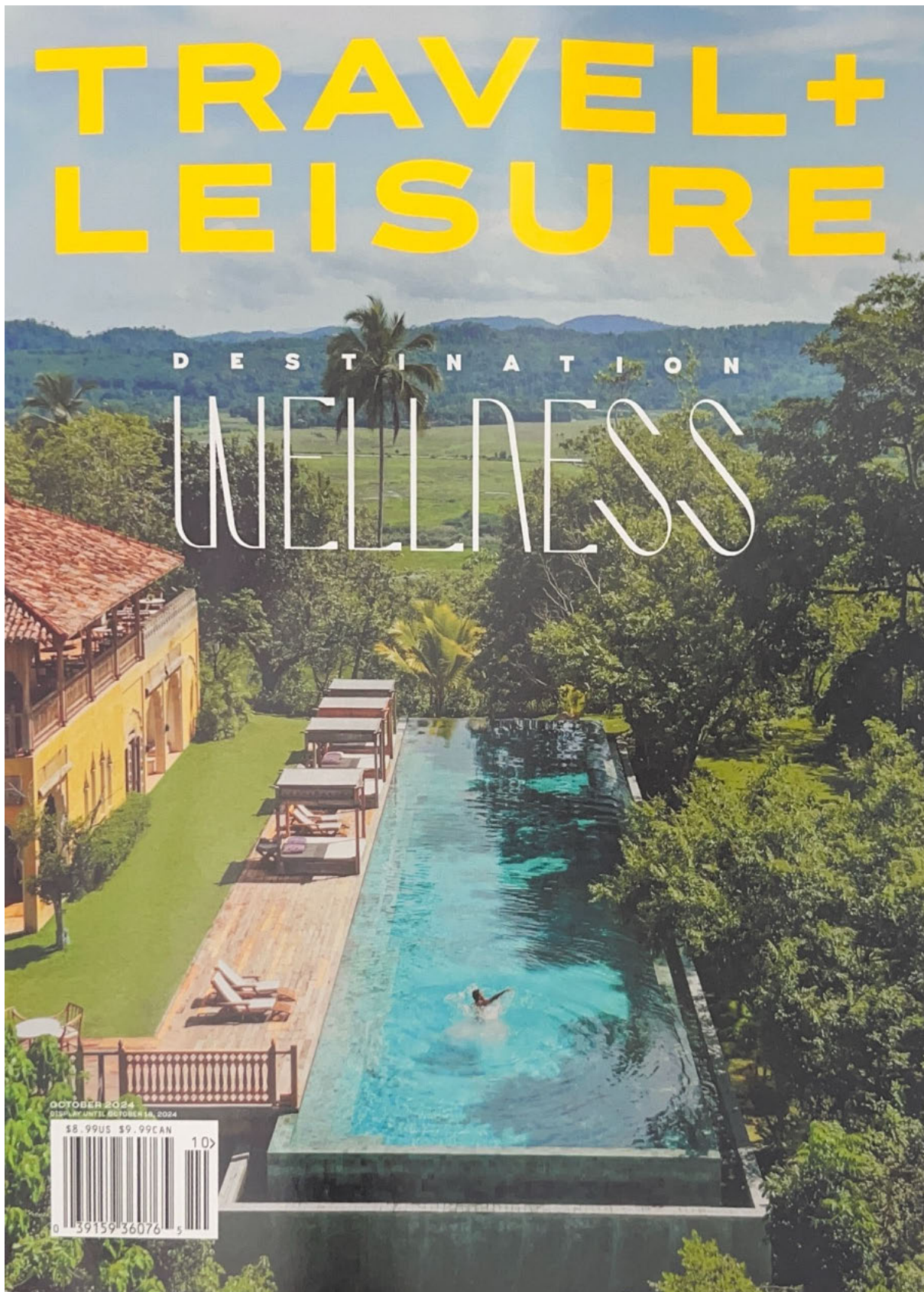


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LEFT Guests hiking at the Ranch Hudson Valley.
BELOW The Ranch's main building, a 1902 mansion.

Take a Hike

A beloved Malibu spa renowned for embracing the outdoors makes its way to the East Coast. Jess Feldman takes an inside look.



ONE FRIDAY IN JUNE I was woken from my dreams by the soft sound of Tibetan chimes. For a moment, I didn't know where I was, but as the rose-colored light peeled into my room at the ripe hour of 5:30 a.m., I remembered. "I'm up!" I shouted. In return, I received a friendly "Good morning, Jess" from the staffer outside my door, before the chimes floated down the hall to wake the next guest.

This is what a typical wake-up call looks like at the Ranch Hudson Valley. The recently opened wellness retreat is the East Coast outpost of the Ranch Malibu, which is known for its challenging fitness programs and plant-based cuisine. Founded by husband-and-wife duo Sue and Alex Glasscock, its original program has developed a cult following since opening in 2010 (Oprah Winfrey and Jennifer Garner are devotees).

Entering the 40,000-square-foot estate in Sloatsburg, New York—just an hour north of New York City—was like walking into a scene from *The Great Gatsby*: detailed trim on the high ceilings, a grand, light-filled staircase, and marble floors. I later learned that this former home, known as the Table Rock Estate, was built in 1902 by financier J. P. Morgan as a wedding gift for his daughter. Whom was she marrying, you ask? The great-grandson of Alexander Hamilton.

