos while you're on the road? There's a practical little gizmo you may want to investigate. The **Picture Keeper Connect**, designed for tablets and computers, as well, is an easy way to keep your memories safe. Choose from 16 GB, 32 GB, or 64 GB. (\$119.99 to \$179.99) **picturekeeper.com**



Make a statement and protect yourself from the sun at the same time with the Milan, a **stylish wide-brim hat** from Wallaroo. Beaded trim in gold and silver adds a little dazzle to this hat that's woven from abaca, a natural fiber. Wallaroo also makes a number of packable hats, including the Casual Traveler (\$40) that comes in a rainbow of colors. Nice to note: This company is a certified B Corporation. (\$108) **wallarohats.com**

A proprietary blend of essential oils in **Body Bliss Bug Mist** and **Bug Stick** naturally keeps pesky bugs at bay. These are free of DEET, parabens, phthalates, and mineral oils and come in carry-on friendly sizes. (\$16.95 and \$24.95) **bodybliss.com**



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Restival

THE NEW ART OF THE RETREAT FESTIVAL

BY **STEPHEN KIESLING**

A few days before the Harvest Moon in September, I flew to Flagstaff, Arizona, and was greeted inside the terminal by a limo driver holding a sign for an event called Restival. We left the airport and drove northwest for about 40 minutes before turning onto a dirt road into the vast desert dotted with cinder cones. We then wound for miles toward what seemed the middle of nowhere, but then my driver pointed out Roden Crater, the cinder cone that artist James Turrell has been sculpting for decades into a celestial observatory. This is a land of grand horizons and grand ideas. We then turned into what's called Gateway Ranch, which began inauspiciously with an abandoned old school bus, but I noticed that my driver was now excited. She had taken early retirement from a government job in San Diego, bought a condo on the golf course in Flagstaff, became a Reiki master, and drove a limo part time to get out of the house. She had been ferrying people out here for a couple of days and was no longer worried about getting lost. As we rounded a wall of steel shipping containers and the Restival scene unfolded, she was saying, "I want to be here next year!"



I took a breath. What I saw was an expanse of high desert dotted with elegant white tents and tipis—as if Christo had invited close friends for a week.

Gateway Ranch, I quickly learned, is a sculpture garden, a place where Burning Man art installations find a permanent home. Aside from the temporary tent village for Restival, there's an enormous, geodesic dome with a stage for music and a fire pit for telling stories. Another whimsical dome-like structure once supported a mock kelp forest at Burning Man and now serves as a shade structure for dining and exhibiting paintings. There's also a multi story steel temple that for Restival was pressed into service for sound healing and Nia dancing. For Restival, a straw-bale garage was also transformed into a pop-up spa with treatments that included Thai massage and myofascial release from extremely talented practitioners.

Yet the heart of Gateway Ranch—and the reason Restival came here—is a small, hand-built dwelling up on the ridge. This is Navajo country, just a few miles from the reservation, and the owners of the ranch, Mark and Kate Sorensen, built an authentic Navajo roundhouse called a *hogan*. Mark first came to the reservation about 40 years ago to work on his doctorate in education, and he fell in love with the people and the desert and was gradually adopted into the tribe. Kate, who has a master's degree in counseling, drove from Florida in the school bus to meet Mark. Together they created a now-famous Navajo charter elementary school called the Star (Service To All Relations) School, the nation's only completely off-the-grid school, and a place I would have been happy to have sent my own kids. Over the decades the Sorensons (who happen to be longtime *S&H* subscribers) have become elders of the extended Navajo family. For that reason, Restival could authentically include traditional Navajo men's and women's sweat lodges, music, storytelling, mural painting, and astronomy lessons.

Gateway Ranch is exactly what Restival founder Caroline Jones went looking for. Jones, who lives in London, spent 25 years in the business of planning large events and music festivals and awoke in her forties with the dream of creating a new kind of retreat/festival—the kind she wanted to go to. Her goal was to gather a relatively small group, a hundred



PHOTOGRAPHY COURTESY **RESTIVAL** AND **@KIKISUNSHINE**

people from around the world, and get off the grid, get back to nature, and get connected to an authentic indigenous culture. She wanted the creativity, spontaneity, and egalitarian spirit of a large music festival or Burning Man, but she also wanted to “glamp” with luxurious bedding, hot showers, and spa treatments. Her first annual Restival was in the desert in Morocco. Gateway Ranch is her second, and a third is being planned for Sweden.

Mornings at the Gateway Ranch Restival began by unzipping the tent and watching the sunrise and then going either to yoga or back to bed until it was time to find Hannah Mendoza at her magical elixir bar. A super-food aficionado and veteran festival vendor, Mendoza has years of experience refueling people who may have been dancing for 24 hours on whatever it was that kept them going perhaps far too long. She uses a Vitamix to blend restoratives with ingredients like cashew milk, chai, rooibos, cacao, and a wide variety of mushrooms. Her special coffee was “bullet-proofed” with butter to modulate the caffeine, and proved remarkably good. One could have lived on her elixirs alone—and she taught us how to make them as she blended—but there were also three mostly vegan and delicious buffet meals created in a nearby food truck by another group of extremely talented festival chefs.

