



IN PURSUIT OF WELLNESS

Wellness resorts go far beyond the typical spa retreat, providing peaceful settings and comprehensive programs to nurture physical, mental and emotional health.

BY THERESA GAWLAS MEDOFF

If anything good comes out of the pandemic, it may be that people are focusing more on their own wellbeing. Most of us have realized that to be healthy and happy, we need balance in our lives. We've recognized anew the importance of proper exercise, essential sleep and good nutrition; the restorative qualities of nature; and the value of social connections as well as me-time.

If you're ready to reengage with yourself and focus holistically on health, consider a retreat at one of these wellness resorts.

PHOTO BY ICSNAPS/STOCK.ADOBE.COM

CIVANA Wellness Resort & Spa

CAREFREE, ARIZONA



The mantra at this AAA Four Diamond luxury resort outside Scottsdale is "happiness first, healthiness always." As this past year has certainly taught us, we can be physically healthy, as in *not sick*, but still not be well. Mental, social and spiritual health matter, too. With its striking Sonoran Desert location (forests aren't the only outdoor environments good for "bathing"), the 20-acre CIVANA Wellness Resort & Spa provides the perfect opportunity to relax, regenerate and rediscover happiness.

CIVANA gets the nod as a top wellness resort from the likes of *Travel + Leisure*, *Yoga Journal* and *Departures* and has earned AAA Inspector's Best of Housekeeping approval. The 176 guest rooms and suites soothe with neutral colors and natural materials, and each has a private balcony or patio.

Choose a path for your CIVANA resort experience—yoga and mindfulness, personal growth and discovery, outdoor adventure, total wellbeing or joyful journey—or create your own path. With more than 70 wellness classes in rotation, you might begin your morning with guided labyrinth walking meditation, burn off some energy with TRX suspension training, try a new style of yoga (think aerial, wall or water yoga), and then wind down with Sunset Sound Healing as the tones of crystal singing bowls and gongs clear and cleanse body and mind.

CIVANA's newest wellness program is its Chopra Health Retreat, inspired by Deepak Chopra's bestseller *Perfect Health*. Offered twice monthly, the five-day retreat features massages, meditation and yoga as well as workshops on the centuries-old healing method Ayurveda.

Despite its location in the desert—or perhaps because of it—CIVANA emphasizes healing through water. There's a pool for swimming and one for Watsu therapy (massage and accupressure therapy performed in warm water), and the spa includes a revitalizing aqua therapy circuit.

Breakfast and lunch at Seed Café + Market and dinner at Terras feature healthful seasonal fare sourced locally, with an emphasis on plant-based dishes. And, no, cocktails and desserts are not forbidden. There's even a Happiness Hour Menu served daily from 4 to 5:30 p.m.

Right, from top: Clean lines and Southwestern architectural accents mark the entrance to CIVANA Spa; Yoga classes sometimes take place outdoors in CIVANA's Sonoran desert setting.



PHOTOS ABOVE BY LISA DIEDERICH PHOTOGRAPHY
INSET PHOTO COURTESY OF CIVANA

EUPEPSIA Wellness Resort

BLAND, VIRGINIA



Your first question might be, “What’s ‘Eupepsia’?” (We wondered, too.) “Eupepsia” is a medical term for “good digestion,” and you will, indeed, enjoy tasty farm-to-table vegetarian dining at this wellness resort in southern Virginia. But the uncommon word can refer as well to optimism and cheerfulness. In other words, Eupepsia Wellness Resort emphasizes holistic healing.

The setting itself is restorative: 256 acres of farm and woodland in the foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains, with an organic greenhouse, farm animals (the goats are especially popular) and a pond. The cedar chalet-like main building houses dining areas, fitness facilities, a gym, the spa and 26 guest rooms (including six for families).

Retreat packages range from Relax & De-stress to Advanced Healing, and all are based on the ancient South Asian traditional medicine Ayurveda. Assessments such as infrared full-body screening and Ayurvedic body type analysis are offered, and retreat packages are tailored to each guest’s goals.

