

TEXAS TRAVEL

9 HRS AGO



Time to spa-tify: Wind down in style at Miraval Austin



Connie Dufner, Contributor 

I don't think I was supposed to peek, but I did. Suspended in a lilac silk cocoon, I gazed through its folds to a sky puffed with clouds. A woman's soothing chant echoed through the pretty yoga barn, punctuated by singing crystal bowls.

It was just another Sunday afternoon at [Miraval Austin](#), the brand's first resort outside of its Tucson flagship. Open since January, the 220-acre resort overlooking Lake Travis is the third of its kind on the property since 2003; most recently it housed Travaasa, and before that The Crossings. (Visitors to the spa's previous incarnation may remember a curious mechanical bull, now vanished.)

Miraval enters a well-served part of the state for wellness seekers. With longtime luxe accommodations at Lake Austin Spa Resort and recently renovated Omni Barton Creek Resort & Spa, Austin itself has plenty to write *om* about. And just down Interstate 35, San Antonio is a mecca of mantra destinations -- with La Cantera, J.W. Marriott, Mokara Hotel & Spa, and Eilan Hotel & Spa, among others.

Crowded playing field, yes. Something special, *definitely* yes. From the moment you arrive (well, really, even before that, as you are checking in with the Experience Planning department), you power down almost instantly from 60 to zero. At every bend of your journey, you are reminded that unplugging is good (cellphone sleeping bag included!), that food should taste as good as it is healthy, that exercise can be fun and effective, and that there are wellsprings within just waiting to be tapped.



A calming campus

The 117 guest rooms and suites are outfitted in peaceful neutral tones, with beds that you truly sink into. Upgrades include outdoor showers for some rooms. In-room refrigerators boast low-tech filtered water pitchers that just beg to be drunk; peaceful balconies overlook the lake, just perfect for a morning meditation or caffeine boost.

Meals are taken in the scenic, vaulted-ceiling dining room, with an expansive hillside patio for outdoor dining and sipping on temperate days. Selections are "mindful," as our servers explained, and loaded with local ingredients, with plenty of options for gluten- and dairy-conscious diets. Note: Reservations are suggested for evening meals, so plan in advance to avoid a wait.



For culinary-minded guests, an airy, well-stocked Williams-Sonoma demo kitchen is a must for cooking classes with executive chef Ben Baker. (Envy alert: You will lust after the bright orange Hestan commercial cooking equipment.)

On the move — or not

The resort packs a full schedule of activities, including a two-hour challenge course, guided hikes, cardio drumming, paddle-boarding, kayaking and meditation on the lake, yoga, cardio fitness, a gym and nearby Cypress Creek Farm with a full equine program designed to help you grow personally through your interactions with the horses.

You'll be tempted to schedule every hour, but pace yourself! Here again, reserve your must-dos ahead of time, as some activities fill more quickly than others. Cue the floating meditation class.

The Life in Balance spa includes a full range of experiences, including Eastern and ayurvedic sessions in 30 treatment rooms. The Austin apothecary massage, for example, incorporates plants, flowers and herbs from Cypress Creek Farm for the aromatherapy portions of the treatment.

A visit to Miraval goes by much too quickly, yet you'll feel you've been there longer than you have. Really, there's only one cure for the check-out blues; it's called rebooking. Let your soul and your wallet fight it out.

Online: miravalaustin.com

Regional updates

While Miraval is the new kid in the Texas relaxation belt, two other longtime wellness resorts have announced renovations and new programs.



Guest-room balconies at Miraval Austin overlook Lake Travis. (James Baigrie/Miraval Austin)



The lobby got a new look at the renovated Omni Barton Creek Resort & Spa. (Omni Barton Creek Resort & Spa/Courtesy)

Lake Austin Spa Resort: The 40-room, much-acclaimed retreat on the waterside at a pretty bend in Lake Austin has deepened its culinary offerings and intensified its water workouts, including yoga on the lake lotus, an eight-station interconnected floating docking station. Indoors, the spa has begun 30-minute full-body workouts on Da Vinci boards, each outfitted with resistance bands to customize a variety of exercises. Many of the rooms have been updated, and new spa treatments lure regulars and newcomers alike. Managing director Janis Claphoff says she welcomes the competition; the two resorts are different, yet complementary. (There are worse things than booking a week at two spas within driving distance of Dallas!) lakeaustin.com

Omni Barton Creek Resort & Spa: The 30-year-old resort reopened in May after a two-year, \$150 million renovation and expansion. Features include four renovated championship golf courses, a redesigned tennis center, updated rooms, a new conference center, an outdoor event pavilion, seven new dining spots, and nearly 24,000 feet of event lawns and a new Mokara Spa with a private, adults-only rooftop pool. omnihotels.com/bartoncreek