

# Body & Soul escapes

Caroline Sylge



Where to retreat and replenish around the globe



### Canada

**Getting there** Montreal, Toronto and Vancouver are Canada's main international airports. From the UK, carriers such as **Zoom Airlines** ([www.flyzoom.com](http://www.flyzoom.com)) and **Canadian Air** ([www.canadianair.com](http://www.canadianair.com)) operate direct flights from London Gatwick to Halifax for Nova Scotia. If travelling from the US, direct flights link many cities across the border, or take a **Greyhound** bus ([www.greyhound.com](http://www.greyhound.com)), which has a network extending into Canada. By train, a twice-daily service links New York to Montreal and Toronto and, on the west coast, a daily train connects Seattle and Vancouver. See [www.seat61.com](http://www.seat61.com) for more details. From Australia and New Zealand, flights go via LA or Hawaii.

**Best time to visit** Winters in Canada can be severe: from November to March it is very cold with snowfalls throughout the country, except on the west coast. British Columbia enjoys the mildest weather, while Ontario has a continental climate with cold winters and hot summers.

### USA

**Getting there** For visits to California, fly to LA, San Diego or San Francisco. For east coast states, fly to Boston or New York and take an onward flight, train or bus. For Colorado, Denver is the main hub, while Utah is served by Salt Lake City. Arizona is served by Tucson, but there are no direct flights from Europe. Hawaii's Kona and Hilo international airports are served mainly by flights from Honolulu, which is reached direct from Auckland and Sydney ([www.qantas.com](http://www.qantas.com), [www.airzealand.com](http://www.airzealand.com)) and major US cities (for connections to Canada and European destinations).

**Best time to visit** California enjoys one of the sunniest climates in the US, especially in the desert region of Palm Springs. The best time to visit is October to December and April to May, avoiding the hottest months of July and August, although San Francisco has cooler summers. The likeliest months for rain are January to March and winters are generally mild. Desert areas in Utah and Arizona are mostly dry with year-round high temperatures. New England states such as Vermont have a changeable climate, with snowfalls in winter and mild summers. Colorado experiences cold but dry winters and hot summers. Hawaii has a tropical climate, with August recording the highest temperatures and the coldest months being February and March. Hawaii's peak tourist season is December to April.

### Mexico

**Getting there** Mexico City is the country's main international airport, but most centres are in the Yucatán and the Pacific coast, within easy reach of Cancún and Puerto Vallarta respectively. European scheduled and charter airlines fly to Cancún. Puerto Vallarta is well connected to major US cities with some flights to Toronto, but travellers from Europe must go via a US airport. For Baja California, fly to San Diego



Feathered Pipa Ranch, USA

and then travel overland. Mexico has an efficient domestic air and bus network for onward travel from Mexico City.

**Best time to visit** Generally the best time to visit is October to April, although there are significant regional variations. June to October is the rainy season for many areas, although in the Yucatán – affected by the Caribbean hurricane season – this runs from October to January and April to July. Don't be deterred by the rainy season, as in many areas, this may mean showers for just a few hours a day. Except for the drier Baja California region, coastal areas can be humid all year round. To avoid the crowds, don't visit the Yucatán in December.

### Costa Rica

**Getting there** San José is the main international airport. Direct scheduled flights from the US arrive daily from Atlanta, Dallas Fort Worth, Houston, New York, Miami and Philadelphia. Flying from other US cities involves a stop in Mexico City, Cancún or Guatemala. Scheduled flights from Toronto and Montreal in Canada go via Havana and San Salvador. Charter airlines flying from North America include **Air Transat** ([www.airtransat.com](http://www.airtransat.com)) and **North West** ([www.nw.com](http://www.nw.com)). There are no direct flights from the UK; fly via a US city, Madrid ([www.iberia.com](http://www.iberia.com)), Düsseldorf ([www.lufthansa.com](http://www.lufthansa.com)) or Amsterdam ([www.klm.com](http://www.klm.com)). From Australia and New Zealand, fly to LA and take an onward flight from there.