While the minimum stay is four nights, guests often stay a week, two weeks or more to immerse themselves in the supportive, family-like environment. (Staff all live on the property, and guests often choose to dine community style.)



PHOTOS COURTESY OF EUPEPSIA

The resort’s functional training area includes weights, cardiovascular equipment and an agility training area. Guests who are ready to get their game on will find facilities for basketball, tennis, volleyball and indoor soccer as well as a rock-climbing wall. Other activities include fitness classes, guided hikes, mountain biking, yoga and meditation. There’s a seasonal outdoor pool, too.

The wellness-focused spa facilities comprise a saltwater flotation room for deep relaxation, a Himalayan Salt Chalet designed to heal and rejuvenate, and a hydrotherapy pool equipped with an underwater treadmill and bicycles along with hydro-massage for joint-friendly exercise.

Eupepsia Wellness Resort may have opened just three years ago, but it already has a large repeat clientele, who come for respite, healing and a new outlook on life.

Above, from left: Eupepsia Wellness Resort features Ayurvedic healing treatments; A variety of hydrotherapy options are available for exercising muscles in a lower resistance environment; Relaxing in Eupepsia’s Himalayan Salt Chalet brings the rejuvenating benefits of halo therapy.



Garden of the Gods Resort’s dramatic surroundings add a spiritual healing component to exercise classes.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF GARDEN OF THE GODS RESORT AND CLUB

GARDEN of the GODS Resort and Club

COLORADO SPRINGS, COLORADO

STRATA brings together amenities and professionals to provide a comprehensive wellness package: spa and salon treatments, fitness facilities and coaching, and wellness concierge medical services.

The route to rejuvenation begins with the resort’s surroundings: endless blue skies, dramatic views of the Pike’s Peak Region of the Rocky Mountains—including the area’s namesake mountain—and the stunning red rock formations of Garden of the Gods National Natural Landmark.

Accommodation options include 116 guest rooms and suites in the main lodge and one-, two- and three-bedroom luxury cottages and casitas grouped in residential settings. Use of fitness center facilities is included in the room rate, as are unlimited group fitness classes, from boot camp-style workout sessions to energy-cranking Zumba to restorative yoga. Floor-to-ceiling windows provide inspirational views, and some classes are held outdoors. Wellness guests also enjoy access to the outdoor infinity pool (adults-only, the better to relax) as well as the Three Graces complex with an outdoor pool, a hot tub, cabanas and lounge chairs.

STRATA Body (aka the spa) offers a tempting array of facials, massages and body treatments. Before and after treatments, spa clients can indulge in STRATA Body’s pink Himalayan salt therapy, sauna or steam room, and experiential showers.

The same complex houses STRATA Med, offering guests concierge access to more than 20 health and wellness specialists for personalized health assessments as well as treatments and services ranging from healing touch, naturopathy and acupuncture to IV nutritional therapy and chiropractic care.

All this surrounded by nature’s stunning scenery? We feel better already.





Miraval Berkshire's Life in Balance Spa blends the resort's natural surroundings with a mindful approach to wellness.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF MIRAVAL

MIRAVAL BERKSHIRES

LEXOX, MASSACHUSETTS

Miraval Berkshires Resort and Spa opened just over a year ago, but the Miraval name has been associated with the best in destination spas since 1995, when Miraval Arizona launched in

Tucson. The newest member of the brand is already raking in the awards, just like its two predecessors (Miraval Austin opened in 2019). The western Massachusetts wellness resort made *Travel + Leisure's* It List 2021 as one of the Best New Hotels in the World, and it ranked among the Best New Wellness Resorts in the World on *Condé Nast Traveler's* 2021 Hot List.

