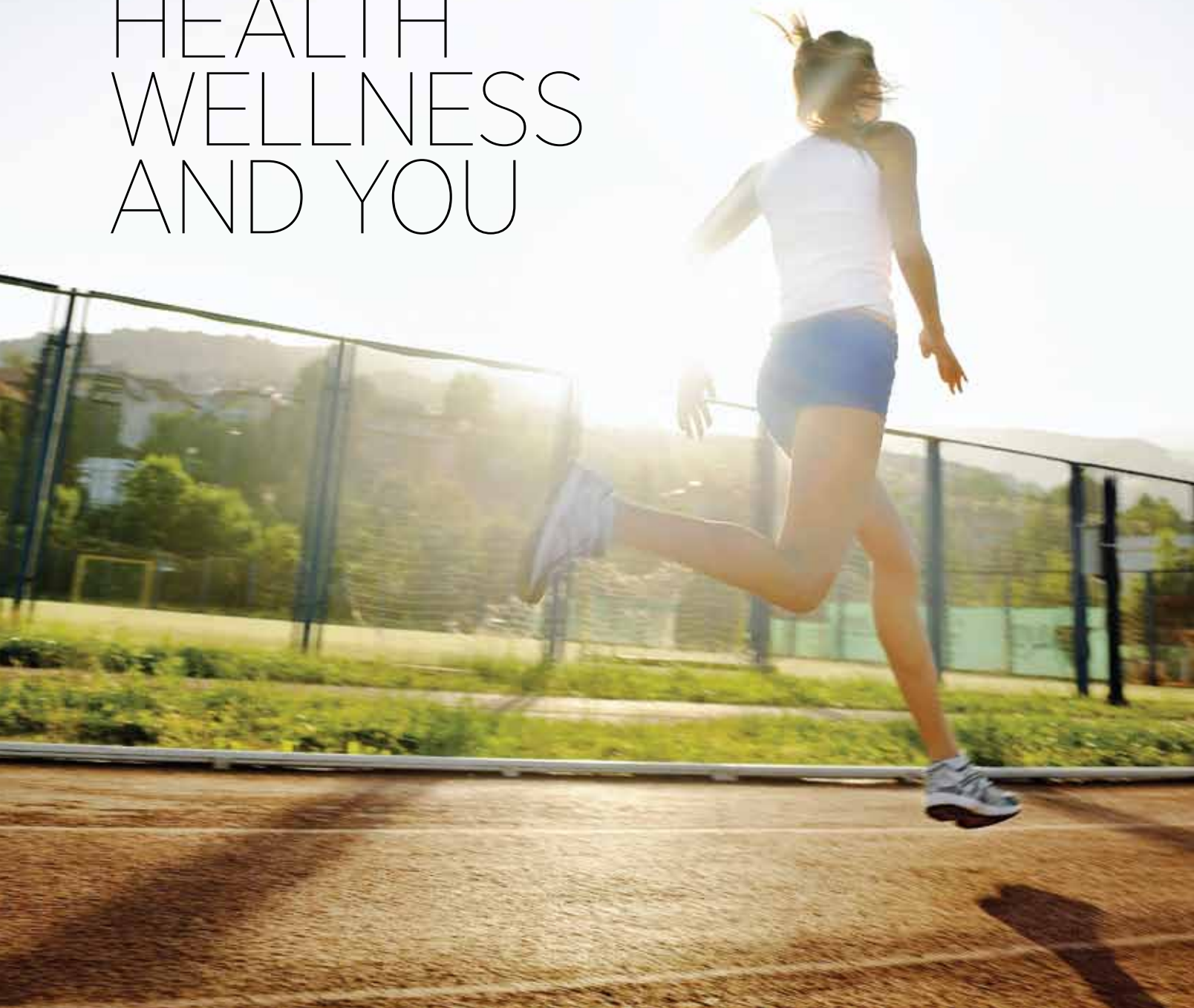
