



**Elite Traveler**  
**Summer 2022**



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**LEADERS IN LUXURY**

by Becca Hensley

# SPAS

Like everyone else, the spa industry had a chance to pause during the pandemic and reinvent itself. While spa trends are ever-evolving, most experts agree that in 2022 spa-goers began to demand more personalized services, as well as more avenues to healthiness via sleep cures, nutrition counseling, fitness regimes and mindfulness. With mental health issues being a dreaded aftereffect of the Covid-19 era, many of us have been keen to find ways to alleviate stress and embrace harmony. While Sensei Lanai, A Four Seasons Resort talks about reconnecting to discover “what it means to live again,” Lake Austin Spa Resort advocates the healing power of being around water. We’ve talked to leaders at both destination resorts, and discovered new treatments and spa locations to pencil into your list.



A treatment room at Sensei Lanai, A Four Seasons Resort

## Mike McAdams Co-Owner, Lake Austin Spa Resort

In early 1997, Mike McAdams and his best friend William Rucks purchased a property on the shores of Lake Austin that had quite the history: It was formerly a fishing camp, a nudist camp and a weight-loss facility. After extensive renovations, Lake Austin Spa Resort is now considered one of the best wellness retreats in the world. Becca Hensley speaks to co-owner Mike McAdams about the journey and his own wellness anecdotes.

### We've pegged you as a leader in the spa and wellness industry. How did you get into this field?

My background is in commercial real estate, and I have a lifelong personal passion for interiors and architecture. I worked for a major real estate developer based in Dallas and was living on a plane, traveling a lot. It was high stress, high energy — and I loved it. I enjoyed relative success at a young age, which paved the way for me to end up where I am today. In 1984, I found a place that changed my life: The Ashram in Calabasas, California. It was a true boot camp (not like Lake Austin Spa Resort), with physical activities and dietary restrictions that were very intense — think 1,000-calorie macrobiotic days. I remember Thursday nights were a highlight — for dinner, we'd get half a baked potato with herbs and cottage cheese! We would hike around 80 miles in six days. It was transformative for me. This experience forced me to come down from my hectic lifestyle of traveling, eating, drinking, not exercising. I wasn't in tune with my body and ended up going back to The Ashram many times over the years — sometimes twice a year. Every visit would inspire me to change

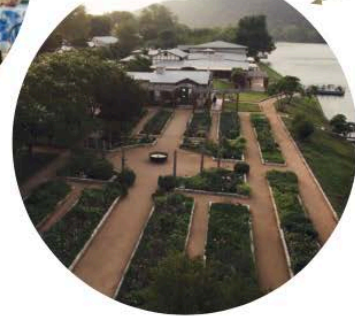


old habits. I evolved, had better awareness and took better care of myself. I was introduced to new teachings like yoga, healthy eating and daily exercise. When I came home, I sought out those changes. So when a close friend told me that Lake Austin Spa Resort was for sale, I knew instantly that this is what I wanted to do. It literally fell into my lap and was the perfect fit. My close friend and fraternity brother from LSU, Billy Rucks, and I formed a partnership to buy the resort and transform it into what it has become today. It was a diamond in the rough, with so many things in place that gave it soul — including some people who worked there then who are still on our team today.

### Lake Austin Spa Resort has a legendary reputation in the world spa industry. What do you think makes it distinctive?

Our unique location on Lake Austin in the Texas Hill Country, one of America's most beautiful waterways. Our size is also a distinction with just 40 waterfront accommodations, the 25,000-sq-ft LakeHouse Spa, where we weave in more than 100 healing services (some based on ancient practices, some incorporating the latest in technology and products) coupled with an extraordinarily welcoming staff... It's a magical combination that our guests enjoy. The eclectic design

The resort's garden at sunrise



and architecture are designed to inspire rest and relaxation — hues of nature in the guest rooms, original art and luxuriously understated furnishings all come together. When you walk into a room, it's so comfortable, your shoulders drop a little and your personal journey begins.

### How has the resort evolved from your initial vision?

My original vision was to create a world-class destination spa. It was a lofty goal for two entrepreneurs who had no experience in the wellness space! But we did it. When we purchased the property, we immediately and methodically began a renovation and repositioning of the resort that took several years to complete. Culminating in the development of our star, the LakeHouse Spa, we soon began to receive accolades and awards from the major travel publications. Through the years we recognized how important the water was to our experience. Twenty-five years ago our guests didn't want to put a toe in the water. Now, we can't get them out. The rooms, facilities, spa and land-based offerings are close to the original vision. The transition to the water has been a big surprise, including how much people want and need it.

### How does Lake Austin Spa Resort mirror the wellness movement?

The wellness movement is massive — according to the Global Wellness Summit it's a \$4.4tn global economy. We're a small piece of that, but we are happy that it is now at the forefront of travel. We offer an experience that can be tailored to each individual. If someone wants to come and lie in a hammock, eat incredible cuisine, and book a Muscle Tension Melt massage — they can. Or, if their focus is personal growth or getting a really tough workout, learning new skills in the kitchen or on the water, we have so many avenues for people to achieve well-being. Social and corporate groups are coming to us, whether it's a complete buyout or a group celebrating a milestone birthday. The demand for wellness travel is high.

[lakeaustin.com](http://lakeaustin.com)

Water sports on Lake Austin