**Best time to visit** Costa Rica has a tropical climate. On the Pacific coast and in the central highlands, December to April is the dry season and May to November the rainy season, peaking in the wettest months of September and October. Rainfall usually occurs for only a

## Feathered Pipe Ranch



Helena, Montana  
 T+1 (706) 442 8196  
[www.featheredpipe.com](http://www.featheredpipe.com)  
 From US\$1395 per person per retreat

Montana is one of the USA's least populous states. Nestled in the Rocky Mountains at the edge of the Helena National Forest, the Feathered Pipe Ranch is a beautiful retreat that runs five- or seven-day rolling programmes in an intimate setting.

Situated on the banks of a tranquil alpine lake, the ranch offers shared and private rooms in a yurt, tipi or cabin beside a stream or tucked into tiny mountain meadows. Each offers a back-to-nature experience but with comfortable beds and cosy bedding – you share a cedar bathhouse, which also has a massage room, a sauna and a spring-fed hot tub.

Retreats on offer include hatha, vinyasa flow and iyengar yoga, martial arts, mysticism and meditation. The line-up of visiting teachers includes Erich Schiffman ([www.movingintostillness.com](http://www.movingintostillness.com)), and Seane Corn ([www.seanecorn.com](http://www.seanecorn.com)). Also on offer is Swedish massage, hot-stone therapy, acupuncture and naturopathic and chiropractic consultations.

Native grasses and mountain flowers –



Above: Feathered Pipe Ranch.  
 Right: Sunrise over the hot pond at The Golden Door.

many with medicinal uses – grow prolifically here and you can learn some botany during an early morning guided hike through the forests and lush alpine meadows. An organic garden – a fine spot for meditation – sits at the edge of the lake. End your day of yoga with a sauna or a soak in the hot tub followed by a bracing skinny-dip.

Food is organic, sourced from the kitchen garden or from local and regional producers, including the occasional free-range chicken or grass-fed beef or lamb. Suppers range from polenta with a fresh tomato-basil sauce to lavish Indian meals complete with home-made chutneys.

Guests come from all over the United States and some from the UK and Europe. Ages and backgrounds are diverse, from hip New York yoga instructors to active retirees and even the occasional celebrity. The number of guests ranges from 10 to 50.

Workshops run from late-May to early-September, but whatever the season, be prepared for unpredictable weather, and bring layers. Helena Regional Airport ([www.helenairport.com](http://www.helenairport.com)) has connections to

major hubs, including Salt Lake City, Minneapolis and Seattle. The Ranch offers an airport shuttle service for US\$50 return.

During the winter months, the Feathered Pipe sponsors yoga instruction and tours in Mexico, Cambodia and India. Its sister institution, the 3300-ha Blacktail Ranch in Wolf Creek, Montana, also offers courses but with a traditional Western twist.

## HEALTH & FITNESS RETREAT

### The Golden Door



Escondido, California  
 T+1 (1) 760-744 5727  
[www.goldendoor.com](http://www.goldendoor.com)  
 From US\$7500 per person per week

The Golden Door is one of the world's most desirable spa destinations. You do actually enter through a golden door, giving you the distinct impression that you are leaving the real world behind.

The complex's design is influenced by the ancient Honjin Inns of Japan, with a series of



# Body & Soul escapes

→ Europe, Africa, Middle East, India, The Himalayas, Indian Ocean, China, Japan, Southeast Asia, Australia, New Zealand, Pacific Islands, North America and Latin America

Body & Soul escapes is the first book of its kind, bringing together over 400 inspiring journeys and retreats that are right for you, whether you're stressed out, seeking spiritual enlightenment or simply in need of some serious pampering.

- ★ The best guesthouses, villas and hotels for do-it-yourself retreats
- ★ Yoga, pilates, tai chi, dance, art and adventure holidays
- ★ Meditation retreats and ashrams
- ★ Personal development courses and life coaching weeks
- ★ Ayurveda, detox and thermal spa retreats
- ★ Destination health spas and extreme fitness weeks



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*Packed with advice that manages to be both sensible and inspirational.*

Condé Nast Traveller

*Comprehensive guidance on the newest and best retreats, spas and fitness adventures.*

Vogue

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