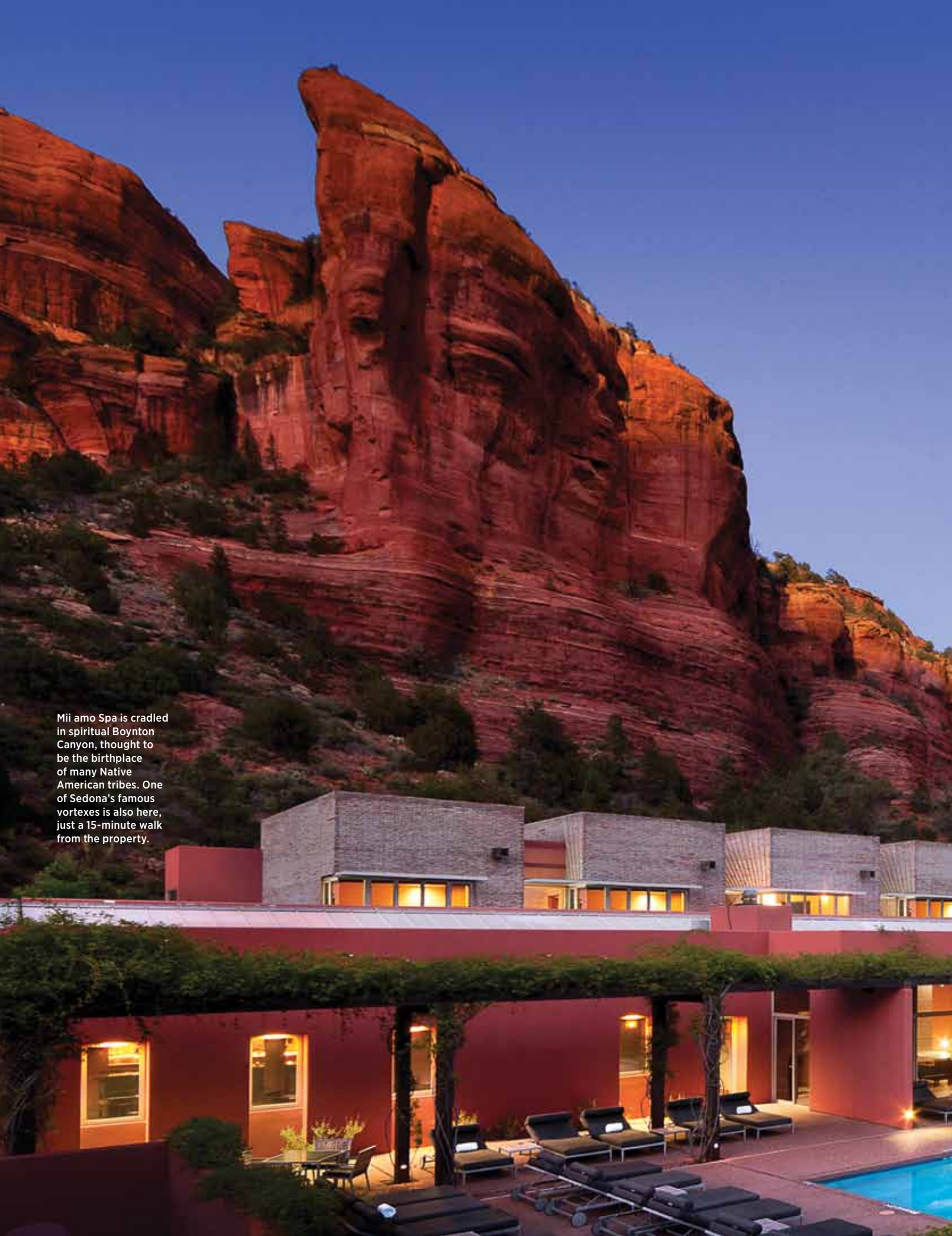


