

BARRON'S

Welcome to the Age of the Wellness Resort

Wellness is a word you hear a lot these days. The term, once confined to medical jargon, has morphed into a trendy, commercialized catchall for products and practices that improve one's physical or mental health. And there is no such thing as too much wellness, it seems. Like love or oxygen, more is always better.

One area where the concept has truly soared is the luxury travel industry. Hoteliers, ever sensitive to client preferences, are offering a bevy of body- and soul-enriching services, from Sweden to Sri Lanka. It has become a multibillion-dollar industry. If the 2010s were the decade of the eco-lodge, our new one belongs to the wellness resort.

But what is wellness anyway? "The currency of wellness is connection, which includes connection with yourself, other people, and with nature," says Dr. Marc Cohen, a wellness travel expert based in Melbourne, Australia. "Wellness travel can foster connection with the self by expanding people's perception and experience of what is possible for them."

In anticipation of the post-Covid era, with the whole world in need of an overhaul, the industry is betting on growth. After all, what is more on everyone's minds than their health? But with every hotel under the sun hiring a therapist or lighting some incense to bill themselves as a wellness resort, it can be hard to pinpoint the real deal. Collected below are five ultraluxurious spots that won't disappoint, all with highly tailored and proven approaches. In matters of the mind and body, after all, one size never fits all.

The Ranch—Malibu, California

This much-touted but grueling retreat is, above all, "results-oriented." The weeklong program is for those looking less for a vacation and more for a true transformation. Limited to nineteen guests each session, the place follows a strict "no options policy"—you are merely on for the ride. Think hikes along seaside cliffs, fitness and yoga classes and meditation. All of it is complimented by a 1,400-calories-per-day vegetarian diet.

After their exertions, guests undergo cholesterol testing, body fat analysis, acupuncture, deep tissue massage, and cryotherapy saunas. Physical endurance is improved alongside mental health. There are no televisions in the rooms and screen time on personal devices is highly discouraged. An even more intensive program away from other guests is on offer through the newly available Ranch Private. Show up prepared to work for your wellness.