Between meals, Restival offered a series of workshops, typically with two choices for each hour, as well as spa

treatments or a sweat lodge. The Navajo man who ran the men’s lodge proved remarkable, keeping the first “round” of heated stones fairly cool and not very dark, and only gradually increasing the heat—and thus allowing one of the participants to admit that he suffered from severe claustrophobia, especially in dark places. Yet the man stayed all four rounds—and the lodge provided him a breakthrough. This was a truly healing sweat—made especially poignant by the revelation that the lodge leader’s son had just been arrested in the Dakota pipeline protest. He needed the sweat, too.

Later in the day came a much-needed siesta followed by more yoga and dance. As the Restival week progressed



toward a truly spectacular Harvest Moon, the night grew brighter and the music and stories went a bit longer into the night. There wasn't much of a line between the staff, the presenters, and the paying guests, and the blurring added to the experience—an inside ticket to the best of the festival world for those no longer twenty-something.

Be warned that even glamping is not without creature comforts, like getting dressed in the middle of the night to walk to the vault toilet. There were also too many gizmos attached to the generator, so morning coffee was . . . on . . . its . . . way . . . really . . . *soon!* And three weeks before Restival, the shower provider backed out and so an ingenious man in Grass Valley, California, named Anders Gustavsson went to work designing an elaborate mobile shower/art project from scratch. He started with a boat trailer and covered it with a wooden platform that drains to a single spot. Then he built six shower stalls each with its own special set of symbols, and its own secret showerhead accessory that one could search for and play with. Included in the design were billowing cloth walls,



giant water tanks, a propane water heater, pressure pumps, and a gray-water-catchment bag that doubled as a waterbed for star gazing.

Gustavsson and friends designed and built the entire project in three weeks and then drove it overnight from California. Did it work?

Miraculously and delightfully yes—almost without exception. But, like Restival itself, the multi-symbolic shower was an ambitious art project, in progress, and if you're the

sort who becomes seriously distraught if the water kicks off in the middle of a shampoo, stay home. Please.

Jones says that next year's Restival will be more glampy with flush toilets, an espresso bar, room service, and perhaps less artistic showers. The small kinks will get worked out, and that almost seems a shame. I'd hate to see it grow up—or fill up—too fast. Like my driver, I want to be there next year, too.

Stephen Kiesling is the editor in chief of *Spirituality & Health* magazine. Caroline Jones is offering an early bird discount to S&H readers. For more information, go to restival.global and use the code SPIRITHEALTH to redeem the 20 percent discount. Space is limited.

Let the miracles, even the ones we don't want or see, unfold.

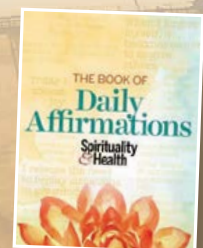
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WORKING FARMS *for Foodies*

BY BECCA HENSLEY

“There are two spiritual dangers in not owning a farm. One is the danger of supposing that breakfast comes from the grocery, and the other that heat comes from the furnace.”

—ALDO LEOPOLD

Think about the best meal you’ve ever eaten. Not the most exclusive meal or the most expensive meal or the one when you were the hungriest and felt blessed to be sated. Instead, return to that moment of blissful synchronicity when all senses exploded in utter delight, when you became one with the earth, when the meaning of life became—momentarily—utterly evident.

My guess, if you are honest, is that this meal consisted of something very simple—like fresh cherry tomatoes you couldn’t stop picking off the vine one summer in Canada, or apples you plucked from the trees near Northampton, Massachusetts, on a breezy fall day. Perhaps it was those chunks of pungent Parmigiano-Reggiano you purchased for a picnic in Parma, the wheel in the cheesemonger’s shop thankfully too big for you to pack in your carry-on.

There’s a reason that farm to fork (sadly, now sometimes found in acronym form as “F2F”) became a thing. We’d lost our way, we global eaters. Even back in the 1990s, certain researchers began telling us how far our food traveled to get on our tables. Soon, the average mileage touted was something like 1,500 miles—especially for processed food, something simple, like cereal with raisins or strawberry yogurt. The whole movement to awareness happened nobly enough.



For that, we thank Alice Waters of Chez Panisse. She wanted to reinstall seasonal eating into the food she served in her down-to-earth Berkeley eatery. People had forgotten that peaches grew in summer and pears in fall. She began listing the names of farms on her changeable menu, using only ingredients grown nearby, by farmers and gardeners she knew, in the appropriate season. People and chefs copied her—with the best of intentions. Eaters began to remember—even if it was their cultural unconsciousness that recalled—the taste of locally derived food.

A movement formed, farmers markets came to fruition, chalkboards and servers everywhere began touting provenance—and we slowly returned, somewhat, to the beginning, the time when a pecan fell from the tree and you picked it up, cracked it with your shoe, and tossed it in your mouth. Our plant-to-plate awareness has made the culinary world more authentic. We're in a better place. Farm to fork, plant to plate, tail to snout, ranch to repast—whatever you want to call it, it's a good thing—and this new normal has



BLACKBERRY FARM, TENNESSEE

COURTESY BLACKBERRY FARM

become part of everybody's lexicon. The key, now, is staying the course, deciphering the gambit to seek the genuine. As Wendell Berry wrote, "The soil is the great connector of lives, the source and destination of all." Let's stay connected with it.

Here are some suggested ways to truly root into farm-to-fork, as it ought to be.

