

The 6 Best Running Retreats to Visit

Sometimes a curated running vacation focused on mindfulness and fun is exactly what you need to rejuvenate your running

Published Feb 7, 2024 · **BRIAN METZLER** · from **OUTSIDE ONLINE**



When you're in San Diego and a friend tells you to head south and meet him across the border, the first images that come to mind are those of the raucous tourist experiences available in Tijuana, Mexico.

But my friend promised pristine, high-desert running trails, a relaxing, secluded vibe and an exquisite dining just a stone's throw south of the U.S.-Mexico border, so I knew he must have had another destination in mind. I took his word for it, and I wasn't disappointed.

After driving about an hour southeast of San Diego to an international border crossing at Tecate, I arrived at Rancho La Puerta, a family owned wellness resort and spa that dates back to the early 1940s.

For much of that time, the resort focused on the promotion of healthy living with regular fitness and organic food connected by an ethos of personal and planetary wellness and sustainability. But in recent years, the remote ranch in the valley at the base of Mount Kuchumaa has engaged guests with [trail running retreats](#). The 4,000-acre property, which backs up to the U.S.-Mexico border, has more than 40 miles of both smooth dirt trails and a few rocky, technical routes that weave around the resort's organic farm, peaceful oak groves and robust vineyards, as well as semi-wild mountainous terrain.

Running vacation destination: Rancho La Puerta, Mexico



For four days, I ran twice a day in what was essentially my own personal training camp, typically making loops from 3 miles to 15 miles on the ranch's 10 designated trails—often with the resort's expert-level guide, Martin Ruiz, leading the way. I watched the sun rise on several early morning runs, dug deep into the grind of a challenging session of hill repeats, then rejuvenated myself with daily yoga, strength, stretching and other holistic wellness classes. (I even dabbled in meditation and tried a sound healing class.)

But mostly I just immersed myself in the natural goodness all around me, relaxing at the hot pools, getting treatments at the spa, and refueling on the resort's scrumptious lacto-ovo pescatarian fare—which, in addition to a variety of fresh fruits and vegetables, included dairy, eggs and seafood but no meats or poultry—at both its main dining hall and La Cocina gourmet cafe and cooking school.

Most of the locally inspired delicacies come from the Northern Mexican roots of chef Reyna Venegas—including Mexican corn chowder, ranch tamales, chile rellenos, and zesty Tecate-style Halibut—but equally memorable were the savory, yellow split pea soup, fresh spinach lasagna and homemade pasta with porcini mushrooms. (I didn't imbibe any alcohol on this trip, but happy hour for many ranch guests included enjoying a glass of artisanal Guadalupe Valley chardonnay while watching the sun drop toward the horizon from the Bazar Del Sol outdoor dining area.)

Although my trail running stint at Rancho la Puerta was relatively brief, it was enriching and transformative. I left the resort feeling healthy and rested, and I continued to embrace the “siempre mejor” vibe that it has celebrated since its inception. That slogan translates to mean “always better,” although ranch co-founder Deborah Szekely, who is now 101 and still active at the resort, has always interpreted it to mean “always changing,” and that's certainly something any trail runner can relate to.