

## THE health trip

Yoga at Blackberry Farm in the Great Smoky Mountains of Tennessee.

*High-end wellness resorts tout their body and soul benefits atop layers of luxe.*

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Faster than you can say "om," the concept of healthy vacation travel has evolved from spartan weight-loss camps to a fast-growing, global wellness tourism industry. Hotels, spas and resorts tout themselves as immersive headquarters for life-changing, longevity-promoting experiences that promise to add vigor and vitality to body and soul.

Wellness tourism represents 14.6 percent of all global tourism expenditures (about 1 in 7 tourist dollars), and spending on wellness-focused travel is forecast to reach \$678.5 billion next year, according to the Global Wellness Institute. Unlike travel to seek cures or recover from illness, wellness tourism is focused on enhancing quality of life and well-being through practices such as meditation and exercise, or receiving





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anti-aging treatments or personalized counseling about diet or health.

“Many destination wellness retreats are getting much more customized,” says Beth McGroarty, research director of the Global Wellness Institute. “Some of them are really medical and begin with a nurse’s or doctor’s assessment, and others are more alternative.”

Expect to find personal trainers or diets based on your blood type or your ayurvedic doshas, or mind-body type.

“We’re seeing so many new combinations of travel experiences that focus on or blend physical, social, mental, spiritual, emotional and environmental ‘healthy’ experiences,” McGroarty says. Destinations may offer eating and cooking classes, nature hikes that also teach about wildlife protection, or immersions in natural hot springs, all with the goal of ac-

complishing an integrative lifestyle change. Today’s wellness traveler can expect luxurious pampering on the route to good health. A 21-day, \$80,000 global tour of spiritual sites via private jet offered by TCS World Travel recently sold out well in advance of the February departure date. That high-flying opportunity may have passed, but luxurious wellness resorts near and far are rolling out the yoga mat, ready to receive and revive the fit and fitter.



COURTESY OF AJA MALIBU

Aja Malibu is set within 23 acres of lush hillside about 90 minutes north of LAX.

## Aja Malibu

Described by its founders as “an energetic tuneup station,” Aja Malibu is a wellness resort set within 23 acres of lush hillside about 90 minutes north of LAX. Founder Inannya Magick, an Australian mystic and artist, spent seven years creating the seven guest rooms and the seven chakra-themed gardens, each offering a harvest of medicinal and therapeutic plants. Opened in June, the property looks like a luxe, boutique B&B with private accommodations for up to eight guests. Each all-inclusive, seven-day stay is \$10,000 and includes daily workshops, naturopathic supplementation, hikes, spa treatments and meals.

**What’s different:** To complete the unplugging process, there’s no access to telephones or television. Guests experience the trademarked Magick Process, billed as a detoxifying, healing series of daily workshops, rituals, spa treatments and cleansing meals. A tea sommelier guides guests through the on-site apothecary of healing herbs, roots, barks and flowers for custom tea and elixir blending.

**A sample:** The plant-based, low-fat, low-glycemic Aja Chakra Tune Up Diet is free of gluten, wheat and dairy and is culled from the property’s gardens and orchards. The fusion of modern and ancient healing therapies may include aromatherapy, meditation, yoga, outdoor tea ceremonies and spa, light, sound and vibration therapies. [ajamalibu.com](http://ajamalibu.com)

## Blackberry Farm

A 4,200-acre estate in the Great Smoky Mountains of eastern Tennessee began as a family retreat but has emerged as an ultra-luxury resort touting its clean living, fresh food and immersion in unspoiled nature. With 68 guest rooms tucked into cottages, suites and even five-bedroom homes (\$845-\$9,000), Blackberry Farm recasts agriculture as an exercise in health enhancement where chefs pluck heirloom produce from on-site plots, and barns are a showplace for wine dinners and visiting chefs.

**What’s different:** The new Wellhouse spa and wellness center uses its picturesque mountain and forest location as a setting for activities and treatments that focus on Japanese forest bathing – shinrin-yoku. Sessions include yoga, meditation and endurance hikes.

**A sample:** The 30-minute Learning Lectures (\$35) cover topics such as “The Science Behind Deep Healing Woods,” Aromatherapy 101 and “What Color Is Your Diet?” The farm-to-treatment-table body wrap (\$185) contains sorghum to help firm, brighten and hydrate the skin.

[blackberryfarm.com](http://blackberryfarm.com)

