

FOR ALL THE FAMILY

HOW TO GET THE WHOLE GANG ONBOARD WITH A FEEL-GOOD ESCAPE



NEW

BLACKBERRY MOUNTAIN

TENNESSEE, USA

INTREPID ENDEAVOURS DEEP IN THE WOODS

An outdoorsy escape with impeccable heritage, this long-awaited sibling to the perennially popular Blackberry Farm turned out to be even better than expected when it opened last year. It was the dream of the late Sam Beall, who ran the farm – a utopian summer camp with fresh air, phenomenal field-to-table food and elegant interiors – with his wife Mary Celeste for 14 years. But the altitude of the Great Smoky range always called for a second outpost. Sadly Sam died before he got to see Blackberry Mountain up and running but his vision has been exquisitely brought to life. Guests are invited to walk the ridgetop to recreate the first time he and his parents took Mary Celeste to Mount LeConte. Today the Italian-influenced Firetower restaurant, in the forest lookout, symbolises that climb. The views from up here are spectacular; overlooking 5,200 acres, more than half of which have been dedicated to land conservation, is like gazing over your own private national park. Home is in one of the low-rise stone cottages or stilted cabins made from reclaimed timber – deeply smart inside with wood-burning

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stoves and crisp bed linen, yet hunkered down humbly into the woods. Lovely as they are, it's not about loitering indoors. A stay here means seeking out adventures in the dynamic and vibrant landscape. For energetic children, there are endless activities from organised hikes with one of the passionate trekking masters to biking along mapped-out trails, rock-climbing and kayaking. The pace can be slowed with a pottery workshop or crafts session, and younger members of the clan can dip in and out of Camp Blackberry, which has its own scaled down fun and games. Proper battery recharging for grown-ups takes place in the Nest spa, where the approach to wellness is also rooted in the rhythms of nature. Home-grown herbal poultices, essential oils and tinctures take centre stage, alongside guided meditations and Traditional Chinese Medicine practices including acupuncture, reiki, tuina and qigong. And the beds in the spa's relaxation space face out to the Great Smokys. A stint lying here is as healing as the treatments. The founding mantra of Blackberry Mountain is the pursuit of balance between pleasure, nourishment, activity and rest. Tennessee may seem a long way to come to chase that equilibrium, but there is something moving and genuine about the sense of hospitality, with guests treated as part of the Beall clan. There is a rhythm, a pulse, a heartbeat that lets families connect to their wild side and also get deep rest at the same time. Combine that with the magic of the pastoral experiences and the purity of the environment and you have somewhere very special.

INSIDER TIP Be sure to book a naturopathic consultation with resident Dr Jill Beasley – she can offer a fresh perspective on ailments from fatigue and insomnia to anxiety and fertility issues.

BOOK IT Healing Holidays (+44 20 7843 3592; healingholidays.com/condenast) offers seven nights from £11,599, half board, for two adults and one child under 12, including flights, transfers and daily group activities.



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