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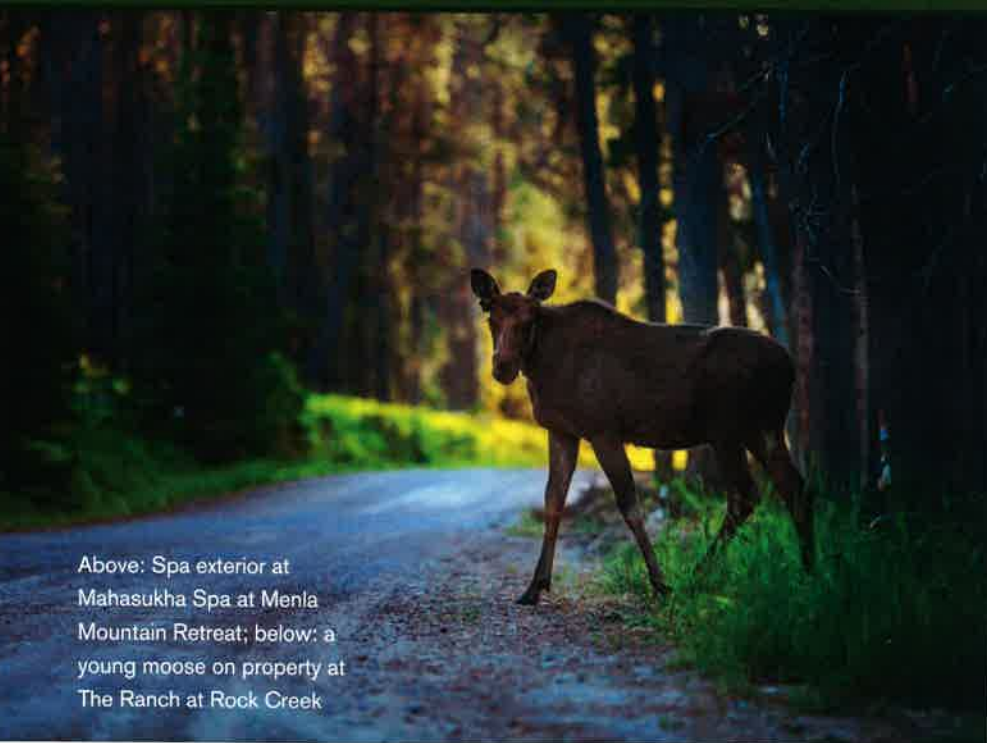


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Spas with a Wild Side

Where to find wildlife viewing on the spa menu



Above: Spa exterior at Mahasukha Spa at Menla Mountain Retreat; below: a young moose on property at The Ranch at Rock Creek

Last fall I wrote about how watching wildlife improves your mental health by engaging your senses, encouraging mindfulness and instilling a sense of awe. At that time, I suggested visiting one of our great national parks as a way to view wildlife. But there is another way to have a wildlife viewing experience: Visit a spa.

As research began to prove what many of us felt instinctively—that exposure to nature is good for our health—spas started to offer nature experiences. They added outdoor movement and meditation classes, hiking, stargazing, massage on the beach, therapeutic horseback riding, and other fresh-air activities to their menus. A few spas, located in or adjacent to wilderness areas, also started offering wildlife viewing. The obvious draw to wildlife viewing at a spa is that you get to take advantage of all the other spa services, which can also improve mental and physical health.

Now that spring is in the air, consider combining your interest in wildlife with a visit to a spa. To help you get started, we have put together a list of spas around the country (and in Canada) that have a “wild side.”

Mahasukha Spa at Menla Mountain Retreat, in Phoenicia, NY, is located in an Audubon-recognized bird sanctuary in the Catskills. The 325-acre nature reserve is in a region of the Catskills renowned for its variety of wildlife, which includes black bear, white-tailed deer, beaver, bobcat, coyote, fisher cat, mink, woodchuck, muskrat, red fox, gray fox, turtles and more. For bird enthusiasts, there are over a hundred different kinds of birds, including the elusive Bicknell’s thrush. Wildlife can be viewed while hiking, horseback riding, fly-fishing or tubing down Esopus Creek. menla.org

Nemacolin Woodlands Resort and Woodlands Spa, in Farmington, PA, is situated in the Laurel Highlands of Southwestern Pennsylvania. In addition to the 2,000-acre property, which is home to a variety of native animals, they have a

Wildlife Academy that offers educational live animal programming (with black bears, zebra, buffalo, tigers and hyenas), an equestrian center and animal nursery. nemacolin.com

The Ranch at Rock Creek, in Philipsburg, MT, boasts one of the most abundant wildlife populations in the lower 48 states. Visitors can watch prairie dogs, deer, elk, moose, big horn sheep, wolves, coyote, beaver fox, black bear and mountain lion. Bird watchers can see bald and golden eagles, osprey, hawks, grouse and more. Guided hikes and Jeep tours are available. theranchatrockcreek.com

Spring Creek Ranch, in Jackson Hole, WY, offers wildlife and natural history excursions into Grand Teton and Yellowstone National Parks, both of which have outstanding wildlife watching. In fact, Spring Creek's wildlife adventure is considered to be one of the top ten safaris in North America. springcreekranch.com


Refuge Spa in Carmel, CA, is a hydro-thermal therapy spa located at the base of the 20,000-acre Santa Lucia Preserve. With over 100 miles of trails, visitors can see bobcats, boar, wild turkeys, red tailed hawks and golden eagles. refuge.com

Sonora Resort, located in British Columbia's Discovery Islands, has grizzly bear tours in late August, September and October. The tour includes a First Nations guide, a boat ride up Bute Inlet to the river mouth and travel by vehicle into the rainforest to various viewing towers, where you can watch for the elusive king of the bears. sonoraresort.com

BELINDA RECIO, recipient of the Humane Society's Award for Innovation in the Study of Animals, owns True North Gallery (truenorthgallery.net) in Hamilton, MA, where she exhibits art that connects people with animals and the natural world.



Trail rides at Nemacolin Woodlands Resort and Spa


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