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Creative Force

Hotels and resorts are embracing the power of art classes in their wellness programs

> IF HIGH-SCHOOL art class was the last time you picked up a paintbrush, it may be time to start again. Sketching, ceramics, sculpting and weaving are among the many art forms shown to decrease pain, minimize anxiety, build confidence and even help fend off depression.

For decades, the United Kingdom's National Health Service has operated a prescription program for health-care practitioners to refer patients to artist-led workshops. In the U.S., establishments from the Cleveland Clinic to the University of Florida's Center for Arts in Medicine have similarly

worked to seed art therapy across the country.

The idea of painting and pottery classes to aid wellness may sound too good to be true, yet even the World Health Organization has jumped on the bandwagon. It cites more than 3,000 studies that delve into the link between arts and health in a report on the topic, noting "arts activities can trigger psychological, physiological, social and behavioral responses" that are linked with positive health outcomes. Some studies even show that art and music can minimize the length of a hospital stay, and potentially reduce the need





for narcotic pain medicine.

According to Tara Reddy, founding director of the U.K.-based nonprofit Arts on Prescription, any type of art activity, from knitting and pottery to drawing and writing, offers health benefits. It's all about finding the one that works for you.

"Finding a creative activity you enjoy brings a positive impact to your health and well-being," Reddy says, noting the ritual of making art is as important, if not more so, than the art itself. "Art allows people to switch off from worries and helps relax the mind. It's a conduit for conversations that would not be held in a more formal setting." The process also builds confidence via social engagement, gaining new skills, and learning to let go of the idea of perfection.

Given art therapy's many benefits, it's no surprise that wellness retreats and hotels around the world have joined in the movement, too. Find your inner artist at one of these art-meets-wellness escapes.

FOR PAINTING
Alila Ventana Big Sur
California

Nestled among the redwoods of California's untamed Central Coast, Alila Ventana Big Sur could very well be the subject of a painting—and it offers workshops for guests to get their paint on, too. Join local artist Sofanya White for a 60-minute Champagne in Colors experience that pairs crisp bubbles with simple painting instruction. The latter here is merely suggestion—guests are encouraged to follow their imagination, with views of the Pacific Ocean as inspiration. Other on-site art experiences include leather crafting, soapmaking and macramé.



FOR SCULPTING
Rancho La Puerta

Tecate, Mexico
Spanning 4,000 acres at the base of Mount Kuchumaa, wellness hub Rancho La Puerta is a patchwork of rock gardens, mountain lilacs, tranquil meadows and chaparral landscapes, with critters from coyotes to cottontail rabbits calling the grounds home. If that's not enough to spark your sense of well-being, the property's many art workshops will do so—starting with its sculpture courses. During classes, guests learn to mold heads and torsos out of clay, with detail on how

["Finding a creative activity you enjoy brings a positive impact to your health and well-being."](#)

FROM TOP: Pottery at Enchantment Resort, Sedona, Arizona; sculpture by Victor Hugo Castañeda at Rancho La Puerta, Tecate, Mexico
OPPOSITE, FROM TOP: Atelier d'Artiste at Royal Mansour, Marrakesh, Morocco; painting at Alila Ventana Big Sur, California



to employ tools and techniques used by the pros. Rancho La Puerta guests use a nonhardening clay, which means you can't take the actual sculpture home, but you can get it cast in bronze for a fee.

FOR POTTERY
Enchantment Resort

Sedona, Arizona
If Enchantment Resort's copper-tinged Boynton Canyon and sandstone cliff backdrops don't inspire your inner artist, an expert-led pottery class should do the trick. This Sedona getaway runs daily pottery classes where guests can let their inner ceramist run wild. Pair art immersion with a glass of wine selected by the on-site sommelier, and build in enough time during your visit to enjoy the property's many other creative experiences, such as beading, watercolor painting and nature sketching.

FOR ART THERAPY
Royal Mansour

Marrakesh, Morocco
One step through the ornate doors of the five-star Royal Mansour is enough to foster relaxation. The grand estate, with its thick palms and intricate mosaic tiles, is a stark contrast from the hustle and bustle of the nearby medina. Its interior, crafted by more than 1,000 artisans, is also the perfect backdrop for artistic inspiration—as is its Atelier d'Artiste studio, home to a host of therapeutic art classes. A Sacred Femininity class helps guests find balance and self-connection via crochet, embroidery and jewelry making with natural materials, while the Letters for a Freer Body immersion teaches travelers to become "an instrument to achieve your transformation" via calligraphy and literature.

TOP LEFT: ROYAL MANSOUR, MARRAKECH/ISAAC ICHOU; BOTTOM LEFT: COURTESY OF ALILA; TOP RIGHT: COURTESY OF ENCHANTMENT RESORT; BOTTOM RIGHT: SCOTT DRAPER