# 805 LIVING

OCTOBER 2012

HEALTH  
WELLNESS  
AND YOU



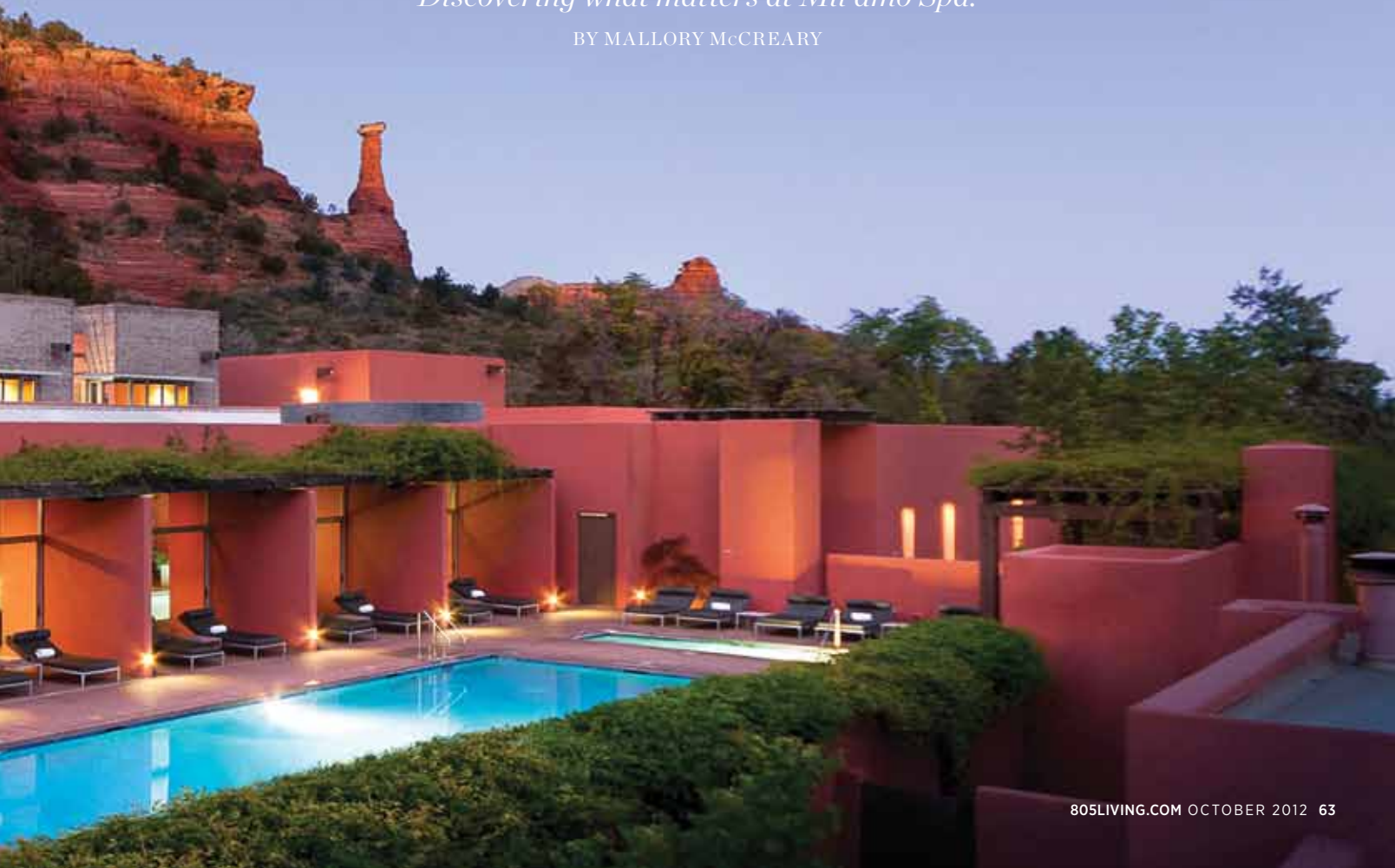


Mii amo Spa is cradled in spiritual Boynton Canyon, thought to be the birthplace of many Native American tribes. One of Sedona's famous vortexes is also here, just a 15-minute walk from the property.

# SEEKING SOLACE IN SEDONA

*Discovering what matters at Mii amo Spa.*

BY MALLORY McCREARY



Slatted outdoor wickiups are a modern take on the Native American hut and offer guests stunning red rock views during spa treatments.

“I FELT RENEWED  
AND REFRESHED,  
WITH A NEW  
TAKE ON LIFE.”



I dug my toes into the rich red earth, hoping to draw its purported healing energy up through my soles to take home with me. Around me, people expressed gratitude, relief, awe, and sadness that our time here was over. I breathed in the smell of burning sage and listened to the reverberations of the tones of the crystal bowl. I tried to hold it all in, terrified that the insights and lessons I'd learned over the past few days would disappear as soon as I left this magical place. But since this was the departure ritual at Mii amo, a destination spa in Sedona, Arizona, named for a Yuman word for "journey," it meant it was time to go. Before I knew it I was speeding back on the highway toward Phoenix and my flight home, red rocks disappearing in the distance behind me, dazed at the sights and sounds of traffic after three days of retreat.

