

Hotels Above Par

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5 Luxe Wellness Retreats That Are Worth Booking for the Watsu Therapy Alone

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I have the uncanny ability to fall asleep in unusual places, but drifting off in a shallow pool of water—in the arms of someone who wasn't my husband—was admittedly a bit unexpected, even for me. When my eyes fluttered open, it took me a moment to remember where I was and what I was doing, but at the same time, my mind felt clearer, more active, as if I'd just emerged from the deepest slumber of my life.

Such sentiments aren't unusual for participants of Watsu therapy, a form of bodywork that's performed in a pool heated to body temperature. "The overwhelming majority of people say to me that this is what it must feel like to be in the womb," says Antoine Lamar, a certified Watsu practitioner at [Sanctuary Camelback Mountain](#).

Combining elements of Shiatsu, joint mobilization, and muscle stretching with dance-like movements, Watsu is celebrated for its potential to deeply relax and restore the mind, body, and spirit. Its roots date to 1980, when Harold Dull, an expert in Zen Shiatsu, found warm water to be an ideal medium for unwinding the body. While clinical studies on the effectiveness of Watsu are limited, Lamar says, the general consensus among practitioners is that "you're getting deeper muscle release and increase in range of motion beyond what you would get in a deep-tissue session, with no pressure applied."

While some wellness-minded destinations have offered the treatment for decades, other properties have recently caught on to the hype. Below are five excellent resorts worth checking in to for many reasons—but especially for the Watsu therapy.



Courtesy of Rancho La Puerta

Rancho La Puerta

Tecate, Baja California, Mexico

Guests have been floating their cares away at Rancho La Puerta, in the tranquil city of Tecate, Mexico, for the past 15 years. Watsu is one of several water-based modalities offered under the broader umbrella of Water Flow Therapy, which is available weekly (and often fully booked—so don't delay). All practitioners at the Ranch, as the regulars call it, are trained to perform treatments both at the water's surface and underwater, tailoring the floating, stretching, and massaging to your individual needs.