Once checked in, I received a wristband—a brown leather cuff with a big "R" on it. "You're on Ranch time now," said Carlos Diaz, a meditation coach who had worked at the Malibu location for several years.

And Ranch time it was. For the 10 other guests and me, the five-day stay at this opulent sleepaway camp for adults

COURTESY OF THE RANCH HUDSON VALLEY

was completely scheduled, from start to finish—something I had not experienced since childhood. It went like this: 5:30 a.m. wake-up, morning stretch, group breakfast. By 7:30 a.m. our group, plus five guides, would head to the trails for the daily hike for which the Ranch is known. When we returned, the whiteboard in the mudroom had a schedule of the afternoon's events, which included optional workout classes and the highly anticipated daily massage.

Despite all the scheduling, guests can choose what their individual experience will look like. I decided to opt for the longer hikes ("Ranchers," as we were called, can choose either two- or four-hour routes). While I wouldn't describe myself as a hiker, I can confidently say I am fit. That said, on the second day, as I looked up from the start of the trail, set on a 70-degree angle with no ridgeline in sight, I doubted my ability to tackle three more days.

But while my body became sore and the hikes got harder, the joy and calm became more apparent. The scenery changed, too: On our first day, we hiked across open boulders under a wide blue sky. On the last day, we were fully hidden in the woods, covering muddy terrain crisscrossed with roots. (The trails are labeled with orange flags, and Ranch guides are spread evenly throughout the group, just a walkie-talkie page away if needed.) I was often hiking alone for as much as two hours, listening to a creek flow or making eye contact with hawks overhead. I felt a sense of peace I rarely experience in the city.

After burning about 2,000 calories each morning, we were often starving by lunchtime. As a proud meat eater who is consistently looking for ways to up my protein intake, I admit the all-organic, plant-based, dairy-free, and gluten-free diet gave me pause. But my fears quickly dwindled when I met chef Michael Narciso. He explained that the Ranch's long-standing approach to holistic eating is meant to serve as a springboard to good habits, not as a lifestyle. All meals, including our twice-daily snacks, ranged from 200 to 500 calories, with our daily intake never exceeding 1,500. My favorite? The mini bean burgers paired with crispy kale chips.

By the final day, I had survived—and even enjoyed—seven hot-to-cold plunges with three women I had known for less than 72 hours, hiked 31 miles, and successfully meditated for the first time. As we shared what we were grateful for on our last evening, comically small quinoa-tahini balls in hand, we were certainly no longer strangers, and I couldn't help noticing that our sentiments now involved one another. As one of my new friends astutely said, "I learned something different from each of you."

But the biggest takeaway? Our bodies—and minds—can do more with less, if we give them the chance.

Three-night program at the Ranch Hudson Valley from \$2,950.

ROMAN REVIVAL

From the English countryside to the Eternal City, ancient baths are all the rage. By Nicole Trilivas



The Eynsham Baths at Estelle Manor, in Oxfordshire, England.

WITH THERMAL-POOL circuits, classical columns, and marble galore, Roman-style bathhouses are having a renaissance, showing up in hotels around Europe. Not only are they worthy of an emperor in terms of aesthetics; they're also emphasizing the social aspects of spas.

Riffing on the ruins of a nearby Roman villa, the blindingly white, Neoclassical Eynsham Baths at the Oxfordshire countryside hotel and members' club **Estelle Manor** (doubles from \$637) is the undisputed headliner. Its six pools range from the two frigidaria (43 and 54 degrees) to the caldarium (104 degrees) and the shoulder-slackening, body-temperature tepidarium.

During the Roman Empire, bathhouses were not only for washing and unwinding but also for socializing, which Eynsham supports: "We want guests to be able to enjoy these generous spaces as a group," says hotel founder Sharan Pasricha. To encourage conviviality, the baths are sized to palatial proportions (the Breccia pink marble hammam fits up to 12). There are also spaces for socializing, like an alluring lounge that serves

Casa Dragonos tequila, Krug champagne, and other tipples that Bacchus would have approved of, as well as teas and tonics.

Italy is the natural epicenter of the trend. The modern Roman bath at **Six Senses Rome** (doubles from \$1,310) has an art collection and traditional baths that make for an impressive subterranean space. The spa has commissioned a bath oil from Seed to Skin Tuscany made with macerated botanicals including chamomile and burdock root.

Florence's recently renovated **Helvetia & Bristol** spa (doubles from \$728) rises from the ruins of the Capitoline Baths with portions of the ancient walls visible along the bath circuit. In the tepidarium (called the Stanza del Sale, for its sandbox-like pile of salt), a glass floor gives a window onto the ruins of the base of a medieval tower.

In Nice, France, the spa at the new **Hôtel du Couvent, a Luxury Collection Hotel** (doubles from \$446) pays tribute to the Roman ruins in nearby Cimiez; it has a succession of ever-hotter pools and massages with botanicals from the hotel's herbalist—designed with gladiators in mind.