

# Ahhh, the spa

By Caroline Tapp-McDougall



Photos: Miraval

*Miraval is touted as the place to go when caregiver stress gets you down, your mind needs calming and your exhausted body needs relief. Plan a visit to simply recharge or to check out what many have claimed are the most healing spa treatments anywhere.*

**M**y first visit to Miraval was about 10 years ago. During my weeklong stay I'd been introduced to the resort's trademark "Life in Balance" concept, which encourages a mindfulness approach to healthy, sustainable living. There were heart-pumping, head rethinking activities, joyful morning walks and the calming power of evening meditations. Rarely had I felt so at peace, received such life-changing advice or eaten as well. I had arrived drained and left feeling ready to take on the world again.

## **Better next time?**

Now, here I was a decade later, older and supposedly wiser, en route to Tuscan with mixed

feelings. On the one hand I was hungry for more of the same and really hoping things hadn't changed one bit. On the other, I was curious about what the new owners had introduced at their destination spa.

## **Like coming home**

What a happy re-entry! The good vibes surrounded me within moments of my arrival. The warm welcome, that familiar feeling, and the "all about me" sense of place came gently back. Nothing and everything had changed. The layout of the property, which incidentally is located in the Sonoran Desert, was much as I remembered it—except for the new villas. But the team of onsite specialists and the number

**"How beautiful it is to do nothing, and then to rest afterward."**

*Spanish Proverb*

“A crust eaten  
in peace is  
better than  
a banquet  
partaken  
in anxiety.”

Aesop, Fables

of activities available seemed to better reflect the resort's commitment to healthy lifestyle change and self-discovery.

### *Chilling out or cluing in*

Rebooting options here are cleverly divided into active or passive sessions that can be taken privately or in a group. My one-on-one was with James Nicolai, Medical Director of the Andrew Weil M.D. Integrative Wellness Program. His special interest in whole-person medicine (he's both a family practitioner and integrative medicine specialist) addressed not only my physical needs, but also explored my emotional and mental health. His calm, supportive style and unique expertise shed intelligent light on a combination of conventional and alternative therapies including the use of herbs and botanicals, vitamins and lifestyle management.

Suggesting attainable goals that I understood was the cornerstone of my private session with registered dietician Junelle Lupiani. I'd attended one of her workshops earlier in the day and wanted help to unearth the mystery of post-menopause energy management. Bless Junelle...I came away with some real-life suggestions and easy, practical tips that are realistic even with my crazy caregiving and work schedule.

### *It's still not about the horse*

Even the second time around, the Miraval Equine Experience with horseman Wyatt Webb

made it as one of those memorable Miraval moments. Once again, he took us out to the pasture to groom a horse. Simple as it sounds, the work he encouraged us to do shed light on our learned behaviours, our interpersonal communication skills and the management of our day-to-day professional relationships. It was a profound learning experience with a man who has helped hundreds of people overcome their self-doubt and fears to open guests' eyes, minds and hearts.

### *Intensely rejuvenating*

New for me this time was a signature spa treatment called the "Spirit Flight" with Dr. Tim, a doctor of naturopathic medicine. The treatment promised to renew my body's energy and balance. Unlike anything I've ever experienced, this transformational ceremony combines a full-body therapeutic massage with the healing practices of spiritual Shamanism and drumming. Dr Tim also introduces an assortment of alternative modalities including craniosacral therapy, acupuncture and spinal alignment.

Other Miraval spa treatments are deliciously relaxing, and a variety of thought-provoking workshops and exercise classes run throughout the day. So whether you're ready for a change or simply want somewhere to rest, reflect and re-energize as you begin the next chapter in your life, a healthy dose of Miraval may be just what you need. I speak from experience. ●

[www.miravalresorts.com](http://www.miravalresorts.com)

