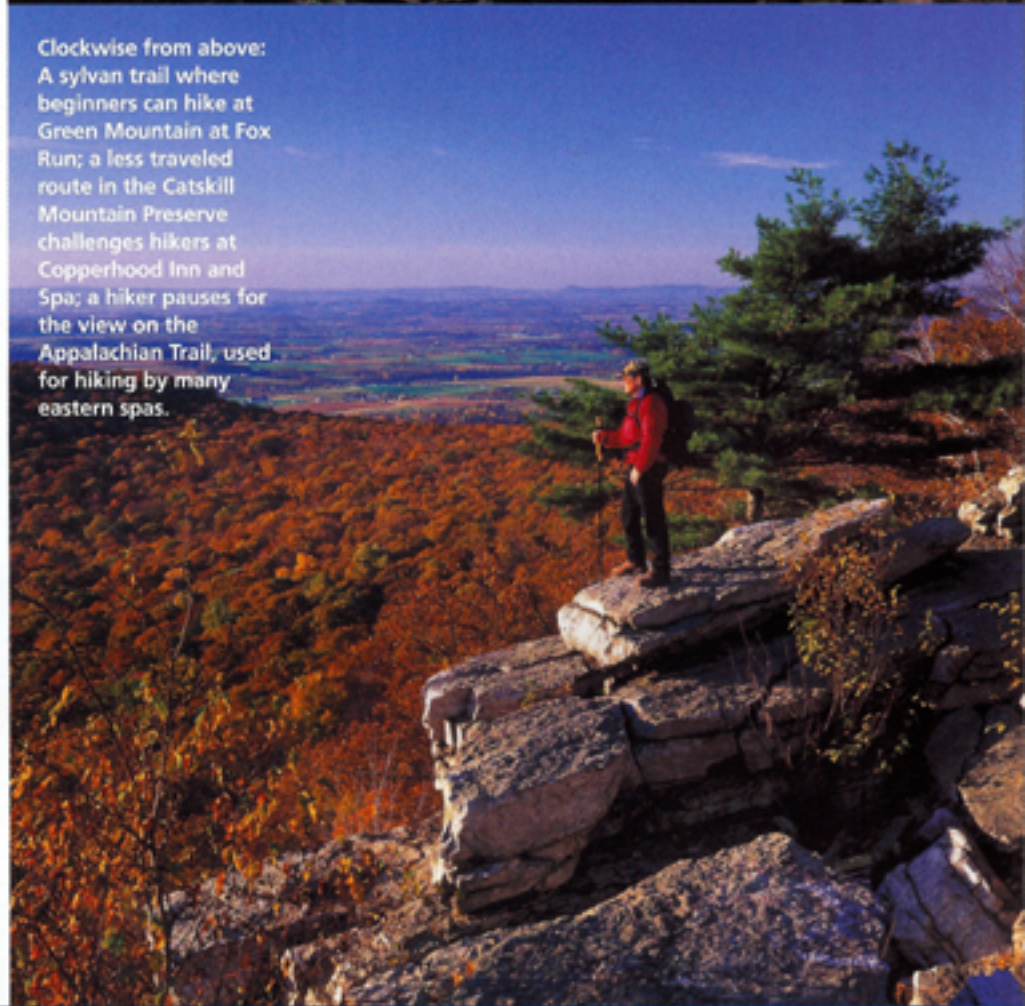


NO OTHER PARTS OF THE COUNTRY let you experience the seasons as acutely as those in the east. And that's particularly true when you're hiking: over rolling countryside abloom with wildflowers in spring, through lush forests in summer, in dramatically colored woodlands in fall, even along snow-covered paths in winter as you wind your way to a mountain peak. The beauty of the landscape at these spas is subtle, complex, and always changing. If you hike at a spa in April, you can come back six months later and find yourself in a completely different environment with a changed mood.

At **Stoweflake Mountain Resort & Spa** in Stowe, Vermont, hikes—such as the Snowshoe Safari and the Foliage Fling—take advantage of seasonal differences. That's in addition to daily fitness hikes for all levels and five more-demanding guided treks per week. The gentler hikes take place on Stowe's five-mile recreation trail; the guided excursions traverse challenging backwoods paths, logging trails, and Vermont's highest peak, 5,000-foot Mount Mansfield. Mountain hikes are also on the program at **Topnotch at Stowe Resort and Spa**, another Stowe getaway. The guided rambles on Mount Mansfield's Long Trail are designed so beginners and advanced trekkers can find their levels. **New Life Hiking Spa** in Killington, Vermont, is dedicated to hikers. The spa offers daily hikes at three levels that pass mountain streams and working farms, cover parts of the Appalachian Trail, and, for ace hikers,



Clockwise from above: A sylvan trail where beginners can hike at Green Mountain at Fox Run; a less traveled route in the Catskill Mountain Preserve challenges hikers at Copperhood Inn and Spa; a hiker pauses for the view on the Appalachian Trail, used for hiking by many eastern spas.