BLACKBERRY FARM, TENNESSEE

Get schooled at Blackberry Farm's Farmstead School, a hands-on, fertile soil immersion in Appalachia's far-flung Tennessee. A 68-room Relais & Chateaux hotel, best known for its nostalgic—yet luxurious—rendition of the bucolic life, Blackberry Farm exemplifies the soulfulness of bygone times. Drawing from the area's many cultural heritages, from Cherokee to African, the farm teaches eager pupils the arts of beekeeping, seed sowing, heirloom seed preservation, truffle hunting, and chicken raising. blackberryfarm.com

FLORA FARM, LOS CABOS

Mexico is not just about margaritas anymore. This vast, diverse, magical terroir has always had a more salubrious side—you just didn't know where to look. Flora Farm, a 10-acre, organic estate in the foothills of the Sierra de Laguna Mountains, has spent a decade plying the land without pesticides or genetically modified seeds. They dedicated 100 percent of their production to local consumption, and work the farm the old-fashioned way—by hand. With more than 100 varieties of vegetables and herbs, they offer farm tours, have a scrumptious restaurant and a farm bar, and invite you to live the dream ensconced in their culinary cottages and "agri-stays," which proffer harvesting privileges as a chief amenity. Flora-farms.com

continued on page 20



FLORA FARM, LOS CABOS

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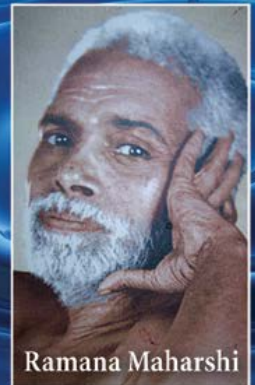
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BUTTERMILK FALLS INN, NEW YORK

Rip Van Winkle dozed here. And you'll sleep well, too, after days spent gathering your own breakfast eggs from heritage chickens, foraging the garden with the cheerful chef, and frolicking with the llamas, miniature donkeys, alpacas, and rescued geese and swans. Located in the verdant Hudson Valley, with the Catskill Mountains as backdrop, the inn stands a stone's throw from characteristic hamlets, antique stores, Lilliputian farms, wineries, and art galleries. With 18 cozy rooms, including 10 in the historic (circa 1764) main house, the inn's highlight is Millstone, a 40-acre organic farm, and Henry's at the Farm, its stellar, garden-to-palate restaurant. buttermilkfallsinn.com

CASTELLO DI VICARELLO, ITALY

The cities of Tuscany, in central Italy, vaunt some of the world's most storied Renaissance art and architecture. But it's the sigh-making countryside, punctuated by needle-shaped pine trees, carpeted with meadows of sunflowers, and smudged with family-owned vineyards, that sets the heart aflutter. Alongside winding roads, moldering castles and ancient mansions beckon, their golden-flecked stone capturing the sunlight for a halo effect. Dusty paths, flanked by olive orchards, invite hikers and bikers to ply them. Do that in the Maremma, near Grosseto, at Castello di Vicarello, located about halfway between Rome and Florence. With just seven rooms, surrounded by vineyards, rife with bountiful gardens, and flanked by olive groves, this Small Luxury Hotel of the World is a restored 12th-century castle. Here, owners

Aurora and Carlo Baccheschi Berti welcome you as family. Aurora will tutor you in the kitchen—she's the author of *My Tuscan Kitchen*—while Carlo will take you hunting for wild boar (you'll learn to cook it nose to tail), or join him during the grape harvest. castellodivicarello.com

JAKE'S, JAMAICA

Find a quieter, more authentic Jamaica at Jake's. This family-owned haven on Treasure Beach, on the lesser-traveled south side, transports visitors who have a yen for the intimate and a penchant for artistic digs. Gaudi-influenced, stand-alone, brightly colored cottages hover at the ocean's edge and offer coddling touches, such as rooftop daybeds—ideal for celebrating the sunset—and outdoor bathtubs. Organic gardens, a yoga platform, and a cozy spa add to the sense of visiting the home of longtime friends. In a region called Jamaica's "breadbasket," with more than 40,000 farmers, the resort celebrates nature's gifts with monthly full-moon dinners at a nearby local farm. Sitting at a long table, participants nosh on a bevy of organic, family-style courses created at the farm with its harvest. jakeshotel.com

THE PIG, NEW FOREST, UNITED KINGDOM

Go high on the hog at The Pig, the ultimate destination for culinary aficionados. Set just out of sight of the Dorset coast, in Arcadian Hampshire, this "restaurant with rooms" frames the fabled, unblemished New Forest National Park. Known for its robust breed of horses, the profuse woods also have pigs and cattle aplenty—not

to mention a cast of other wild animals. During pannage season, hogs run free to graze on acorns and chestnuts, a diet said to improve the quality of their meat. Once the hunting lodge of royals, The Pig aims for a house party atmosphere. Gourmands go to gobble from the menu, which gleans its ingredients from a walled garden and vendors living no more than 15 miles away. Between meals, join the forager on his rounds or the chef in the kitchen. Attentive staff share their tips on chicken raising, gardening, fly fishing, and smoking meat. thepighotel.com

SPORK FOODS, LOS ANGELES

Sisters Jenny Engel and Heather Bell comprise Spork Foods, a vegan culinary support system in Los Angeles. These advocates for vim, vigor, and deliciousness are chefs, teachers, consultants, and cookbook authors who work with local farms, pick their own fruits and veggies, and teach classes on vegan cuisine that even carnivores love. "In living a plant-based lifestyle and teaching vegan cooking classes, cooking with produce that is sourced from local farms makes our job easy because they simply taste better and contain more nutrients than their shipped-in counterparts. We also feel like local fruits and veggies make you feel better on a physical and spiritual level," they say. Check out their newest cookbook, *Vegan 101*, a collection of easy recipes, ideal for busy lifestyles. Find their cooking class schedule at sporkfoods.com.