I expected to leave feeling pampered and relaxed. With two spa treatments a day, how could I not? But I never imagined that I would make friends, discover a new talent, and find answers—and more questions—to issues that had been plaguing me for years.

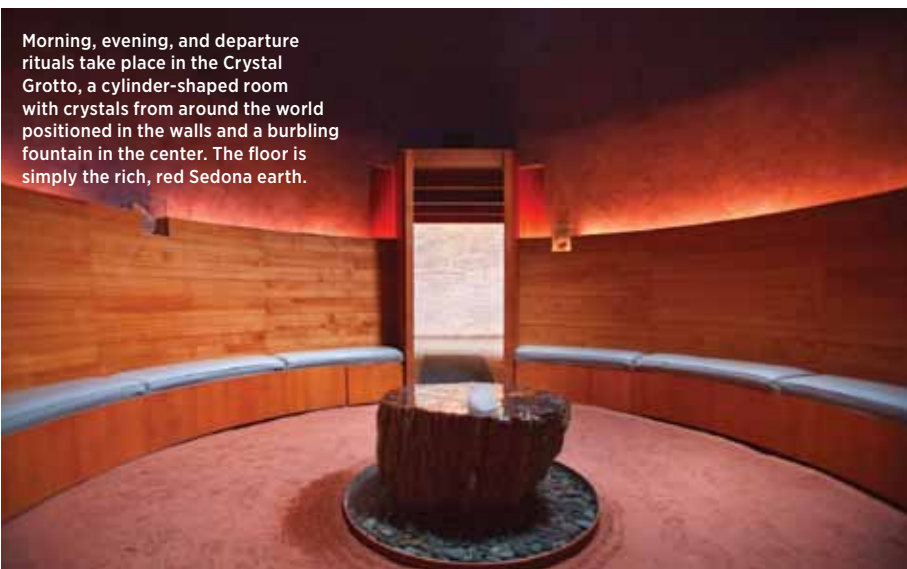
Thanks to airline snafus, I arrived at Mii amo late for the 5 p.m. orientation for all incoming guests. I was grumpy and aggravated when the eager young Mii amo staffer greeted me with a beaded, dried-juniper berry necklace designed to ward off negative energy. Oh, no, I thought, what had I gotten myself into? Was I going to have to believe in the magical powers of 10-cent

beads? I feared meals of lifeless squares of vegetarian flan and guests who tried to outdo each other with tales of their spiritual journeys.

My fears vanished during the (rest of the) orientation and delicious dinner (a changing menu offers plenty of choices for carnivores and veg-heads alike). The other guests were girlfriends from LA on a getaway, a priest from Chicago on sabbatical, a woman from New York contemplating retirement, and a young woman from Maryland on a leave of absence from work. They were all seemingly normal—no hippie hair, no flowing skirts, no crystals. There were also teachers and hairdressers and management consultants, and they were there to relax, not to make anyone feel inferior about attaining enlightenment. I had my first treatment that night—an aromatherapy massage—and sank blissfully into sleep.

Mii amo offers three-, four-, and seven-day journeys that are designed around the type of healing that guests need, including stress relief, health, spirituality, and the search for a new direction in life. Journeys are infinitely customizable, though there are suggested treatments that correspond with each. They can be loose or structured, but they are self-directed. No one monitors your progress or scolds you if you leave a class early or eat dessert or don't write in your journal. I'd had some trouble choosing from the impressive array of spa treatments; luckily a spa concierge helps guests pick and then does some kind of spreadsheet voodoo to create the perfect schedule.

Morning, evening, and departure rituals take place in the Crystal Grotto, a cylinder-shaped room with crystals from around the world positioned in the walls and a bubbling fountain in the center. The floor is simply the rich, red Sedona earth.



**The details:** Mii amo boutique destination spa is in Sedona, Arizona, about two hours north of Phoenix. Three-, four-, and seven-night journeys include lodging, three meals a day, two spa treatments per day, and taxes and gratuities (from \$2,250 November–February and June–August; from \$2,400 March–May and September–October); [miiamo.com](http://miiamo.com).