HOW SPAS GO THE EXTRA MILE

TO CHALLENGE YOUR fitness limits, stimulate your mind, and lift your spirit, spas create special hikes that add a new dimension to the experience. Some of the great ways they do it:

Hikes with expert guides

At most spas, your leaders will be well versed in the natural history of the area where you're roaming, but some spas go all out by hiring experts to accompany guests. You may be walking alongside a naturalist, horticultur-

ist, ornithologist, geologist, biologist, or archaeologist



providing insight into the land and its plants and animals; an herbalist, forager, or naturopath explaining how plants are used for food or medi-

cine; a wilderness survival expert sharing lifesaving tips; a historian telling tales of who came before you; or a landscape photographer showing you how to frame the view.

Intensive hiking weeks

For people who are already

ascend 4,000 feet on steep terrain. Hiking on the 11-night Weight Loss Retreat (offered between May and October) starts slowly and progresses gradually, helping guests improve their skills as they become more confident about their bodies. Over in Ludlow, at **Green Mountain at Fox Run**, the guided treks (offered about four times a week) help beginners get the hang of hiking at this women-only weight-loss spa. Between one and three hours long, these moderately paced sojourns wind along wooded trails. A special contemplative hike includes a guided meditation.

Don't worry if you sleep through the morning hike at **Canyon Ranch** in the Berkshire Hills of western Massachusetts. The spa offers four or five daily hikes that are meant to boost your heart rate while giving you a scenic tour of the countryside near Lenox, sometimes with an ornithologist leading the way. In September, the spa offers its Appalachian Trail Hiking Week, which covers 87 miles of the famed corridor as the leaves begin to turn. The fitness staff at **Cranwell Resort, Spa & Golf Club** in Lenox is willing and able to guide hikes by request and tailor them to guests' abilities. In the winter, you can use snowshoes.

You can explore the forest on your own (you'll be directed to marked trails) at **The Copperhood Inn & Spa** in Shandaken, New York, but it might be more fun to go with a group. The guides, who include an herbalist, a mushroom hunter, and a forager, often bushwhack their way along less traveled trails in the Catskill Mountain Preserve. Hikes range from quick workouts to all-day, ten-mile affairs. From May through October, **New Age Health Spa** in Neversink, New York, offers full-day hiking excursions in the nearby Catskill preserve that cover about seven miles on well-groomed trails. Hikers who enjoy communing silently with nature can try the meditation hike in the spa's own woods. The **Deerfield Spa** in East Stroudsburg, Pennsylvania,



At **New Life Hiking Spa** in Vermont, hikers of all levels head out daily for three-hour treks.

offers its guests eight hikes a week on the nearby Appalachian Trail, which winds through forested hills and alongside streams with waterfalls. A naturalist comes along to explain it all.

Farther south, the green slopes of the Blue Ridge Mountains near Blowing Rock, North Carolina, provide a pretty backdrop for the **Westglow Spa** and also offer a challenge to hikers. This destination spa usually sends out two groups every morning, one for a short hike and another for a longer, more vigorous workout. Like many eastern spots, **Blackberry Farm** in Walland, Tennessee, gives you access to great seasonal hiking, animated by a naturalist and a horticulturist. The retreat schedules a group hike every Saturday morning in Great Smoky Mountain National Park, a wilderness sanctuary where more than 200 species of wildflowers bloom in spring.

In the Midwest, the grounds of **Birdwing Spa** in Litchfield, Minnesota—prairie grasslands, as well as 300 acres of woodlands—are ideal for striding. The daily guided hikes last from one to three hours, with stops for yoga along the way.

“Using the mountains for a workout is so special: being in the woods, noticing the flowers, getting your boots muddy, feeling your heart beat as you trek up a hill, seeing a vista, breathing in the fresh Vermont air. Hiking is an outdoor retreat. You fall into a kind of inner contemplation as you focus carefully on the trail under your feet. With each step, you have a feeling of being in the here and now.”

—JIMMY LE SAGE, DIRECTOR, NEW LIFE HIKING SPA, VERMONT

strong hikers and for novices who want to become better hikers, spas offer a variety of intensive hiking programs. Over the course of a week (and sometimes longer), the hikes in these programs increase in duration and difficulty. Hiking as much as 18



miles a day, rappelling down rock faces using ropes, or scaling alpine peaks may also be part of the plan—but so are massages and comfortable beds back at the spa.

