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New Year Fitness: 3 Top Health And Wellness Retreats For You In 2025

Larry Olmsted Senior Contributor 

Larry Olmsted is a bestselling author who covers travel, food & sports

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Wellness should be good for you, but “Wellness” has become a multi-billion-dollar word in the travel industry, and that has increasingly meant bad news for travelers. Hotels, resorts, and practitioners are seeking to cash in by marketing anything and everything as wellness, from astrology

and tarot card readings to rooms with views of the forests to having a tennis court. Many places do not deliver, but if one of your goals for next year is to live healthier, get in better shape, lose weight or learn more about your personal health and wellness, these are three top health and wellness retreats for you in 2025.

I know this because I have tried them all, along with a lot of other wellness, fitness and active travel. They stand out as some of the bets in the country, and I would go back to any of them in a heartbeat. Not surprisingly, they are not new (though there is a new location), and instead of rushing into the field chasing dollars, they have long been benchmark gold standards for the industry, with proven track records and very loyal followings, customers who go back annually or even several times a year. No one would do that if they were disappointed.

Rancho La Puerta, Tecate, Mexico

These spots are not ranked in any particular order, but I put this one first simply because they have been doing it the longest and in many ways are the inventor of destination fitness and wellness retreats—family owned and operated since 1940.

Who It's For

Everyone, with a very broad slate of physical activities, education, healthy eating, and if you want, weight-loss.

The Details



For more than 80 years, [Rancho La Puerta](#) has been sending guests home happier, healthier, better informed and often a little bit lighter than when they arrived. But instead of being stuck in the past, they are watching trends and continually upgrading and were at the forefront of then rare but now ubiquitous activities like yoga and pickleball. When interest in cooking increased, they built a state-of-the-art demo kitchen and added cooking classes with guest chefs.

After all those years they also have the logistics down to a science, with one of the best and most detailed websites of any resort I have ever visited, from sample menus to daily activity schedules, with no detail left out. Since the resort is just 3-miles into Mexico, and most programs run Saturday to Saturday, they set up a table in the San Diego airport, check in arriving guests and ferry them to the resort with a fleet of buses. It is a slick operation to the point where they are so established that we didn't even have to show our passports at the border crossing. The attention to detail continues after arrival, with orientation and activities beginning right away, plus an amazingly friendly, dedicated and helpful staff—roughly 400 employees, many of them from multi-generational families working here.

The ranch is in a beautiful mountain wilderness preserve of 4000-acres and has additional land through privileges with abutting owners. There are 40-miles of trails, and the main feature is daily hikes, with 3-4 options of varying length and difficulty each morning, as long as 7.7 miles, and an additional afternoon hike some days. After this there is an extremely extensive hourly calendar of exercise and educational classes, including yoga (several options), pilates (mat and reformer), several kinds of strength training, aqua fitness classes, indoor cycling, TRX, bootcamps, as well as tennis and pickleball lessons and free play. Many classes like yoga are offered for all levels from first-timer to advanced, and there are specialty swimming stroke clinics, trail running programs and movement classes like Feldenkrais and dance. There's also a roster of meditation and mindfulness practices, and perhaps the most challenging activity is just picking what to do from competing choices.

But many returning guests just do a hike, take a class or two and spend a lot of time relaxing, enjoying the many pools, hammocks strung across the property, fine weather, very large spa and ultra-relaxed atmosphere. Separate men's and women's "health" buildings each offer complimentary sauna, steam, hot tub and showers.



Each week includes a broad slate of guest expert lecturers, on topics as diverse as music, education, nutrition, and cooking classes with a guest chef. The Ranch operates a large organic chef's farm, which supplies much of its produce, and you can even take gardening lessons. There is a full art studio with a range of art and craft classes.

It's like a college campus in a giant garden, with at least ten different gyms and studios, several pools, and lodging in freestanding casitas. There's a central dining room that serves all three meals, plus ancillary outdoor breakfast spots, specialty dinners, a smoothie bar, two specialty coffee spots, and a separate wine bar serving exclusively Mexican wines, craft beers and cheese plates. The food skews Mexican and is largely plant-based, but also includes eggs, dairy and seafood, and every day showcases homemade soups, homemade breads, entrée specials and extensive healthy breakfast and lunch buffets.

The weekly fee covers all hikes, classes, lodging, meals (including two gala dinners with wine or sangria), entertainment and transfers, while spa, cooking classes, private training and the wine/beer bar are extra. Rancho La Puerta also offers several specialty weeks, an annual Folk Music Festival, Chamber Music week, culinary celebration of Baja foods week, and popular Family week, where extra camp counsellors are brought in and a wide variety of special activities and classes for all ages are offered. Pickle Ball Retreats are offered several times each year.

Rancho La Puerta sits in the middle of the destination fitness spectrum, between educationally oriented learning trips and hyper-active bootcamps. If you want to lose a few pounds quickly, you can, but if you want to eat large meals and drink a bottle of wine every night, you can do that too. For most guests, it's a mix of several hours a day of exercise with healthy eating, thoughtfulness, education and relaxation, and just about everyone goes home cleaner, healthier and recharged.