ISLAND CREEK OYSTERS, MASSACHUSETTS

A Boston-area phenomenon, Island Creek Oysters stands out as—arguably—the Northeast's most fascinating bivalve laboratory. A family-owned farm wedged into Duxbury Bay's muddy flats, the business yields more than five million, succulent, briny oysters annually. Top restaurants serve them with an esthete's reverence, and your palate thanks them. But ever wondered what it's like, firsthand, out there in oyster land? Board a skiff with an oyster guide to visit the oyster farm—from hatchery to processing. You'll end your extravaganza at Island Creek's floating Oysterplex, the ideal spot for an all-oyster feast. Tours take place during the summer months, and sell out quickly. islandcreekoysters.com

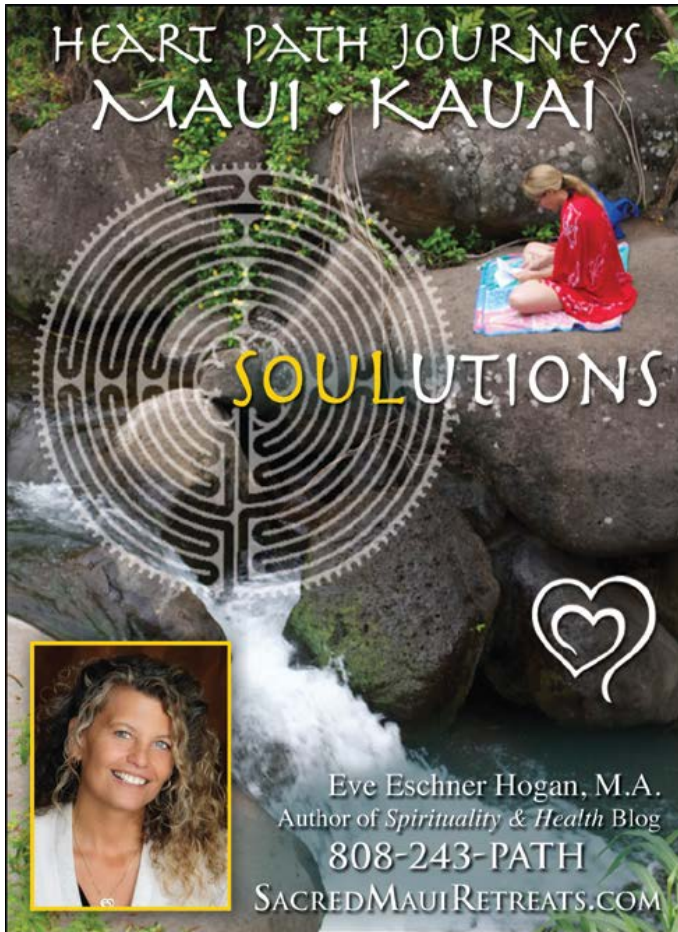
Becca Hensley is a spiritual adventurer and a widely published poet and writer, specializing in travel and spas. Her work has appeared in *National Geographic Traveler*, *Toronto Star*, and *Austin Monthly*.





ISLAND CREEK OYSTERS, MASSACHUSETTS

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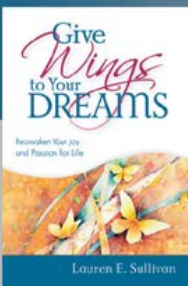
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TWO BUNCH PALMS,
DESERT HOT SPRINGS, CALIFORNIA

COURTESY TWO BUNCH PALMS

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SOOTHING GETAWAYS FOR SOAKING

BY MARY BEMIS

INDIAN SPRINGS, CALISTOGA, CALIFORNIA

For more than a century, guests have been happily immersing themselves in the good-for-you thermal mineral waters at this historic resort in one of America's iconic spa towns. The property is home to California's largest outdoor naturally hot-water-fed pool that stays open until midnight, seasonally. Stay in the Lodge, the restored 1930s Mission Revival building, or in one of the cottages, originally built in the 1940s.

indianspringscalistoga.com

THE GIDEON PUTNAM, SARATOGA, NEW YORK

The only hotel situated in beautiful Saratoga State Park, the Gideon Putnam is where you may experience the Roosevelt Baths & Spa—a bathhouse that opened its doors in 1935, thanks to President Franklin Roosevelt's thoughtful act to preserve the Saratoga Springs. The water here is known (and loved) for its effervescent qualities. This is old-school spa-ing at its best.

gideonputnam.com

BLACKSTONE HOTSPRINGS, TRUTH OR CONSEQUENCES, NEW MEXICO

The historic spa town of Truth or Consequences is a must-visit for hot springs aficionados, and Blackstone, located downtown, is fun and funky, with a creative twist. The 10 guest rooms pay homage to bygone television shows (*The Jetsons*, *Golden Girls*, and the Babaloo Suite, to name a few), and, best of all, feature hot spring tubs for unlimited in-room soaking. blackstonehotsprings.com

COTTONWOOD HOT SPRINGS, BUENA VISTA, COLORADO

"We consider this place magical," says Cathy Manning, owner and steward of the property, located in the San Isabel National Forest. "People come stressed and leave feeling peaceful and relaxed. That's what it's all about." Book one of 12 rooms in the Old West-style lodge or one of the cabins, built in the early 1900s, and enjoy some of the purest geothermal water in the States. On offer: five separate soaking areas of varying heat and lots of nature. cottonwood-hot-springs.com

