

INSIDER'S GUIDE TO SPAS

TAKE ME THERE

8 Great Health Retreats to Go Solo

BY MARY BEMIS



Not so many years ago, a healthy spa diet arrived in shades of dark green and brown and would make a foodie wince. Not anymore. Health resort foods now tend toward the exquisite, the kind of meals you really wish you could make at home. And the same is true with health resorts in general. Forget boot camps: These places—whether simple or luxurious—provide an instant, invigorating change in lifestyle that immediately feels great. Given that so many of our physical and mental ailments are lifestyle related, a solid week devoted to healthy pleasures could be the best investment of the year. Here's a range of healthy possibilities to ease whatever ails you.

Sunrise Springs Integrative Wellness Resort, Santa Fe, New Mexico

The focus of this wellness resort is to teach you sustainable healthy practices that “allow you to thrive and experience life differently.” It's a wonderful blend of Eastern and Western healing therapies, and the expert team here includes acupuncturists, behavioral health counselors, chiropractors, medical doctors, and massage therapists. The setting is lovely—70 serene acres to help you slow down, relax, and decompress—and the experiential activities (think nature bathing, “animal interactions,” and expressive arts) are noteworthy. Highlights include the Integrative Therapeutic Spa with private outdoor hydrotherapy, the greenhouse with its culinary classroom, and 20 acres of intentionally designed gardens, paths, and walking trails. SUNRISESPRINGS.COM; 505-780-8145

Hilton Head Health, Hilton Head Island, South Carolina

Long regarded as one of the best weight-loss retreats in the nation, Hilton Head Health underwent a renovation, revamping its programs and building The Indigo Spa (there are a lot of very good signature treatments here, including the Indigo Blue Eucalyptus Ritual to help relieve tiredness, low moods, and sore muscles). Stays at this health and wellness retreat begin with a 45-minute private consultation with a health specialist to tailor the most beneficial classes and experiences based on your needs. Try one of the Living Well programs, which includes a week-long Healthy Cuisine Kitchen and the Body + Mind Stress Management program. HHHEALTH.COM; 843-785-3919

Good Commons, Plymouth, Vermont

Located in an 1840s building that was once a country store turned ice cream parlor, this eco-friendly retreat center/B&B prides itself on being a “home away from home” for those looking for a relaxing, creative escape with a focus on wellness. Known for their reinvigorating weekend yoga retreats, healthy themes have included Gluten-Free Gourmet Getaways. You can also build your own dream retreat. Cooking classes, wine and cheese tastings, hiking, and intense yoga flow are just some of the options. GOODCOMMONS.COM; 802-672-1859

Copperhood Retreat & Spa, Shandaken, New York

If you’re looking to recharge in an intimate, natural environment where nutritious, real food takes center stage, this 20-room healthy destination spa located in the Catskills, will hit the mark. On the menu: juicing, raw food, yoga, swimming, and lots of Mother Nature. There are a number of packages that can be customized to fit your needs, including a 3-Night Detox Plan and 21-Night Break Your Old Habits Plan. COPPERHOOD.COM; 845-688-2460

Green Mountain at Fox Run, Ludlow, Vermont

A peaceful country setting provides the backdrop for this women’s only weight-loss program that began in 1973. Programs are a minimum of one-week and up to four weeks—designed to help you improve weight management and healthy lifestyle skills. The staff includes experts in nutrition, exercise physiology, metabolism, medicine, stress management, psychology, massage, tai chi, and yoga. Note: There are special programs for binge eaters, compulsive eaters, and those with body image issues and chronic health problems. FITWOMAN.COM; 800-448-8106

The Raj Ayurveda Health Spa, Fairfield, Iowa

If you want to experience ayurveda—an ancient system of preventive health care that was developed in India over 6,000 years ago—in its purest form without leaving the US, this is the place to do it. For a real life-changer, try one of the Panchakarma Programs (you may choose from three-day to 21-day-plus packages). This is a powerful detoxifying and rejuvenating therapy that includes pulse assessment, a number of intensive ayurvedic spa treatments, herbal enemas, organic vegetarian meals, and yoga classes, meditation, and evening lectures. THERAJ.COM; 800-864-8714

Cal-A-Vie Health Spa, Vista, California

This luxurious destination spa is a real treat. Stay in one of 32 spacious Mediterranean-style villas, decorated in country French décor, and enjoy a personalized program designed to address your wellness goals. Choose from three-four- and seven-night packages that include gourmet cuisine, beauty and spa treatments, mind and body awareness programs (there are more than 20 different mind/body classes, including Feldenkrais, Chakra yoga, and tai chi) fitness classes, and lectures. Walk the labyrinth or spend some quiet time in the 400-year-old candlelit chapel. CAL-A-VIE.COM; 760-945-2055

Rancho La Puerta, Tecate, Mexico

The mothership of health resorts, Rancho La Puerta is nearly 80 years old and keeps getting better. Start your day with a hike up the mystical mountain, followed by yoga, dance, pilates, weight circuits, aqua aerobics, a labyrinth walk, art classes, bird watching, cooking classes, organic farm walks, and much more. The options are endless, but you can wind down at the end of your day at the tiny wine bar and art gallery, featuring Mexican wines and original artwork. It’s the best week you’ll spend all year. RANCHOLAPUERTA.COM; 800-443-7565