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Inside the *Ultimate Zen Retreat* at Shou Sugi Ban House

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The gravel drive up to Shou Sugi Ban House, the recently opened wellness retreat and spa in the Hamptons, reveals little of what lies behind the wooden gates. A glimpse of the giant stone Buddha from Montauk Highway hints at the Japanese meets Hamptons sensibilities, but it still doesn't quite prepare you for the experience awaiting you.

Stepping out of their Tesla SUV, I felt my blood pressure immediately drop on arrival. The heady scent of In Fiore Fleur Vibrante filled the air around me (the spa uses the luxurious all natural products for many of their spa treatments) and I knew I was in for a special few days.



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Set amid a series of meticulously renovated barns, Shou Sugi Ban House is a destination spa and retreat set on three acres in the heart of the Hamptons that skillfully employs a combination of global wellness and healing arts practices. Thirteen guest studios surround the main pool, a stunning Main Barn with a demonstration kitchen, a Healing Arts Barn with a tea bar, a treatment spa with hydrotherapy pools, an open-air Movement Pavilion and so much more.



Michelin star quality cuisine is lovingly prepared by a team led by former NOMA chef Mads Refslund and his Executive Chef Jacob Clark, and hits all the right notes of locally sourced, organic, hyper-seasonal, beautifully prepared and presented, and did I mention insanely delicious? And don't think this is three artfully placed almonds on a plate. We were served everything from house-made silken tofu with shoyu, ponzu, and scallions to miso roasted cauliflower and roasted duck with cabbage, radish, and apple cups. And for dessert? Persimmon sorbet with yogurt and sorrel granita. (I tried to convince Chef Jacob to move in with me and my husband, or simply be our new best friend, but he politely demurred. I will keep working on it and report back.)



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All-inclusive or custom itineraries are available seasonally to overnight guests, and personalized wellness journeys are provided to ensure the individual intentions of each guest are surfaced and met. I was initially invited to the property as an inaugural guest speaker for a weekend reset program this past summer and indulged in two of their signature spa treatments including a Deep Within massage (a 60 minute deep-tissue massage from In Fiore, integrating hot stones and hydrotherapy), as well as a Clear the Path massage (which involves a hybrid of movements from both Western and Eastern modalities such as a brisk hemp glove exfoliation and cupping therapy).



On my most recent visit, I experienced two of their healing arts treatments, including a Shamanic Healing Session with Britta, one of their onsite shamans (at first I was resistant to the visualization exercises, and then halfway through found myself bursting into tears), and a Sacred Sound Journey (an immersive sound experience with tuning forks, gongs and Himalayan and crystal bowls) with the talented sound healer Jodie Webber, which was more relaxing than a full body massage, IMHO.

By the end of the second day of my retreat, I found myself wondering what I did in this lifetime to deserve this slice of heaven (and saying a silent prayer of thanks for whatever it was). I then contemplated standing very still in my crisp, cream colored linen bathrobe, hoping I would blend into the walls and they wouldn't notice I was still there. Unfortunately, they did and it was eventually time to get back into the Tesla SUV and begin the journey back to NYC via Jitney. (I am trying again on my next visit. Don't tell them.)