LITHIA SPRINGS RESORT, ASHLAND, OREGON

You could drive right past this delightful 38-room resort, situated between a hippy hotspot called Jackson Wellsprings and a car dealership—but that would be a real shame. This is a whimsical oasis, a couple of miles from the famed Oregon Shakespeare Festival, that offers healing mineral water springs piped right into your soaking tub. Flower gardens, arbors, koi ponds, and all kinds of secret spots (plus some killer scones) only add to its allure. lithiaspringsresort.com

TWO BUNCH PALMS, DESERT HOT SPRINGS, CALIFORNIA

This carbon-neutral hot mineral spring spa resort has a very loyal fan base that keeps on coming back—and for good reason. The lithium-rich waters at this 270-acre property, simply put, make you feel great. Time seems to disappear when you're soaking in the palm-tree-lined Grotto. Add authentic mud treatments, tasty and healthy cuisine, and a yoga dome and you have the makings for a restorative and restful getaway. twobunchpalms.com

Mary Bemis is the editor in chief of *Journey to Renewal* and the founder of *InsidersGuidetoSpas.com*.

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Enriched by ANIMALS

BY BECCA HENSLEY

A couple of years ago, lonely and lost, I took a walk on a secluded beach in Nantucket, before the throngs arrived for the season. It was rainy and gray, a miasma of weather that paralleled my mood. I had the sliver moon of sand to myself; there was nobody else about as far as my eyes could see. Solitary, small, miserable, I felt like the last person on earth, my streaming tears consumed by the rain. Hopeless, I concentrated only on moving forward.

It wasn't long before I realized that I wasn't alone. As I walked, something walked with me. Not in the sand—but to my right, in the water, just beyond the breaking of the waves. It was a sea lion. She'd popped from the water, turned her head, and caught my gaze, compelling me to stop walking and stare back. Her animated eyes bored into me, filling my soul with a rush of golden warmth. Then, she'd submerge and meet up with me again a few steps later. Soon, she brought along some babies, and they, too, accompanied my trudge. This went on for nearly two hours. I can't explain what happened next, but I realized I was smiling, my heart opened—a zest for living flowed in. When my walk ended, the sea lion offered me one last, long gaze. I'll never forget the love in her face. She wasn't going to leave me unless she knew—so I nodded, and she turned and swam away.

Our connection with animals dates back at least a hundred thousand years, and it is said that at one time all

humans could communicate with beasts—that this talent was not reserved only for the gifted, but something we all had the capability to do. Perhaps, today, we've forgotten how to listen. But now at least, we can prove that our interactions with animals benefit our health (medical studies have noted lower blood pressure and the release of healing oxytocin in pet owners), lighten our moods, and fortify our soul. Animals teach us to love unconditionally, to live in the moment, and to be loyal and true. They teach us compassion and curiosity. Primal, awake, and essentially uncomplicated, infinitely free from hubris, they instruct us in our quest for meaning in our lives.

While pets at home may offer the best medicine, you may feel drawn to interact with other species in their own environment. As a caterpillar turns to a butterfly, I have been transformed by my interactions with animals during my travels. Here are some places to connect with some special creatures, and be forever enriched.



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COURTESY GOIN' OFF SAFARIS



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Hike with a Llama

First of all: When llamas feel happy, they hum. Join Colorado's **Paragon Guides at Arrowhead Ski Area**, near Vail, for their four-hour "Take a Llama to Lunch" hike, which begins with llama lessons amid the pine-flanked mountainside. During the hike, you'll lead your gentle llama along the trail, through meadows of wildflowers, and traipse through the woods. You'll finish with a picnic, having fallen in love. Longer treks, including multiday, hut-to-hut, llama trekking can be arranged. paragonguides.com/llama-trekking/

Walk with Mountain Gorillas

They're like Zen poets. Discover the endangered mountain gorilla in **Rwanda at Volcanoes National Park** with **Volcanoes Safaris**. Like Dian Fossey before you, you'll follow a ranger into the thickly wooded bamboo forest, tracking these astounding apes. Serene giants who live in family groups, helmed by a gargantuan Silverback, they wander the mountains in search of food. Find a brood, then pass a joyous hour in their presence, monitoring and photographing their merry antics in this natural habitat. When the

day ends, return to Virunga Lodge to toast your day with a sundowner, and enjoy local entertainment and riveting views. volcanoessafaris.com

Harmony with Horses

Astride the steeds at **Half Moon**, a Rock Resort in Montego Bay, Jamaica, you'll ply the waves as a mermaid should. It's like riding a seahorse. Scheduled training sessions and morning rides bond riders with their mounts. The rescued horses revel in taking their riders down the beach and into the cossetting splash of the waves. Highly recommended, a Positive Empowerment exercise teaches riders to use body language and intuition to communicate with the horses. Unmounted, riders connect with the horses and hone mutual respect without the use of restrictive equipment. Halfmoon.com

Woof with Wolf Dogs

In Canada, near Banff's dramatic, mountain-laden national park, join **Discover Banff Tours** for an illuminating visit with wolves and wolf dogs at **Yamnuska Wolfdog Sanctuary**. An

interactive adventure meant to dispel the myths surrounding wolves and wolfdogs, the tour gets participants up close and personal with the majestic creatures. You'll learn about their behaviors and challenges, then have the chance to feed and photograph them. You may even consider adopting one from this ethical, nonprofit organization, inspired by its stellar cause. yamnuska wolfdogsanctuary.com, banfftours.com

