

Rural Intelligence

MIRAVAL BERKSHIRES OPENS FOR GUESTS SEEKING A TRANSFORMATIVE EXPERIENCE

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Women's lounge. Photos courtesy of Miraval Berkshires

At the newly opened **Miraval Berkshires Spa and Resort**, the focus is on mindfulness and being in the moment. Perhaps you find living in the moment challenging? No worries — Miraval will help you with that. If you're hovering weightlessly above the ground in a silk hammock during floating meditation (in your pajamas, no less), kayaking around Laurel Lake, walking a labyrinth or focusing on your breath while throwing a hatchet, you probably won't want to be thinking about the past or worrying about the future.

Miraval, owned by Hyatt Hotels, took over the former Cranwell Resort and Spa in Lenox, Mass. and added 12 new buildings to the 380-acre campus. With the mission to help individuals find their paths to well being, it offers guests a tranquil bubble, with its Clodagh-designed guest rooms, Life in Balance spa, 32 treatment rooms, healthful meals and creative programming. It's a digital device-free environment, too — at check in, guests receive a cell phone "sleeping bag." A Tibetan gong in the garden by the outdoor pool rings out at 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. every day, a reminder to be present. Serenity reigns here.

Initially scheduled to debut in March, Miraval put its opening on hold, but administrators decided to follow the Byzantine COVID-19 regulations and just go for it last month. Adhering to the stringent, ever-changing regulations has meant that some services can't be rendered right now, but open it and people will come. Miraval's team members are pleased with the guest volume so far.



Cottage room

“It’s a tough time to open any business,” says General Manager Victor Capadonna, “but this kind of environment is needed more than ever.”

So, rooms are disinfected and sanitized. The Life in Balance Spa’s menu is abbreviated for now; pool patio seating has been configured to allow for physical distancing; every other cardio machine in the Body Mindfulness Center is turned off and masks are mandatory there (and most everywhere on site). Class sizes are limited. Every Miraval colleague goes through a temperature check upon arrival at work. There are disinfectant and sanitizing wipes everywhere.

Still, the schedule of well-being activities is robust, and delightfully uncommon. Capadonna reports that one of the most popular activities is that hatchet-throwing course. Guests are also taking to the kayaking, canoeing and paddleboard activities at Laurel Lake (Miraval has access to 200 feet of beach rights).

“We’ve worked to increase the outdoor adventure options by 50 percent,” Capadonna says. Indoors, guests are gravitating to the astrology sessions, particularly Chinese astrology. Activities are grouped by intention: Wellbeing (including wellness counseling); Spirit and Soul (besides astrology, chakra balancing, energy imaging, something called “planetary buzz”); Yoga and Fitness; Meditation; Creative Expression (craft and mandala work); Culinary and Nutrition (“Appreciating Chocolate” —yes! — and plant-based BBQ are two of the offerings); Sustainable Living (beekeeping and a holistic metabolic tuneup); Equine Activities; Farm and Garden Activities (chicken keeping and equine meditation at Miraval’s Meadowview Farm and Barn); and Outdoor Adventure (a challenge course, hiking/biking, water sports).



Indoor/outdoor spa pool

A four-season resort, Miraval will offer a full menu of winter activities and adventures. To keep things comfortable in chilly temperatures, the 29,000 square-foot facility was designed with passageways throughout; guests never even need to go outside during an entire stay if that's their preference. One thoughtful touch: the art and photography on the walls in all the buildings are the work of six local artists: Scott Taylor, Kathy Winstanley, Scott Barrow, Thomas Hoadley, Marguerite Bride and Peter Gordon.

Overall, about 60% of the programming is complimentary, with the rest a la carte. The rates, starting at \$599 per person, per night, include unlimited participation in daily yoga, meditation and fitness classes, as well as hiking, outdoor activities, well-being sessions, culinary and nutrition classes, group photography classes and more.

(The Gilded Age Cranwell mansion high atop the hill has been converted to Wyndhurst Manor & Club — also owned by Hyatt Hotels— but they are separate hotels with their own facilities and amenities. Importantly, Wyndhurst is child friendly, while Miraval is adults only. The former Cranwell golf course is now Golf at Wyndhurst.)

Miraval is offering several packages for overnights and — attention locals — has plans to offer day passes (COVID-19 has forced a postponement for now).

With Canyon Ranch and Kripalu located in the same town, it will be interesting to see the impact Miraval has on the health-and-wellness visitor traffic in the Berkshires. General Manager Capadonna acknowledges the competition, but, he says, “We all share the intent to live a better life, we just do it in a different way. We’re focused on meeting our guests where they are in their lives at this moment.”