

Accessible Weekend Wellness

BY TRACY E. HOPKINS

Nature-deprived New Yorkers can find respite at the Lodge at Woodloch (www.thelodgeatwoodloch.com), a destination spa tucked away in the Poconos. During the scenic two-hour drive with my husband over the river and through the woods of Northeast Pennsylvania, I thought to myself more than a couple times, "Are we there yet?"

Although the Lodge at Woodloch is just 90 miles from New York City (the nearest small city is Scranton, Pennsylvania....yes, as in 'The Office'), it feels a world apart from big city urban hustle and bustle. Once we arrived at the picturesque 58-room resort, check-in with the friendly front desk staff was a breeze. Every guest is given a schedule of activities, a tote bag and water bottle when they check in. Those welcome gifts set the tone for our health and wellness weekend.

WHAT TO EXPECT

Located on 75 lush acres with its own private lake, woodland gardens, ponds and waterfalls, the Lodge at Woodloch opened in 2007. Unlike other destination spas where the spa services and fitness classes are often in separate buildings, everything here is under one cozy roof. So you can go directly from morning meditation to an organic breakfast in Tree restaurant.

To maintain an intimate, peaceful vibe, guests must be 16 or older. For couples, groups of friends or families traveling with small children seeking a more robust getaway experience, the neighboring sister-property—Woodloch Pines—has everything from championship golf to bumper cars and evening entertainment. The Lodge at Woodloch guests also have access to Woodloch Pines.

A SETTING FOR NATURAL BALANCE

One of the first things we noticed was the set of large crystal chakra bowls in the lobby. When you tap the bowls with a gong and rub gently around the outside, they create healing sounds and vibrations.

The handsome, wood-and-stone architecture reflects a harmony with nature, and every spacious room has a balcony that either faces the lakeside or wooded land side. Other soothing touches include the Lodge's soaring, floor-to-ceiling windows, designed to bring the outside in.

Guests have plenty of places for quiet reflection: the Library Room adjacent to Tree restaurant is a cozy spot to catch up on the morning news; the fireplace-warmed Whisper Lounge is a relaxing place to read, snack on complimentary fruit and nuts, and sip a cup of organic herbal tea; and the fire-circle patio is a popular area to gaze at the stars after dinner.



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A DESTINATION SPA

Even the most jaded spa enthusiast will be impressed by the Lodge at Woodloch's luxurious 40,000 square-foot spa. From signature and customized facials and massages to specialty bodywork, all skin and body treatments are designed to promote relaxation and wellbeing.

I was treated to a 50-minute Correcting Detox Facial (\$120), a deep cleansing and skin-refining facial that helps clear congested, oily and acne-prone skin. A professional multi-acid peel was applied followed by a purifying masque to promote clear, rejuvenated skin. This targeted treatment also includes a thorough skin analysis and extractions for immediate and lasting results.

Men and women have separate dressing rooms with sauna and steam rooms. The spa also offers co-ed retreat spaces; the heated hydro-massage "waterwalls" in the pool area and the heated outdoor whirlpool on the Sun terrace are popular spots for couples.

The Complete Spa Package includes three meals per day, most fitness classes and a daily spa allowance of \$120 per day. Deluxe room rates range from \$349 to \$659 per night, per person. Half-day and full-day packages with spa services, fitness classes and select meals are also offered from \$225 to \$550 including tax and gratuities.

PROGRAMS AND ACTIVITIES

With so many fun classes and outdoor activities to choose from, I was tempted to spend the entire Saturday in yoga pants and sneakers. There's even a 3,000-square-foot cardio weight room. But I narrowed my focus and took a morning Zumba Gold fitness class taught by a surprisingly spry

senior, while my husband opted for gentle yoga. Afterwards, we took a mid-morning walk on the Lodge's figure-eight trail and down the footbridge path to the private lake that's ideal for canoeing and kayaking in the spring and summer.

In the afternoon, we took a wine tasting class in the Chef's Kitchen. The entertaining class gave us a chance to mingle with other guests and sample reds and whites from different regions. Cooking demonstrations and art classes are also offered for an additional fee.

LEAN CUISINE

At Tree, guests gaze at the treetops while noshing on award-winning spa cuisine prepared with fresh, naturally raised meats and fish and organic, locally grown vegetables. Instead of calorie counting, the focus is on portion control. For dieters, the Lodge offers the Fit and Fab program with a stricter food and calorie intake plan and personalized training sessions.

Although it's admirable the Lodge at Woodloch's food is made with wholesome ingredients, some of our dinner entrees were quite simple. Breakfast and lunch, however, offer more flavorful a la carte and buffet options. Unlike other destination spas, you can even indulge in a glass or wine or cocktail with your meal (not included in the all-inclusive rate).

WE'LL BE BACK

Because of its proximity to New York City, the Lodge at Woodloch is closer and a nice alternative to my usual healthy retreat in the Berkshires. If you don't have a car, you can take a NJ Transit train from Penn Station to Port Jervis, NY or a bus from Port Authority to Hawley, PA. To arrange for pickup or other transportation options, call the Lodge at (866) 953-8500.

