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## Lessons Learned at the Ranch Hudson Valley, the Extravagant New Boot Camp Spa an Hour from NYC



It somehow makes perfect sense that the spectacular, supremely restful [Ranch Hudson Valley](#) is housed in a former convent—which, before becoming a convent, was a Gilded Age mansion built by J. P. Morgan as a wedding gift to his daughter.

The Ranch experience—the original luxe, hiking-based boot camp opened in Malibu in 2010—is both indulgent and ascetic. It’s where you go when you need a hard physical and mental reset but you love a gorgeous setting (there have been pop-ups in places like Vail and Italy’s Palazzo Fiuggi), delicious food, and plenty of massage.





At the new, permanent Hudson Valley location, the Ranch ethos is best expressed by the workout room, which was once the mansion's ballroom. There, rows of top-of-the-line [Fitbench](#) weight systems align perfectly with flickering sconces that punctuate the beautifully restored woodwork. Lying on one of the plush yoga mats, you stare up at an intricately carved ceiling that takes your breath away (nuns are less inclined to renovate than your average mansion-dweller, which meant that designer [Steven Gambrel](#) had many such existing gems to work with). A fireplace that 10 people could easily stand in anchors one end of the room, while a wall of windows on the other overlooks the forests and hillsides beyond. So you do yoga watching the sunset, lift weights in front of a crackling fire, and perform your morning stretches lost in the lacy patterns on the ceiling.

The morning stretches are performed at 6 a.m. The staff wake you up—from under crisp white sheets and a fluffy eiderdown duvet in your enormous Gambrel-designed room—at 5:30. This is so they can have you on the trail by 7:30.

Coffee now factors into this timeline (this was not always so at the Ranch). So does a delicious and satisfying breakfast—which you very much need, because every morning involves hiking, vigorously, for four hours.

The mountains and valleys you hike through are spectacular, but they are not easy. As you sweat up and down the trails, you bond almost instantly with your fellow hikers (the other guests and the super friendly, energetic guides), whether you're way up front (there was a several-time Ironman contestant celebrating her 50th birthday on the weekend I was there) or holding back. For enthusiastic holder-backers, there's always the option to make it a two-hour hike instead of four; either way, the guides are knowledgeable and supportive.







You spend your afternoons recovering, basking in triumph and the alternating hot and cold treatments, and (somehow) working in a few classes with weights and stretches. A big part of the recovery is the daily massage, which they take extremely seriously (the therapists are some of the best in the NYC area). The massages are surprisingly effective in helping work out the lactic acid (part of what makes your muscles scream posthike).

The hot and cold is mostly conducted in the solarium, studded with pools: one for swimming, plus a hot tub, a cold plunge, and an infrared sauna, all overlooking the property's lake and forests. (The view is a gorgeous distraction for those sitting in the cold plunge trying not to jump out.)

In between classes and treatments, you can sign up for extras like chiropractic sessions and sound and energy healing (the latter was exceptional).



You have group meals at a long wood table in the stunning orangery that also overlooks the lake, forests, sunrises, and sunsets. The menus were delicious and vegan, and they did not taste as low-calorie as they were (a griddled ravioli made of zucchini and stuffed with cashew cheese and a fresh pho full of vegetables and complex flavors were my favorites). If you're a very hungry person—I am, and the prescribed 1,400 calories was not quite enough—pack a few extras, just in case: I take [olive oil](#) every morning anyway, so I brought it to add some calories, along with a bag of almonds.



I brought a few other things, too, from an [Oura ring](#) to some essential beauty supplies. Here, what I learned.