Paddle with Pigs

Oink your way to shore amid a flotilla of pigs. Nobody knows how they found their remote island home or learned to swim, but a pack of adorable pigs eagerly awaits your arrival from Pig Beach on Big Major Cay's southernmost crescent of sand where they live freely, basking in the sun and plunging into the waves at intervals. They'll swim to you, and invite you to join their workout. Among them you'll grunt with glee. While many outfitters organize pig-swimming tours, consider basing your stay at **Grand Isle Resort & Spa**, which conducts frequent outings. grandisleresort.com

Elation with Elephants

Their eyelashes will turn you green with envy. Be smitten at **Four Seasons Golden Triangle**, a 15-suite, lodge-style hotel in far northern Thailand—just across the river from Burma. There, in association with the Golden Triangle Elephant Association, program guests can take mahout-training courses, working to better the lives of rescued, once-abused elephants. Bathing, feeding, and exercising the immense pachyderms, guests form deep relationships among the backdrop of banyan trees and a bamboo jungle. Fourseasons.com/goldentriangle

Be Walked by a Mastiff

They call it the original Shangri La. The Ringha Valley, high in the Himalayas of China's Yunnan region, holds some of the most fairy-tale terrain on earth. Let Lanka, a furry, two-year-old Tibetan mastiff, escort you across the grasslands and river-pierced valleys near your hotel, **Banyan Tree Ringha**, in this remote, frontier destination. You'll feel the consummate connection between human and dog as you take the trails and awaken your spirit. Accompanied, too, by hotel manager Mario Piazza, you'll discover a Buddhist-informed landscape awash in temples, prayer flags, colorful traditional costumes, and yak butter tea. banyantree.com/en/cn-china-ringha



COURTESY VOLCANOES SAFARIS

Do Asanas with Goats

They'll help you with "downward dog" by tickling you with their beards. The goats on **Lainey Morse's No Regrets Farm** in Albany, Oregon, don't look like run-of-the-mill yogis. But they are—they have the principles of this ancient practice down; they know it's all about love, breathing, and not taking yourself too seriously. Outdoors, gamboling amid the rows of yoga mats, Morse's loving goats share their prana—and love—with scores of yoga lovers who practice here. A practice that Morse began as curative to herself after suffering a divorce, the prodigious classes will make you feel like a kid again. laineymorse.com

Be a Turtle's Ninja

The predators abound. Only one in 1,000 baby sea turtles makes it to adulthood. Thankfully, humans around the globe are taking note. Join the crusaders and help more babies grow up. Many hotels and seaside regions around the world take part in turtle-nest conservation. At **Velas Vallarta**, an all-inclusive family resort along Mexico's Riviera Nayarit, guests can participate in biologist-led turtle hatchling release rituals. After a training course, guests are given a sea turtle hatchling at sunset, then accompany the scientist to the beach. There, under supervision, they release their baby turtle, cheering it along its way. In addition, guests can take part in turtle nesting patrol, a morning program that often involves mother turtle nesting encounters. velasvallarta.com

Swim with the Sea Lions

Sea lions look like mischievous golden retrievers—but they're even more fun. Frolic with them in the waves in a number of locales around the world, from the Galapagos to Atlantis, the Bahamas' über-resort. For an authentic swim, book with guide David Doudle of **Goin' Off Safaris** on the Eyre Peninsula in South Australia. His tour includes a foray aboard a 22-foot trimaran, accompanied by naturalists from Baird Bay Ocean Eco Experience, who transport you to gadabout with a hoard of protected, inquisitive, playful sea lions in their own backyard—the churning sea. goinoffsafaris.com.au

Becca Hensley is a spiritual adventurer and a widely published poet and writer, specializing in travel and spas. Her work has appeared in *National Geographic Traveler*, *Toronto Star*, and *Austin Monthly*.



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BY MARY BEMIS

CAPTAIN WHIDBEY INN, COUPEVILLE, WASHINGTON

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WHITEFACE LODGE, LAKE PLACID, NEW YORK

Relax in the pristine natural beauty of Adirondack Park—a magnet for great romantics like Ralph Waldo Emerson—at a resort built from regional timbers. There's lots to do outdoors; try whitewater rafting on the Saranac River, canoeing, hiking, rock climbing, dog sledding, and much more. thewhitefacelodge.com

THE SACRED GARDEN RETREAT, MAKAWAO, HAWAII

Run by *S&H* online columnist Eve Hogan, this retreat is a quiet jungle getaway, about 10 minutes from the beach and 50 minutes to Haleakala National Park. But you might not want to leave the property because of the adjacent Sacred Garden—a magical labor of love made up of meditation gardens, walking labyrinths, and fairy gardens. Plan a stay in the renovated 1930s Gingerbread House. sacredgardenretreat.com

OMEGA INSTITUTE, RHINEBECK, NEW YORK

Located on the grounds of what once was Camp Boiberik, Omega is renowned for its speakers and workshops, but it's also a great place to simply escape. Leave your cell phones and laptops behind, and get ready to explore nature by walking one of

the many wooded trails, or kayaking on the lake. The Institute spreads over 250 lush acres and offers Rest & Rejuvenation Getaway Retreats from May through October. eomega.org

