

## **Total Body Magazine**

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### **“A Respite for the Body and Soul”**

by Nancy Galeota-Wozny

The Omega Institute in Rhinebeck, NY, is one of my favorite destinations. It's a perfect place for a holistic health practitioner such as myself to take in the latest in my field, sneak off for some spa services and enjoy the luscious landscape of the Hudson Valley. Unfortunately, after the plane, cab, and bus rides required to get there, I really need the rest.

When Omega at The Crossings opened in Austin, I packed my bags. The Crossings, on 210 acres of the Balcones Canyonland Preserve, overlooks Lake Travis just northwest of Austin.

The founders, Joyce and Ken Beck, created a nurturing environment for individuals to grow, heal, and renew. After careful planning, community input, and a stint on the Omega Institute Board of Directors, The Crossings became a reality.

I recently traveled to Austin to study with movement pioneer Emilie Conrad. Conrad is a frequent presenter at the New York Omega, but had not taught in Texas in 20 years.

As I followed the swerving path down the hill, I noticed the elegant buildings along the way. The Crossings adheres to principles of green building, with minimal impact to the land. Hatch and Associates, leaders in the green building movement, built structures that merge with the rolling landscape. Paths follow the natural tree line, and local materials are used when possible. Water conservation and recycling are top priorities. Interiors exude a “Tex-Zen” style, with cool blue hues that contrast with the regional flora.

My first stop was the Wellness Spa. The varied menu of services focuses on health and wellness. The Jamu Asian Spa rituals integrate tropical oils, invigorating skin techniques, and refreshing scrubs. I can get a Swedish massage at the local nail salon, but a Balinese massage? While waiting for my appointment, I enjoyed the vanishing edge pool and considered a cold dip, but decided to stay safe with the sauna and hot tub. After selecting an exotic fragrance, I was off to a pleasurable and unique experience. I headed off toward dinner smelling like a lemon drop.

Later that week, I was scrubbed with lemongrass and experienced my first Watsu water massage. I have never felt so weightless, fluid, and relaxed. The Crossings boasts the only freestanding Watsu pool in Austin. For those dealing with specific

health issues, integrative medical doctors are in the house. To continue the healing process, individualized take-home programs accompany many services.

For lodging, I chose the sunroom option. Cozy rooms equipped with comfy beds, functional desks, and white fluffy robes surround the central courtyard. Common spaces promoted a community atmosphere while I enjoyed solitary time with my morning coffee (which magically appeared, freshly brewed, each morning) on a comfortable rocker overlooking the lake. Lodge rooms are slightly more expensive and come with generous balconies.

Not knowing the differences between the Omegas, I had prepared myself for a week of no meat, wine, or caffeine. I have to confess my secret delight at the fine selection of wines available in the Treehouse Café, the fish and chicken dishes available at mealtimes, and the Sumatra coffee. Chef Fred's fusion cuisine pleases vegans and South Beach dieters. Meals are served in a down-home dining room adjacent to a terrace with a show-stopping sunset view. Expect a bit of discipline – fresh baked pies, cakes, and cookies are available only at dinner. For the weak, cookies are available at the café.

On my second trip to The Crossings (it's hard to do just one), I had the opportunity to work with Irish poet and philosopher John O'Donohue. The hiking trails available 10 paces outside our workshop door made for satisfying meditative walks.

O'Donohue urged us to enlist the tranquility of the environment to broaden our interior inquiry. There's something magical about being perched atop a hill while asking life's deeper questions.

There are many ways to experience The Crossings. You can sign up for a weekend or five-day workshop with such prestigious faculty as poets Billy Collins or Robert Bly, meditation teacher Jon Kabat-Zinn, actor Alan Arkin, medical intuitive Caroline Myss, or creativity guru Julia Cameron. You also can go with the a la carte approach, enjoying spa services, free daily classes in yoga or meditation, hiking, quiet time, evening lectures, and communing with like-minded folks.

Travelers from all over the world come to study with renowned faculty. I met a group from Tokyo that had come to hear Dr. Brian Weiss. A group of teachers learned about self care and surviving burnout. Two charming young mothers from St. Louis custom-tailored their own spa getaway. The Crossings also designs business retreats and the facilities are available for rent.

Nearly everything about The Crossings is soothing to the soul. The blending of architecture and landscape, the striking colors of the interior spaces, even the artwork feels hand-picked for each site. Whether you are a spa or sanctuary seeker, The Crossings has something to offer you. Be aware, it can be habit forming. As I

was driving down the hill, a thought danced in my newly tranquil mind, "When can I come back?"