Spiritual hikes

As an antidote to the physical, goal-oriented challenge of hiking, spiritual hikes are becoming popular at many spas. Silent, slow meditation hikes are a way to end a week's stay reflectively or view a beautiful landscape without the distrac-

tions of speed and conversation. Along the way or at the end, yoga or tai chi, a guided meditation, a reading, or a walk in a labyrinth are sometimes added to foster an introspective mood.



46 Spas for Hiking



NAME	LEVEL	DURATION	TERRAIN	SEASON	HIKES PER WEEK	COST
ANANDA IN THE HIMALAYAS, INDIA		1-3 hours 3-5 hours	Hills, Mountains Woods/Forest		14	\$\$
THE ASHRAM, CA		3-5 hours	Hills, Mountains Countryside, Woods/ Forest, By Water		7	\$\$\$\$\$
AVANDARO GOLF & SPA RESORT, MEXICO		Less than an hour 1-3 hours	Mountains, Woods/ Forest, By Water		7	\$\$\$
BEGAWAN GIRI ESTATE, BALI		1-3 hours 3-5 hours	Hills, Mountains Woods/Forest		7	\$\$\$\$
BIRDWING SPA, MN		Less than an hour 1-3 hours	Countryside, Woods/ Forest, By Water		6	\$\$
THE BISHOP'S LODGE RESORT AND SPA, NM		Less than an hour 1-3 hours	Hills, Mountains		2	\$\$\$
BLACKBERRY FARM, TN		1-3 hours, 3-5 hours All day	Hills, Mountains Countryside, Woods/ Forest, By Water		1 also by request	\$\$\$\$
BODY & SOUL ADVENTURES, BRAZIL		3-5 hours	Hills, Woods/Forest By Water		6	\$\$\$\$
CAL-A-VIE, CA		Less than an hour 1-3 hours	Hills, Countryside		6	\$\$\$\$\$
CANYON RANCH, AZ		Less than an hour 1-3 hours, 3-5 hours All day	Desert, Hills Mountains, Woods/ Forest, By Water		25	\$\$\$\$\$
CANYON RANCH, MA		Less than an hour 1-3 hours, 3-5 hours All day	Hills, Mountains Countryside, Woods/ Forest, By Water		28-35	\$\$\$\$\$
THE CLIFF SPA AT SNOWBIRD, UT		Less than an hour 1-3 hours, 3-5 hours	Mountains, By Water		40	\$\$\$
THE COPPERHOOD INN & SPA, NY		Less than an hour 1-3 hours, 3-5 hours All day	Hills, Mountains Woods/Forest, By Water		7	\$\$
CRANWELL RESORT, SPA & GOLF CLUB, MA		Less than an hour 1-3 hours, 3-5 hours	Hills, Mountains Countryside, Woods/ Forest, By Water		by request	\$\$\$
DEERFIELD SPA, PA		1-3 hours, 3-5 hours	Hills, Mountains Countryside, Woods/ Forest, By Water		8	\$\$
DOUBLE EAGLE RESORT AND SPA, CA		1-3 hours, 3-5 hours All day	Mountains, Woods/ Forest, By Water		3-9	\$\$\$
ECHO VALLEY RANCH & SPA, CANADA		Less than an hour 1-3 hours, 3-5 hours	Hills, Mountains Countryside, Woods/ Forest, By Water		10	\$\$
ELISI SPA & WILDERNESS RESORT, CANADA		Less than an hour 1-3 hours, 3-5 hours All day, Overnight	Hills, Mountains Countryside, Woods/ Forest, By Water		14	\$\$
THE FAIRMONT SONOMA MISSION INN & SPA, CA		1-3 hours, 3-5 hours	Hills, Countryside Woods/Forest By Water		14	\$\$\$\$
GOLDEN DOOR, CA		Less than an hour 1-3 hours, 3-5 hours	Hills, Mountains By Water		37	\$\$\$\$\$
GREEN MOUNTAIN AT FOX RUN, VT		1-3 hours	Hills, Mountains Countryside, Woods/ Forest, By Water		4	\$\$\$
GREEN VALLEY SPA, UT		Less than an hour 1-3 hours, 3-5 hours	Desert, Hills, Mountains Woods/Forest, By Water		21	\$\$\$\$
HART & HIND FITNESS RANCH, TX		Less than an hour 1-3 hours, 3-5 hours	Hills, Woods/Forest By Water		14-21	\$\$\$\$

COST: \$ - \$100-199, \$\$ - \$200-299, \$\$\$ - \$300-399, \$\$\$\$ - \$400-499, \$\$\$\$\$ - \$500+ Spa Finder's rankings are based on the average cost of a vacation package during high season.