STOWEFLAKE MOUNTAIN RESORT, STOWE, VERMONT

A stay at this resort, with majestic Mt. Mansfield in the background, is an ideal getaway if you enjoy Nordic skiing or walking, mountain biking, and swimming in streams. There's also the noteworthy Spa at Stoweflake's Center for Growth, offering esoteric treatments, such as shiatsu and Reiki, sound balancing treatments, and Ayurvedic therapies. Added bonus: This is a dog-friendly resort. stoweflake.com

STANFORD INN BY THE SEA, MENDOCINO, CALIFORNIA

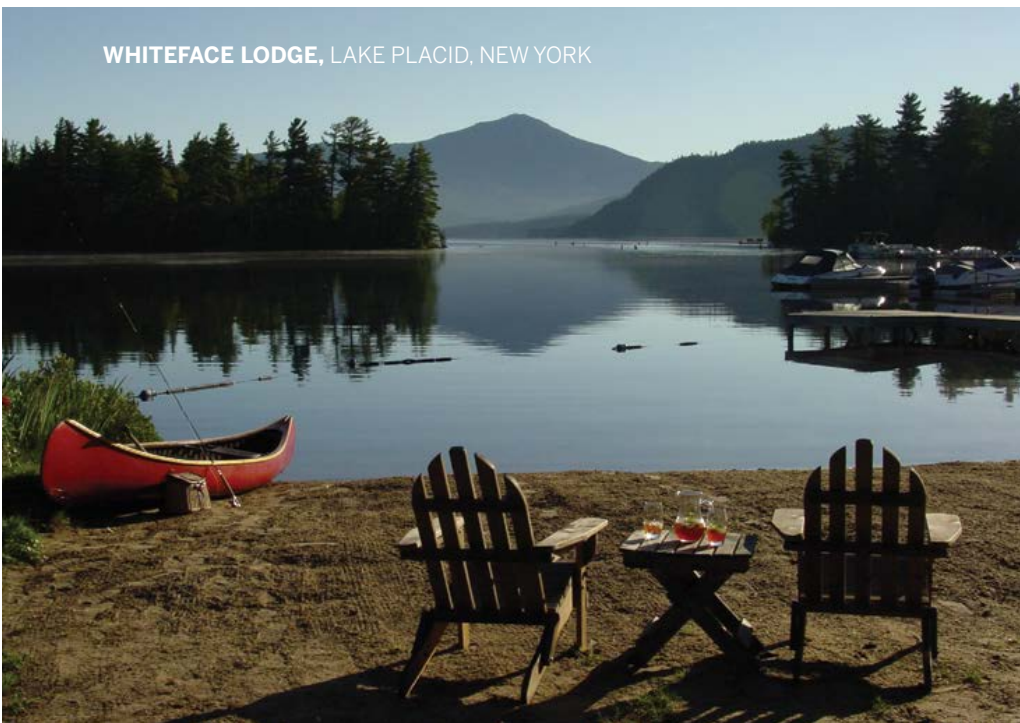
Joan and Jeff Stanford run this eco-resort that's nestled on a hillside overlooking the Mendocino Coast. The inn is home to the Mendocino Center for Living Well, where you can explore the natural world through offerings like seaweed walks, mushroom hunts, solar canoe rides, and bioluminescent water tours. At Ravens Restaurant, a fine-dining vegan and organic venue, much of the produce comes from the couple's USDA-California Certified Organic Farm. stanfordinn.com

RANCHO LA PUERTA, TECATE, MEXICO

For seven-plus decades, guests have come for sun and sanctuary to this beloved destination, nestled at the juncture of the Laguna and Sierra Juarez mountain ranges. Over the years, the owners have created a 3,000-acre nature preserve that includes hiking trails, 32 acres of gardens, plus a six-acre organic farm. The ideal way to experience Rancho is to spend a full week to get back in sync with your own natural cycles. rancholapuerta.com

Mary Bemis is the editor in chief of *Journey to Renewal* and the founder of InsidersGuidetoSpas.com.

