Take a Wellness Roadtrip

Find health and wellbeing at these nearby luxury resorts.

BY STACIE STANDIFER

It looks like we all may be facing a few more months of quarantine fatigue. Just when the veil on our social lives and jet-setting angst seemed to be lifting, case numbers surged higher than ever before. With that in mind, it won't be the typical big glamour European jaunt. Even a blowout Vegas weekend is unlikely at the moment. What does seem not only possible but also responsible is booking an escape that offers visitors wide open spaces, lots of time (and methods) to de-stress and reset. I can already envision friends who've been stuck inside during cold, wet weather days for weeks with bored children and spouses perking up with just the thought of a little 'me time'..... surrounded in pampering luxury, of course.

There are so many destinations on my personal list (watch for upcoming posts on that topic), but at the moment a number of these favored locales just aren't feasible with restrictions in place. Staying safe is a priority for all of us, but I can't say that total lockdown is the answer for those of us really in need of a true break and fresh environment. Right now is the time to research and book those 'treat yourself trips' for the first half of 2021 – both for the great deals available as well as for the uplifting feeling you'll get from having something to truly look forward to as you get through the altered holiday season. These are a few suggestions on ideal properties to soothe your mind, body, and most importantly, your spirit

DRIVING DISTANCE DESTINATIONS

Skyterra – If you're at the point where only an intense focus and program will do to truly get your mind and body out of a funk, think about blocking out a few weeks to participate in Skyterra's signature Lose Smart program. There are tons of one-on-one time with well-intentioned guides, trainers, and instructors. With a longer stay, you can really try out every type of exercise method and develop a long-term strategy for eating well with your own personal nutritionist. It's a commitment but well worth it to return with a slimmer physique, a cleaner digestion system, and the skills needed to keep up the program at home. While staying in one of the private cottages for a month is undoubtedly the best way to really embrace change, they also have shorter retreat stays (3-4 days) with the same overall vibe, just for less time. The drive to the sweeping acreage in the western North Carolina mountains is gorgeous, and the area is surrounded by quaint villages and towns to explore (which is why it's so perfect for a road trip—you need your car for the full experience!). You can pop over to Asheville for a night out or culture fix or take one of many mountain hiking trails. You can go in feeling like a sluggish couch-potato, there's no judgment here, which is the best part.

Blackberry Mountain – Close enough to its sister property, Blackberry Farm (where non-stop eating and wine tasting might be too much temptation to resist for those seeking self-improvement), this more rustic retreat is perfect for finding inner peace and pursuing healthy habits to kick off a new wellness program. The setting in the stunning Great Smokey Mountains is particularly beautiful during winter. Think big, roaring fires, luxurious but casual accommodations, and access to various fitness and nature programs designed to build energy and boost your mood.

Serenbe – This unique spot needs to be on your radar if you don't mind a little road trip and love new experiences. Actually, a full-scale residential community just outside of Atlanta, Serenbe also offers a full-service INN onsite where guests can get a feel for what it's like to live among like-minded health enthusiasts. From horse stables to yoga and spa to art classes, there is a wide range of activities to suit most every taste (as long as it's organic and sustainable!) and age. The vibe is upbeat, upscale, and welcoming. I like the idea of exploring this community concept which is quite different than most wellness resorts. You are in the middle of a carefully planned village community with a curated selection of specialty retailers operating shops and service venues – which keeps things interesting if you're the restless type. With this, you also get the chance to shake up your dining experiences with some independent eateries (really good ones!) nestled between the shops and studios. Everything is organic and sustainable, so there's no way to go wrong. That's unless you pack that junk-food stash from the drawer at home. Keep your luggage clean, and you'll leave Serenbe lighter and brighter.... ready to take on the year ahead.

Palmetto Bluff – If you've ever stayed at a Montage hotel resort, you're familiar with the level of luxury and service that the property company provides. This sprawling Lowcountry retreat is no exception and combines Southern charm and hospitality with a passion for staying active year-round. There are multiple state-of-the-art fitness and exercise facilities scattered across the acreage and the bonus of heated salt-water pools for a little weightless movement. Spa Montage has a menu filled with relaxing, soothing treatments for every possible physical condition for just for breathing a little deeper). The best part is that the resort offers accommodations in spectacularly positioned private cottages with complete privacy paired with unforgettable views. It's just a few hours to this South Carolina haven but feels like another world.

Hilton Head Health – If you are ready to get serious about turning that quarantine body around this coastal facility and resort is an ideal place to get a jump start. Distancing isn't a problem as guests stay in individual villas (they are two bedrooms, so it's ideal for roping in a friend to tag along and keep you company). There may be luxe linens and lovely furnishings. Still, the most compelling reason for trekking the 8 hours to Hilton Head Health is their proven methods and results for helping guests lose weight, fine-tune a fitness regime, or simply to craft a plan and pattern for overall wellbeing. I like the all-inclusive short (4 days) stay packages where calorie and nutrition-controlled fare (complete with cooking classes for following up at home). These healthy getaway retreats allow you to pack in back-to-back interaction with fitness professionals and holistic wellness all day, every day if you're really on fire to shed some excess weight or cleanse the system. There is also a new option for working vacations and extended stays. You can include a home office in your quarters and stagger career tasks with jaunts to wellness sessions, playing tennis, or grabbing a tee time at one of the three onsite golf courses. Like Canyon Ranch, the staff comprises superior talents devoted to customizing the experience to reach each client's individual goals. If you want to drop a few pounds, they'll push you to get there. If sleeping better or finding balance with stress reduction is what you need to get things in check, there are experts for that, too.

The Omni Homestead Resort – In the same amount of time it takes to hit the same stretch of Gulf Coast that's become your default drive-to destination, you can arrive at a historic landmark that just happens to be focused on wellness on many levels. There is a quiet serenity garden (adults only... yes!) for complete solitude and reflection for starters and an expansive sports complex with top-tier professionals for private training (if desired). Winding trails for nature lovers never disappoint, and the extensive list of pampering services at the spa really calls for all-day service schedules for those who love soaking things up. There are also apartment-like rooms with living areas and room to claim personal space, just like at the Omni Grove Park Inn, a sister property we also love for similar reasons in addition to the 'easy drive and arrive' safety factor.

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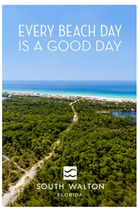

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