


# Heaven on earth

*Reconnect to nature with outdoor bodywork, forest spas or dawn yoga*

## RANCHO LA PUERTA Baja California, Mexico

Rancho La Puerta is the real deal: the original, say some who have been making the pilgrimage to these sun-scorched lands for decades; the benchmark for health retreats across the globe, with its wholesome semi-vegetarian fare and beyond-perceptive practitioners. The ranch has stood the test of time – from the simple dream of summer 1940, when founder Deborah Szekely pitched tents beneath the stars, and served meals so fresh they seemed pulled from the soil – but still, it's evolved. So while guests continue to hike the same meandering trails that teem with wild herbs, and watch the sun slowly rise above Mount Kuchumaa, they now take refuge in rustic casitas, shaded by larger-than-life cacti and sweet-smelling jasmine; and they find solace in the spas, with their colourful murals, hand-painted tiles and homely therapists. Though that earlier accommodation hasn't been forgotten: to mark its 80-year anniversary, the ranch has revealed two private spa tents, where the magic of traditional Mexican rituals runs wild. Sage is smudged and ceremonial blessings performed beneath oak trees, before some utterly intuitive bodywork (led by the emotional pulse of your solar plexus), healing abdominal massage (aided by a detoxifying clay mask) and gentle stretching (using a traditional rebozo scarf). There are immaculately scheduled activities: from barre and yoga overlooking the vineyards to water aerobics in the pool and energetic 'pickleball' (badminton meets table tennis) on hard courts. But most noteworthy are the staff, whose enthusiasm is infectious; the out-of-this-world views; and the food, which is plentiful and bursting with flavour (the Garden Kitchen hike, which winds up at the Tres Estrellas kitchen with plates of picante-spiced eggs, is a must). Here's to the next 80 years...

 *Healing Holidays (healingholidays.com) offers a seven-night fitness programme, full board, from £3,149, including British Airways flights and transfers.*



*Cookery school and retreat signpost (inset), Rancho La Puerta*



*The central pool with mountain views*

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