

Why a woo-woo retreat is one of the Hamptons best all-around hotels

By Christopher Cameron

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Find Japanese Zen at the Hamptons' newly expanded spa hotel.

Fredrika Stjame for Shou Sugi Ban House

Well, well, well ... look what the Hamptons dragged in.

Back in 2019, free-spirited entrepreneur Amy Cherry-Abitbol opened the Hamptons' first Japanese-inspired wellness sanctuary, **Shou Sugi Ban House** (SSBH to the hip), with one of the most extensive spa menus on the East Coast — think 55 pages of woo wonders like crystal healing, sacred sound journeys and energy balancing and more traditional health interventions like Pilates classes.

It was interesting timing.

Yes, there was a pandemic, but one whose upshot was the much talked about — and somewhat overstated — **new “year-round” scene on the East End**. Homes sold at record rates. Hotel occupancy went radioactive. Sant Ambroeus swung. Suddenly it wasn't just health nuts knocking down their doors. People needed rooms and here they were.



Buddha greets you at the front door.

Fredrika Stjame for Shou Sugi Ban House

SSBH had quietly become one of the best hotels in the Hamptons and a hotspot in its own right.

All the while the minimalist Eastern-influenced retreat — located behind a massive Buddha statue in Water Mill central, directly next door to the Parish Art Museum — was growing the size of its house.

What was 13 suites and a communal dining room is now a full-fledged hotel available even to those who have no idea where to find their third eye.



Spinal taps: Guests who enjoy a massage at Shou Sugi Ban House's spa will be back in business in no time.

Fredrika Stjærne for Shou Sugi Ban House

During the pandemic, SSBH bought the old White Fences bed-and-breakfast immediately next door and gave the old-school digs an upscale Asiatic aesthetic, adding five more rooms to its offerings.

Two large adjacent houses, of five and seven bedrooms respectively, were also acquired to give big groups serenity now.



A fire pit, er, ceremonial circle awaits.
Fredrika Stjame for Shou Sugi Ban House

Today guests can avoid competitive luncheons and skip out on charity balls from the comfort of a campus that includes a Healing Arts Barn, a tea bar, a heated pool, a large hydrotherapy circuit (that just means sweaty saunas and icy plunge pools), treatment rooms, a roof deck, vegetable gardens, a fitness center, tennis court and a “ceremonial fire circle.”

Best of all, those who are new to and apprehensive of “wellness” needn’t fear the kitchen: You won’t find new age gruel or starvation regimens on the menu.



As far as barns go, the tea variety is the coziest.

Fredrika Stjärne for Shou Sugi Ban House

SSBH has tapped none other than chef Mads Refslund, a co-founder of Copenhagen's hottest restaurant Noma, to advise the kitchen.

Meals are chicken-, fish- or vegetable-based and pre-fixe. There's no fussing over menus here. Their motto is, "Chef knows best" — and he does.



A culinary breakfast courtesy of chef Mads Refslund.

Fredrika Stjame for Shou Sugi Ban House

Expect three to five courses of grilled purple cabbage, fish steamed in miso butter and avant-garde desserts served fireside in a casual multi-purpose room.

Gourmets and wine addicts might be saddened by the alcohol-free menu (we hear that a license may be in the works) but come on: It's a health resort and we all know you need to dry out.



The Hampton's only Japanese-inspired spa, Shou Sugi Ban House has expanded into a fully fledged hotel, with gourmet food and serene rooms.

Fredrika Stjærne for Shou Sugi Ban House

Rates for the "custom stay," à la carte retreat start at \$1,235 per night in January — daily breakfast and a morning exercise class included.

After a tortuously weird two years, it's probably time to shake up your chakras.