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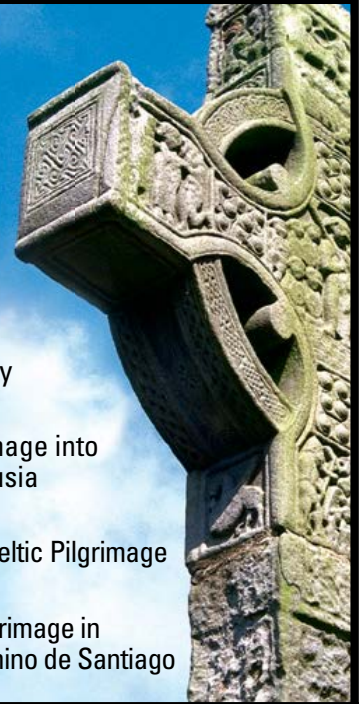
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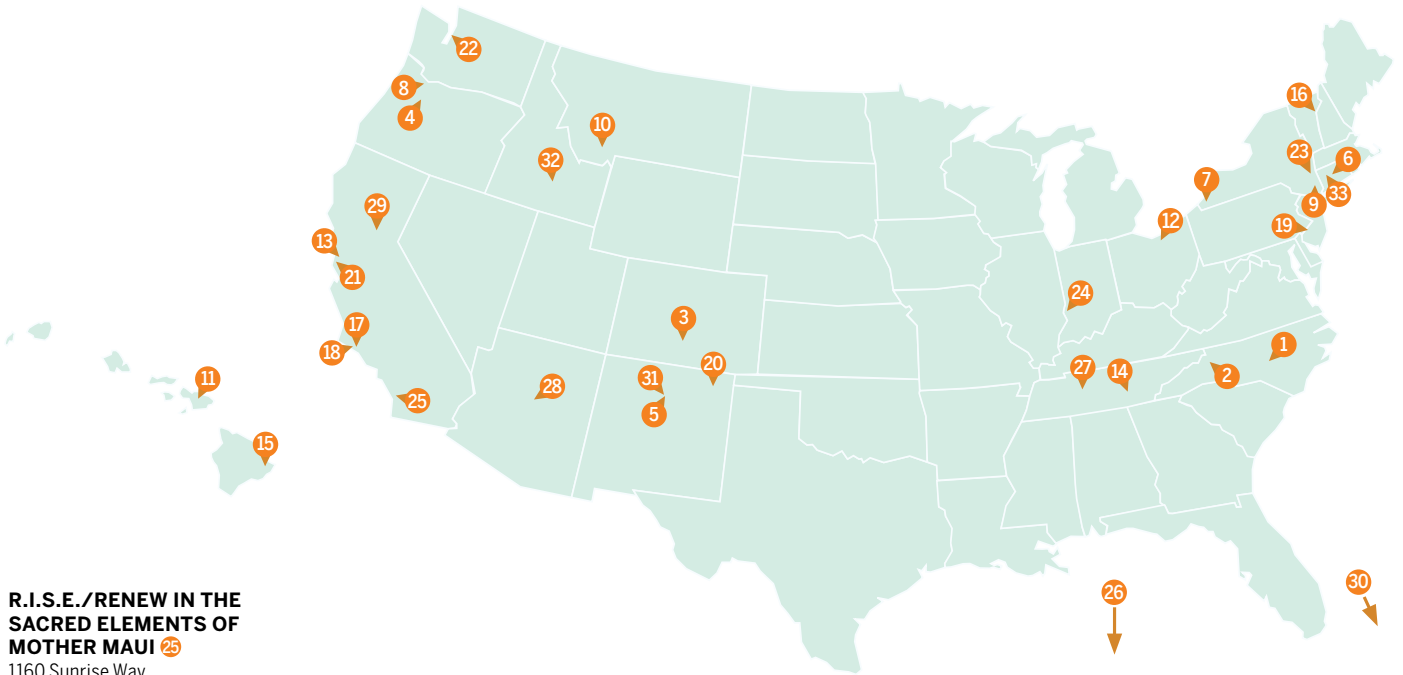
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Finding Quiet

7 PLACES TO EXPERIENCE SILENCE **BY MARY BEMIS**

1. In Wine Country

Osmosis is an eco-friendly, six-acre sanctuary in Sonoma County, California, offering a wide menu of healing and alternative spa treatments, including its famous cedar enzyme baths. Sign up for the Meditation Day Retreat and enjoy sitting and walking meditations throughout the serene Zen gardens, as well as silent spa time, lunch, and more quiet reflection. osmosis.com

2. Near the Grand Ole Opry

If you're looking for a silent retreat in America's country music capital, mark your calendar for March 27 to 30, when Nashville's **Scarritt Bennett Center** will offer its Silence Speaks Retreat. The nonprofit educational center is situated on 10 lush acres and has a history of social activism and community engagement. scarrittbennett.org

3. In the Shawangunk Mountains

Just 90 minutes from New York City, **Mohonk Mountain House** is a National Historic Landmark that has been committed to environmental stewardship since 1869. Popular with families, but also ideal for solo travelers, Mohonk is a place to set your own pace. Guests may sign up for a number of Mindfulness in Minutes

programs offered throughout the year, as well as private mindfulness training sessions. mohonk.com

4. On Long Island Sound

Spend a blissful, solo night by the ocean, or book one of the spiritual growth and renewal programs at Mercy by the Sea on the Long Island Sound in Connecticut. Run by the Sisters of Mercy, the center "values stillness, silence, and solitude" and offers programs such as "A Weekend of Mindfulness." Themed retreats are also offered throughout the year. mercybythesea.org

5. In Calistoga

Float in a warm geothermal mineral pool beneath a starry sky while guided through a peaceful sequence of breath work and visualization at **Solage** in Calistoga, California. As spa director Helen Brown explains, "We thought that combining a meditation/guided visualization practice together with the soothing waters of our naturally heated geothermal mineral water could be a transformative experience." And it is! solagecalistoga.com

6. Amid the Red Rocks


This independent eco-retreat community began as a solitary cabin on a forest hilltop east of Sedona, Arizona, shares founder and resident host Bodhi Heart. A personal spiritual getaway, **Awakening Spirit** offers three private log cabins for extended retreats. "This can be a life-changing journey into silence and self-awareness," says Bodhi Heart. awakeningspiritretreat.com

7. At the Mandarin Oriental

"A lot of the benefits of a spa experience come from taking time for yourself in silence, away from technology, and in the hands of a nurturing and compassionate healer," says Jeremy McCarthy, group director of spa and wellness at **Mandarin Oriental Hotels**. He recently created a number of silent spa experiences, including Silent Night, in which the spa invites people to come in and experience their treatments in silence. mandarinoriental.com

Mary Bemis is the editor in chief of *Journey to Renewal* and the founder of InsidersGuidetoSpas.com.






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unexpected
paths.

MARK NEPO

PHOTO: ROBIN STREMLOW

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