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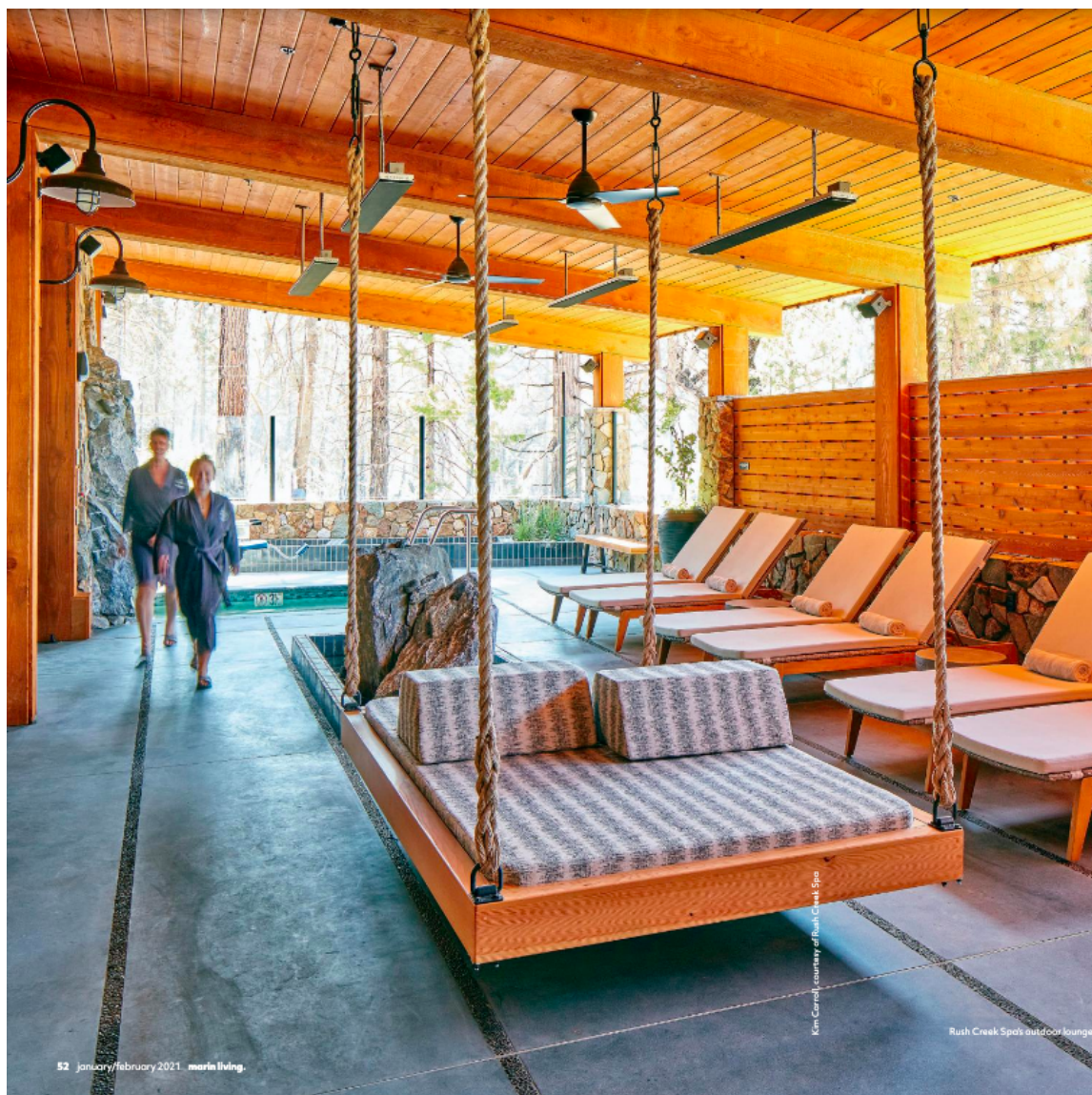
turning up the volume on marin's happy, healthy lifestyle.