The resort sits on a hill amid 380 acres of lush woodlands and the changing seasons of the Berkshire Mountains. Guest rooms and suites in newly built cottages feature cozy, contemporary décor and warm New England-y colors. All come equipped with a Tibetan singing bowl and meditation cushion.

Meals at Harvest Moon Restaurant encourage healthful, mindful eating—and prove that what's good for you can taste great, too. Optional culinary classes range from tastings of kombucha to lessons in gluten-free baking or cocktail making.

Guests choose a path for their wellness journey—self-connection, fitness focus, couples retreat and so on—and receive a list of suggested wellness and spa experiences to achieve that goal. Options include standards such as spinning, Pilates, yoga and meditation. But Miraval Berkshires offers uncommon activities, too, including beekeeping, hatchet-throwing and chicken-keeping. Guests can even exercise their artistic sensibilities using the side of a horse (yes, a live equine) as their canvas.

Miraval also offers a variety of activities to engage spirit and soul: Tibetan sound therapy, Chinese metaphysics, wellbeing and crystals, and more.

At this digital-device-free resort, guests are encouraged to experience life off-screen by following the guidance of digital detox guru Catherine Price. With the renewed focus on health and wellness, we'll bet that most don't even miss their smartphones.



SUNDARA

Inn & Spa

WISCONSIN DELLS, WISCONSIN



Many people associate Wisconsin Dells with water parks and family fun; after all, the Dells was the pioneer of indoor water parks. But this scenic locale along the Wisconsin River in the south-central part of the state also happens to boast one of the first wellness resorts in the Midwest.

The adults-only Sundara Inn & Spa opened in 2003, quickly garnering the attention of spa aficionados. And when it completed a \$9 million, 40,000-square-foot expansion two years ago, the buzz grew louder, thanks to additions such as a second outdoor heated pool, spacious new fitness area, salt therapy room, and woodland guest suites with private balconies and fireplaces.

The resort's footprint is a cozy 26 acres, but it's surrounded by another 50 or so acres of pine forest. With 34 guest rooms and suites, there's plenty of space for social distancing. A no-technology-devices policy in common areas and several "silent spaces" provide a restful atmosphere, and there's an outdoor chakra meditation walk with suggested meditations at seven stops representing the major chakras, or energy centers. Conveniently, the walk ends at a hammock retreat in the woods (and possibly a nap?).

Sundara (Sanskrit for "beautiful") introduced Ayurvedic treatments a few years ago. Now it also offers Reiki, CBD-based treatments, Thai table massage and Champissage (aka Indian head massage). Guests can indulge in the spa's signature five-step Purifying Bath Ritual whenever they like. The inn's nightly rate also includes use of the fitness studio, indoor and outdoor pools, relaxation spaces and wellness activities—from guided hiking to water yoga to culinary demonstrations. Foods from Wisconsin farms highlight the chef-prepared cuisine at Nava restaurant, which recently expanded its menu with additional vegan and vegetarian offerings along with nonalcoholic cocktails.

You can bring the family to Wisconsin Dells anytime; but now, take time for you.



Sundara Spa offers a variety of facials, massages, bath treatments and body treatments along with services tailored to mothers-to-be and to male clients.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF SUNDARASPA.COM

WELLNESS EXOTICA



Foreign travel can have a therapeutic effect all its own. And with AAA Preferred Partner Zoëtry Wellness & Spa Resorts, you can double your dose of healing by combining an escape abroad with an all-inclusive stay at an intimate beachfront resort that combines luxury and holistic wellness.

Each of the five Zoëtry Resorts features suite accommodations, healthy gourmet dining, a world-class spa, a fitness center, pools, and activities for wellness, entertainment and enrichment. Additional amenities and add-ons vary by location and take full advantage of the unique setting of each property. Ask your AAA travel agent about a getaway to a Zoëtry Resort in Jamaica, the Dominican Republic or Mexico, or go to [AAA.com/TravelAgent](https://www.aaa.com/TravelAgent) to connect with one of our travel experts.