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Amazing California Fitness Getaways

Two top destinations guaranteed to jumpstart your fitness regimen and get results

R4.0, Four Seasons Westlake Village

It's not just the weight you'll lose that makes this program worth the sweat.

When you're in need of serious motivation to exercise, eat healthier, even lose weight, where do you turn? If you're up for the challenge, you'll book a spot at the R4.0 program at the Four Seasons Hotel in Westlake Village, CA. The four-day program, which runs Thursdays through Sundays, is a spin-off from its week-long sister program at the Ranch at Live Oak in Malibu, CA.

The program starts with a comprehensive fitness testing in conjunction with the California Health & Longevity Institute. It has several components, including a VO₂ metabolic testing on a treadmill (which will, among other things, tell you how hard you should be training in your workouts), body composition analysis, and weight and body measurements.

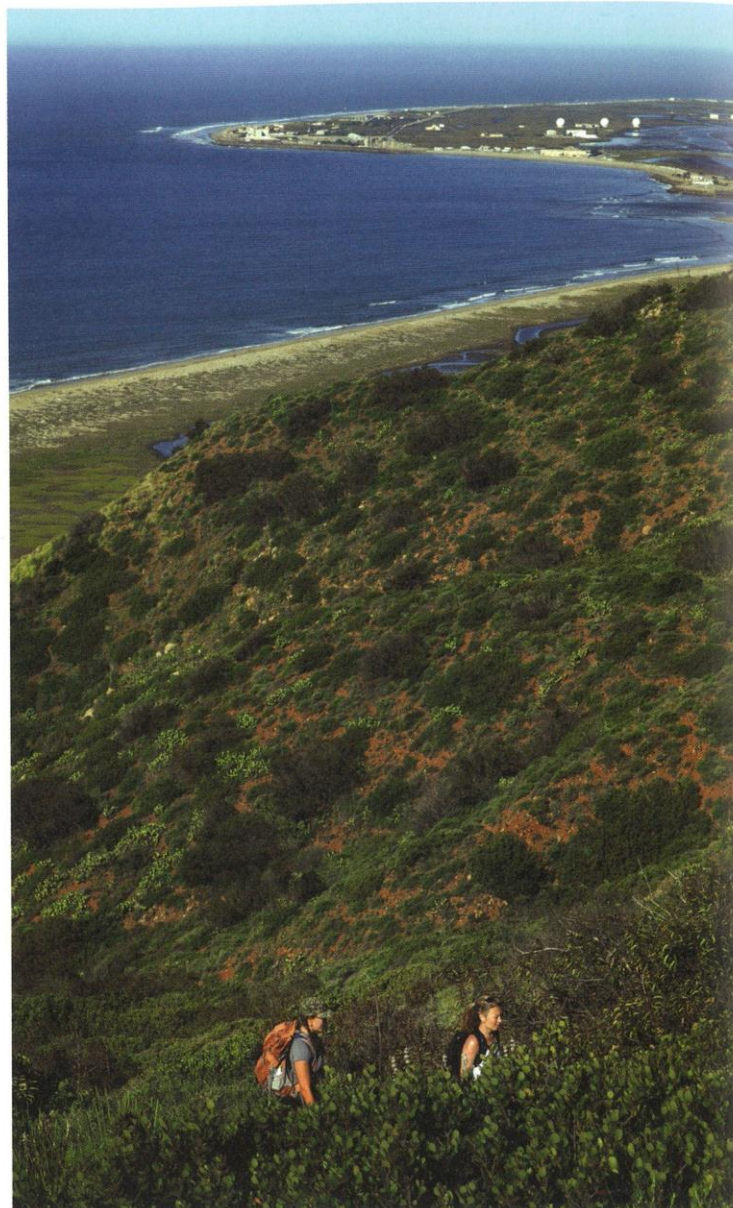
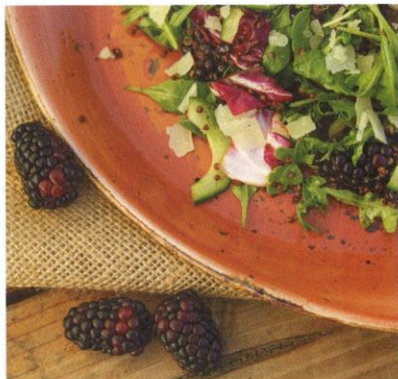
The heart of the program then revolves around exercise—roughly eight hours a day if you choose. The goal? Log 30,000 daily steps (or roughly 15 miles). If that sounds like a feat, it is, considering that studies show the average individual takes only 5,000 to 6,700 steps a day.

That's why you're given a detailed 30-day prep program before R4.0 starts, during which you gradually increase your physical activity. You're also instructed to wean yourself off alcohol, caffeine, processed foods, diet drinks, artificial sweeteners and sugar.

Each morning starts with a three- to four-hour hike, in different locations to offer variation in intensity, scenery and terrain. In the afternoon, you rotate through various fitness classes,

including yoga, all of which are optional. Your reward? An in-room massage all four days, which was the reason I didn't feel any soreness.

The food is vegetarian (some of the best I've ever had) with breakfast, lunch and dinner



served in a zen-like greenhouse. Two daily snacks round out the meals. Portions are carefully controlled, and calorie counts are given with every meal. Adjustments can be made (you just eat larger portions), which is critical if you're doing the program for the physical challenge versus weight loss. One afternoon also features an information-packed cooking demonstration by the program's chef, where you're given a booklet of recipes.

You also learn about healthy living in short discussions led by the staff each night so you're armed with information you can use in the real world. Topics include reading food labels, keeping a food journal and controlling portions. You can then retreat to your room for a well-deserved night of sleep.

While you will lose weight if that's your goal, what you'll gain includes a boost in confidence and a renewed commitment to your health—perhaps the ultimate payoff.

—Karen Asp