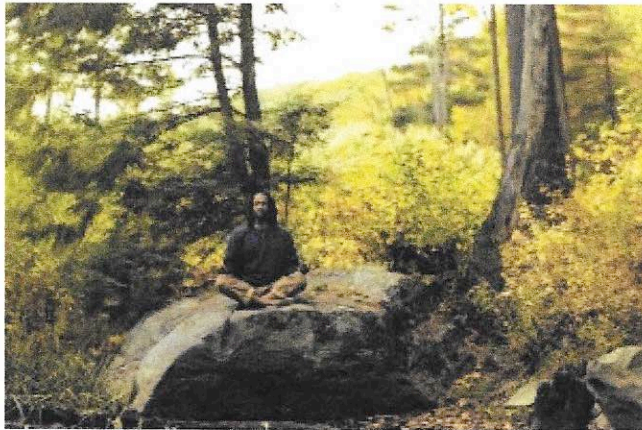


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# Zen getaway weekends

February 25, 2010 By ALISON GREGOR Special to Newsday



A man meditates on the grounds of the Kripalu Center for Yoga and Health in the Berkshire Mountains in Stockbridge, Mass. (Credit: Kripalu Center for Yoga)

Precarious economic times are popularizing a type of getaway that features a different form of R&R. There is rest and relaxation, to be sure, but also retreat and rebirth at yoga and meditation centers, which are receiving more guests than ever.

Sojourns at these retreats are typically a cheaper alternative to conventional vacations,

and, during a time of high stress and job insecurity, they offer a means of getting away from it all - including the chatter of everyday life. (Many offer silent retreat as an option.)

## WHAT TO EXPECT

These are not just spas for the body; they also are spiritual retreats for the soul, and most go to great lengths to avoid the hokum of crystals and channeling that can plague the New Age movement.

Typically far from cities, these holistic healing centers, Zen sanctuaries and yoga workshops are often quiet havens where modern technology is discouraged. The rooms, sometimes in dormitories, don't have televisions or telephones, and smoking and drinking (even caffeinated coffee) are customarily frowned upon. Meals often are vegetarian, and beds may be a bit on the firm side.

In return, guests have the opportunity to study in workshops and seminars offered by recognized experts in such areas as yoga, meditation, holistic healing and self-actualization, all in the company of like-minded souls. The

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ultimate goal may be to launch one on the road to enlightenment and make lasting lifestyle changes - but at the very least, the setting can enable one to experience a healing pause in a busy life.

For those seeking this type of meditative getaway, we've listed three popular nearby sanctuaries for physical and spiritual renewal.

## Kripalu Center for Yoga & Health

57 Interlaken Rd., Stockbridge, Mass.

866-200-5203, [kripalu.org](http://kripalu.org)

**RATES** From \$84 a night per person (two-night minimum), including many classes and activities.

**THE SCENE** This somewhat ascetic nonprofit healing-arts center, on 300 acres in the Berkshire Mountains, bills itself as the largest retreat center in the country, receiving more than 30,000 guests annually. Kripalu offers about 700 workshops and seminars a year on topics revolving around yoga, massage and Ayurveda, and it offers everything from facials and massages to multiday retreats that require total silence. Formerly a Jesuit seminary, Kripalu features a lakefront beach, hiking trails and a labyrinth. There is a fitness room with sauna and whirlpool. Cell phones are allowed only in certain areas; however, a lounge has wireless Internet for laptops. Total silence may be the most difficult condition to stomach for the uninitiated, so, for a brief respite, take a jaunt to The Mount, the nearby home of writer [Edith Wharton](#), a lush paradise she designed herself, or listen to a summer classical music concert at Tanglewood.

**ACCOMMODATIONS AND MEALS** Kripalu offers simple but neat accommodations with no modern-day distractions. Rooms range from queens with private baths to bunk beds in dormitories. Breakfast is silent (though rooms are available for conversation) and complimentary, low-fat vegetarian meals are all-natural. (They do include coffee.)

## Himalayan Institute

952 Bethany Tpke., Honesdale, Pa.

570-253-5551, [Himalayaninstitute.org](http://Himalayaninstitute.org)

**RATES** From \$65 a night per person

**THE SCENE** Founded by Swami Rama of the [Himalayas](#), the institute, which is as much a cultural experience as a spiritual one, is on 400 acres in a tranquil section of the Pocono Mountains. Lectures are given on hatha yoga, meditation and Ayurveda, and also include such topics as vegetarian cooking. The institute also has a bazaar on-site and a store and cafe in Honesdale (630 Main St.) that sells yoga supplies, books, crafts made by artisans worldwide and more. Like Kripalu, the institute is a former Catholic seminary, one whose landscape is laced with hiking trails and dotted with gazebos and flower gardens. A range of natural health-care products and wellness treatments, such as massage, are offered. Wi-Fi is available in many places. Since the institute is only a few miles from Honesdale, guests can break away to visit the Dorflinger-Suydam glass museum or take a train excursion in the birthplace of the American railroad.

**ACCOMMODATIONS AND MEALS** Clean, spare rooms (no TV or phone) range from dormitories to suites with private baths. Besides three vegetarian meals, hatha yoga classes are included in the room price.

## Sky Lake Lodge

22 Hillcrest Lane, Rosendale, N.Y.

845-658-8556, [skylake.shambhala.org](http://skylake.shambhala.org)

**RATES** From \$120 a night, double occupancy, for room only and breakfast; \$275 a night for retreat programs with activities.

**THE SCENE** For a more intimate experience, the newer and smaller Sky Lake Lodge, nestled on 18 acres of cedar and white pine in the Shawangunk Mountains, focuses on the Shambhala tradition, a Western form of Tibetan Buddhism, and meditation, but adds the arts, including flower arranging and photography, as well as movement and posture adopted from Tibetan monastic dance. Many programs are contemplative and silent. With only 18 beds in the lodge, Sky Lake has more of a bed-and-breakfast feel than Kripalu or the Himalayan Institute, which are more resort-like. There are hiking trails and rustic gazebos providing seclusion from which to contemplate the spring-fed pond. For those who need a hiatus from tranquillity, just a few miles away is New Paltz, where guests can drink artisanal beer at the Gilded Otter brewpub.

**ACCOMMODATIONS AND MEALS** Simple rooms have private baths, and decks and are heated in winter and cooled by fans in summer. There are no phones or TVs, and some cell phones won't receive a signal.

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