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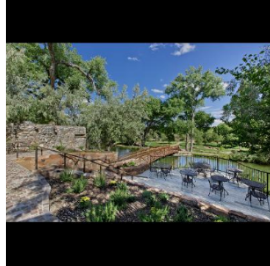
Where To Go To Rejuvenate Or Transform Near Santa Fe



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I cover singular, luxury travel and food experiences around the world. [FULL BIO](#) ▾

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I hadn't expected to play with dogs and chickens when I signed on to the Immerse + Thrive program at [Sunrise Springs Spa Resort](#) near Santa Fe. But these are, indeed, two of the centering, relaxing activities on offer during the seven day program. Guests come for a variety of reasons—from weight loss to recovery from illness to simpler goals such as learning to live a healthier life or managing stress. But one of the healing, rejuvenating aspects of a visit here is the setting itself: 70 acres in a forested oasis with views of the Sangre de Cristo and Ortiz mountains. Natural springs feed the property as they have for centuries, previously as the site of Native American pueblos and as a stopping point for Spanish Colonial explorers and later travelers on the Royal Road of the Interior Land from Mexico City to Santa Fe.

You start out the week with consultations with the thrive guides, Michael Schroeder, the lead therapist, who is in charge of your emotional/spiritual progress and Dr. Sally Fisher, the medical director who addresses any health issues or changes you need to make. They're both knowledgeable, sharp, warm and easy to talk to. Michael meets you in the Medicine Wheel, a stone circle in the center of the property divided into north, south, east and west quadrants each signifying a purpose and direction. He starts out asking about your present spiritual state and an hour later, when we had to end our session, we had gone easily through memories and goals all over the emotional and experiential map. It sets up work that you want to do on yourself and he'll check on you as many times as you'd like during the week.

The activities you choose to accomplish your goals are up to you—or up to them if you ask them to structure the program. I went for pure relaxation: soaking in open air tubs looking up at the trees with a side trip to their sister resort [Ojo Caliente](#) an hour away to soak in the centuries old mineral springs. The spa has well trained, intuitive therapists for massages and facials blending Eastern and Western techniques; there are also expressive art activities, de-stress, meditation, yoga, healthy cooking classes, etc. And then I went to the dogs: the resort works in partnership with [Assistance Dogs of the West](#) which trains service dogs and the current crop of six month old retriever puppies are there for you to help train—and as these dogs do, soothe you by doing it. You don't try and train the chickens, the silkie breed with such soft, thick feathers that it feels like rabbit fur, but just stroking them is relaxing as well. A more intense experience is the sweat lodge with sacred ceremonies performed by resident Concha Garcia Allen.

One of the better activities, though, occurs in the restaurant. Chef Rocky Durham creates absolutely delicious dishes—crab croquettes, Colorado rack of lamb, grilled salmon on top of a mountain of crisp, crunchy greens produced by the organic farm that feeds both properties. There's a good wine list and desserts that are hardly spartan such as churros with cappuccino crème caramel and their take on Elvis' favorite—a chocolate torte with bruleed bananas and peanut butter ice cream. The only drawback is that the menu changes minimally day to day; more variety would be welcome over for a long stay.

Overall, though, the experience is beneficial...even if all you do is talk to Michael and Dr. Sally, eat, take a few classes and hang out in the hot tub looking out at the spring fed pond and the cottonwood trees. It's totally restful and gives you a place to start