

LUXURY CARD™



California Calm

As the concept of wellness has ballooned from trend to lifestyle, evolving from garden-variety salt scrubs and spa days into a global industry three times larger than pharmaceuticals, it's become all about personalization. Tailored experiences address not just your physical needs but what's going on emotionally and spiritually. And detox no longer equals deprivation. These highly customizable, weeklong journeys invoke all the buzzwords (longevity, biohacking, alternative medicine) to possibly change your life.

Rancho La Puerta

Its name, "the Ranch Door" in English, is an homage to two bowing oak trees that formed the entrance to a campsite in Tecate, Baja California, Mexico, that the co-founders first used in 1940. Today the site remains couched in a chaparral- and granite-festooned valley amid sycamore trees and guarded by the sacred Mt. Kuchumaa. All 4,000 private acres of gardens, mountains, and meadows remain central to the retreat resort's mission.

"Live simply, respect the body's inherent wisdom, and embrace a life in nature," said wife and husband co-founders Deborah and Edmond Szekely. (Deborah, now 98, later founded the Golden Door.) Today, the couple's motto *siempre mejor* (meaning "always better") translates to a sequential program—epitomized in the newly launched 21-day Perfect Balance Sabbatical. The plan requires guests to zero in on three things: focusing, recharging, and strengthening. Morning mountain hikes precede energy-filled

reflexology treatments. There are tiny trampoline cardio classes and hula hooping sessions followed by sound bathing and *pupusa*-making, all offered in open air.

Although the family-run Rancho La Puerta turned 81 this year, the sentiment on the property feels less senior and more teenager—a little bit rebellious and constantly curious. While each of the 87 rooms is individually landscaped and sprinkled with Mexican folk artwork, the forthcoming Residences, a wellness village of 108 private residences available for purchase, will feature Mediterranean-inspired scenery and complete interior customization options.

Walking around the property in the evenings, wafts of sage and artemisia float in with the cool, high-desert breezes. The late Edmond Szekely was conversant in 17 languages; thus the nightly schedule reflects his desire to share knowledge via a rotating array of workshops, musicians, and lecturers. From \$4,000/person; rancholapuerta.com —Alexandra Cheney



Golden Door

Passing through bejeweled, golden doors in San Marcos, California, you'll notice a purposeful crook in the wooden footbridge. The *ukiyo* moment (meaning "the floating world" in Japanese) is meant to help you detach from the bothers of life and return to the moment. "How do we transform someone's life in seven days?" asks Kathy Van Ness, Golden Door's chief operating officer. "It starts with breathing out and allowing yourself to be nurtured."

Each of the 40 deliberately spacious and simply appointed rooms are single occupancy, allowing for greater reflection. Japanese sand and rock gardens encourage a detangling of thoughts. Daily in-room massages and facials pamper and encourage routines. As the body slips into a schedule—dawn hikes, morning private fitness trainers or classes, afternoons filled with treatments, evenings of pause and meditation followed by communal under-the-stars meals—deeper rejuvenation and healing begins.

À la carte offerings like Feldenkrais (ask for Tracey), *watsu* ("water massage"), or acupuncture and cupping (book Jill), encourage innate connection or reconnection with oneself. In-room breakfast is served with a side of haiku to mindfully add meaning throughout the duration of one's stay. The ratio of staff to guests hovers at 4:1, creating a dedicated space for detail.

Most weeks are designed to be single sex; separate men's and women's offerings promote nurturing and kinship, stripped down to reveal a simplicity preferred by the majority of guests. "Everything we do here is all about the experience," says Van Ness. The longstanding business model remains that 100 percent of the net profits from Golden Door are donated to organizations that help to end child abuse. "Very simply, we believe in changing lives. How wonderful is it to experience a powerful change and then

become a force for change?" From \$7,950 for the Land and Water package; goldendoor.com —*Alexandra Cheney*



Cal-A-Vie Health Spa

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Losing oneself among Cal-A-Vie Health Spa's 500 acres in Vista, California, can take many forms: listening to the whooshing of the functioning windmill, stargazing solo from the private observatory. This retreat (only a 10-minute drive from Golden Door) is modeled after a small village in the south of France and dotted with historic antiques and charming structures, like the 400-year-old chapel shipped over from Europe and reassembled by hand.

Served alongside the Provençal charm are healthy doses of science and biohacking to aid in self-discovery. Take the Bod Pod, a composition tracking system that analyzes body and fat mass. The training staff, which includes registered dietitians, takes measurements and then provides comprehensive evaluations and bespoke programming to fast track reaching goals. The program combines cryotherapy in an Olympic-size pool with robust classes like Hydroriding (in-water cycling) or body-board boot camp (HIIT training on a floating raft) with deep-stretching opportunities like Melt Method.

An on-site naturopathic medical doctor and two nutritionists work to examine the root cause of an illness or ache. Wellness injections and immune boosters combine medical science and natural practices, allowing the body to heal and recover. Book an acupuncture session and a deep-tissue or Thai massage to allow muscle niggles to dissolve.

A steep walk uphill to L'Orangerie rewards guests with uninterrupted vistas; on a clear day it's possible to see a glimmer of the Pacific Ocean. Sit among the many citrus trees or opt into guided meditation on the perfectly manicured lawn. Created with the greatest flexibility, guests can select a three-, four-, or seven-night stay in one of 25 villas or 7 suites. La Petite Stay from \$4,950/person; cal-a-vie.com —
Alexandra Cheney



The Ranch Malibu

Spanning 200 acres in the Santa Monica Mountains, The Ranch Malibu's signature weeklong program of endurance, nutrition, and wellness has always focused on small-group fitness on spacious grounds with open-air common areas. As people begin to travel again, embracing nature and focusing on their health, the lifestyle resort has introduced The Ranch Private, a program tailored for those traveling solo or in a group of up to four. All elements of the original six-night, seven-day program—daily 10-mile hikes, plant-based meals, massage therapy, and stretch, fitness, and yoga classes—take place in a more intimate, secluded setting.

"After weeks of home isolation, people are ready to go outside and move their bodies," says Alex Glasscock, founder and CEO of The Ranch. "The Ranch Private is for those who feel more comfortable doing the program alone or with friends, and for those who want a more customized experience to achieve their personal goals."

Designed to recalibrate the mind and body through an intense fitness regimen and a highly structured nutritional diet, The Ranch program is the opposite of relaxed spa treatments and lazy poolside naps. After those four-hour hikes and back-to-back strength training sessions, guests receive daily massages at private huts on property. Be prepared to breathe deeply and work through the pain. If you can bear it, you will be more than ready to start anew the next day—and take all the skills and discipline you've acquired to make lasting changes once home. The Ranch Private is \$11,000/person; theranchmalibu.com —Deborah Frank