

SURFACE

TRAVEL AWARDS

The Best New Wellness Retreats

Otherworldly hot springs in China, a Medieval spa in Tuscany, and a marriage of Mexican and Asian philosophies in Los Cabos highlight a survey of the resorts and spas on our radar right now.

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In the age of self care, wellness travel has emerged as a rapidly growing market section geared not only toward offering respite for the mind, but expanding it. Increasingly complex spa treatments, Ayurvedic medicine, raw food cleanses, and spiritual healing of every variety are becoming commonplace at retreats around the world. Sometimes a good old fashioned beach vacation will suffice, too. From Tuscany to Mauritius, the [Surface Travel Awards finalists](#) in the Spa and Resort categories demonstrate the dynamism of wellness travel in 2019.

BEST SPAS



Photo courtesy Department of Architecture Co.

Mist Hot Spring Hotel, Xuchang, China

There's a wondrously eerie nature to this massive campus by [Department of Architecture Co.](#) that sits on top of a natural geothermal spring in Henan province. Simultaneously tapping into over a thousand years of local spa culture and contemporary permutations on the International style, the firm offers a simple clean interior wrapped in a three-dimensional latticework whose glazed glass creates pops of color and joy in the otherwise desolate winter landscape of its site. While the birch paneling and gourmet food inside offer peace, it's the steaming lake outside that remains the focus and star of this design.



Photo courtesy Monteverde Tuscany

Monteverdi Tuscany, Italy

Ilaria Miani has executed a smart repurposing of the rooms and cells secreted in this series of Medieval villas atop a Tuscan hill. The materiality and age of the site is reflected in stripped stone walls, weathered woods, rustic elements, and use of travertine in the soaking baths and elsewhere. While the rolling green views available on the patios are themselves an elixir, the underground heated pool is the spa's signature and most serene space. Monteverdituscany.com



Photo courtesy Shou Sugi Ban House

Shou Sugi Ban House, Water Mill, NY

Perhaps the most cleansing place in The Hamptons, Shou Sugi Ban House is a fully wellness-directed combination of food, instruction, and Wabi Sabi aesthetics. Here, Debbie Kropf has fitted the low-lying structures and guest rooms with motifs pointing toward Japan in a fully contemporary Western format. Cedar slatting references both Eastern and Hampton's architecture, careful landscaping creates a clean break from New York City, and airy, harmonious spaces offer meditation, hydrotherapy, and Noma alum Mads Refslund's elemental plant-based dishes. Shousugibanhouse.com

BEST RESORTS



SALT of Palmar, Mauritius

Natural mattes and placid whites are good for lowering the blood pressure. But artist Camille Walala and JFA Architects make a strong argument for bold injections of color and pattern leading to joy with this extension of the SALT brand that blends contemporary trends, Memphis movement stylings, and nods to local Mauritian architecture and craft. Bridging salt-based treatments in its spa, locally sourced foods with a French twist, and the pristine beaches outside the front door, it very much beams positivity from every Walala-touched nook and cranny. Saltresorts.com

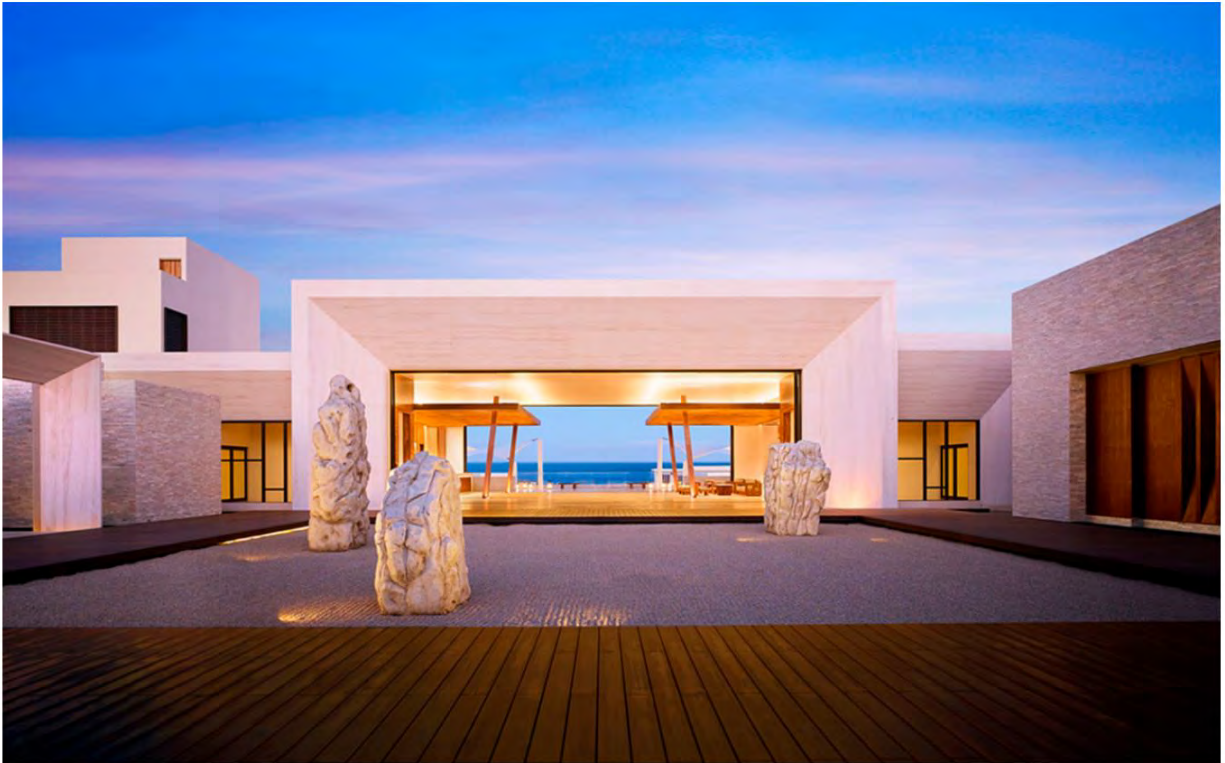


Photo courtesy Nobu Hotels

Nobu Hotel Los Cabos, Mexico

All the destinations above and below take care to match their menu offerings with their overall themes and objectives. But just as with other entries in the growing portfolio of Nobu Hotel properties, the food at the WATG and Studio PCH-designed Los Cabos site is the main draw. Per formula, Nobu Matsuhisa has supervised the menu and dining approach, here with an appropriate level of Mexican influence, while the simple interiors and exteriors reference the surrounding sands, from the comfortably stark Zen suite to the Cabo stone courtyards around the premises. Nobuhotels.com



Punta Caliza, Isla Holbox, Mexico

This family-run hotel stands out for its beautifully executed simplicity. Located in the Gulf just off the coast of Cancún on the naturally sequestered Isla Holbox, the Estudio Macias Peredo-designed property houses 12 adobe-and-palapa suites connected by a series of walkable canals. The limestone exteriors and cedar interiors conjure the Mayan architecture of the Yucatán Peninsula, while the layout's clean lines foster a meditative effect that is the hallmark of minimalism. Simply moving from one building to another is an act of self care. Puntacaliza.com