The Renewed You

Wellness retreats give guests the ultimate reset with treatments and experiences rooted in healing and nature.

By Casey Hatfield-Chiotti

Lucia Greenfield, courtesy of Port Ranch Inn



Kim Carroll, courtesy of Rush Creek Spa

Rush Creek Spa's outdoor lounge

California and Arizona's wellness getaways are needed now more than ever. The properties are planning accordingly for the visitors who are likely to end up on their doorsteps in 2021. Spas and hotels have revamped services and introduced new amenities designed to help people connect with the outdoors and shake off the baggage that comes with uncertainty and loss.

"This year, our lives have been derailed," says Gigi Richardson, spa and wellness manager at the new Rush Creek Spa near Yosemite National Park. "We've had no self-care. We've been homeschooling. We want to bring people to a place where they feel optimistic once again and recharged."

The spa, the first to open on Yosemite's western edge, opened in November with strict cleaning standards and social distancing protocols in place. Immediately, guests started arriving from the Bay Area and beyond. Richardson recalls a male client who was stoic when checking in, but who she soon spotted splashing in one of the spa's waterfalls. "When you come out smiling, mission accomplished," she says. Here are five of the best regional wellness getaways, both big and small, lesser-known and established, offering everything from transformational sleep treatments to ancient water rituals so visitors can start anew.

Post Ranch Inn

Rush Creek Spa

The new 5,000-square-foot spa at Rush Creek Lodge (from \$160, www.rushcreekspa.com), designed by San Francisco-based Anthony Laurino (Shoreline Hotel, Hotel Tama) takes cues from its awe-inspiring neighbor. Yosemite's Carlon Falls-inspired custom waterfall covers offer guests a chance to sit on a bench while warm water cascades down the wall behind them and over their shoulders. "The water washes away any heaviness. It's the ultimate 2020 detox," says Richardson. Cool Mist Showers, ideal after spending time in the Himalayan Salt Sauna, re-create Yosemite Falls' fine mist and the Warm River Rock Beds emulate the park's smooth granite rocks when baked in the sun. There's also a covered outdoor lounge, an amber-hued Aromatherapy Steam Room — perfumed with eucalyptus and lemongrass — a granite waterfall hot tub and five treatment rooms. Mindfulness is a part of each treatment. During a Swedish massage, therapists use a sound bowl to quiet guest's wandering minds and hot stones to balance chakras. The wood-and-stone Rush Creek Lodge, opened in 2016 by two Bay Area dads, is grand but never pretentious. Guests can also choose to stay at Evergreen Lodge, a historic property with 88 cabins, seven miles away.

Big Sur's Post Ranch Inn (from \$925, www.post ranchinn.com) continues to set the bar for what a health-centered getaway can be. The environmentally friendly hotel, with accommodations built into a cliffside, is introducing a sleep program in February. One of the country's foremost experts on sleep, Michael Breus, Ph.D., acts as guests' sleep guru. Breus believes people fit the description of one of four sleep chronotypes: the bear, the wolf, the lion or the dolphin. His personalized tips for achieving more restful sleep include meditations and guidance on room temperature. New sleep-inducing treatments have also been rolled out, including Crystal and Gemstone healing. Guests place a dream stone, a piece of ocean-polished Big Sur jade, on the heart chakra and perform a Native American purifying ritual to clear the way for deep sleep. During the Herbal Tea Ritual, guests select herbs and flowers from the inn's garden to create a calming blend to take home. Post Ranch Inn guests can enjoy massages and other treatments in the spa, on an open-air tent or their room. Three of the property's Mickey Muennig-designed Ocean Houses, with curved roofs covered in grass and native plants, had extensive renovations in 2020 that included adding wine barrel wall paneling, custom furniture and outdoor soaking tubs. Post Ranch Inn's use of nontoxic cleaning supplies and chemical-free sheets and mattresses add to the overall feeling of well-being.