**BELOW:** Nightly gifts (a journal, calming fragrance mist, a dried sage bundle) greet guests at turndown. Rooms are comfortably furnished with fireplaces, sitting areas, and private patios or balconies.

**OPPOSITE:** An enclosed courtyard off the lobby is home to a rock-laid medicine wheel, inspired by Native American spirituality. Guests walk around the wheel, which symbolizes the circle of life, to meditate about their life's journey.

I signed up for hatha yoga, watercolors, and a vision-board class in addition to my treatments: cranial-sacral therapy, which uses gentle massage to balance the cerebrospinal fluid in the head and spine; a *shirodhara* facial, where warm oil drips in a steady stream on your forehead to create inner calm; and a body wrap. I was most interested in two signature Mii amo experiences: a kinetic flow massage and Harmony, a guided meditation followed by a psychic reading.

While not one treatment was a dud, the two signature treatments were by far my favorites. The kinetic flow massage uses a table that rocks from side to side and swings around to give the therapist greater control. At times I felt such pure joy and bliss as the table swung around that I laughed out loud. I had major muscle releases and walked out shaken yet energized, exhausted yet rested. As the treatments stacked up, each was working off the other, so the relaxation was much more profound. Ah, the advantages of a destination spa.

I was a little skeptical about the Harmony treatment because I'm not usually a fan of meditation (the quiet makes me think, then worry, which is not relaxing), and I wonder about the wisdom of taking life advice from a near stranger. But after the 90 minutes (which seemed more like 10) were over, I felt renewed

and refreshed, with a new take on life. Certainly some of what the therapist said could apply to a lot of people—who doesn't need to take more time for themselves?—but much of it felt very particular to me. She reminded me of several long-dormant talents and dreams that I've since vowed to revisit. Unbidden, she mentioned that I might have been a priest in the Himalayas in a previous life, which resonated with me even though I'm not sure past lives are something I believe in. Another spa guest, who had signed up for a past-life regression treatment, was more than a little disappointed when she learned that she spent a previous life in a forest—as a tree.

There are plenty of activities, including hikes, mountain biking, gardening, and exercise and cooking classes that have nothing to do with New Age mysticism. But given Mii amo's Sedona location, long a haven for alternative beliefs, it would be a shame not to experience some of them. There is no invitation to join a cult or call to change your name to reflect your inner light, just an opportunity to have a new experience and see how—or if—it speaks to you.

I've heard people talk of transcendence: times when they've felt at one with the universe or with God; moments full of beauty and joy so pure that they spend their days trying to re-create them. I did have glimpses of something beyond comprehension—pure light, optimal beauty, the divine—during my stay, and from what others shared at the departure ritual, they felt it, too. But what resonates the most for me is how many of the ideas, skills, and practices I learned (or was reminded of) have continued to play out in my daily life, even months later: at-home massage techniques, calm response mechanisms to stressful situations, cooking tips, reminders to be grateful for what I have and ask for help when I need it.

I went to Mii amo because I was looking for a change: a new idea or direction that would answer some questions in my life, turn stress into peace, anger into fulfillment. It would have been all too easy to forget everything I learned and return to old, destructive ways. But that's the true magic of Mii amo, and it's the reason I will go back: to remember.





## Tips to Maximize the Mii amo Experience

**PACK LIGHTLY.** You need clothes for hiking or biking, but a Mii amo robe is good everywhere else. Even stalwarts who don't think they'll wear it eventually fold.

**DRINK THE KOOL-AID.** Or in this case, the custom-blended teas. Try them all, both hot and iced. The white tea, with notes of coconut, is a favorite and sells in the gift shop for \$90 a pound.

**DON'T BE AFRAID OF CHANGE.** In your schedule, that is. Guests often change treatments or therapists after hearing rave reviews from another guest or when they realize they want a different experience than they initially planned.

**DO SOMETHING THAT MAKES YOU UNCOMFORTABLE.** I was intrigued, but terrified, by the watercolors class. I took a deep breath, wielded a paintbrush, and discovered a fun, new hobby.

**DON'T OVERSCHEDULE.** There is an activity offered nearly every hour of the day, from 7 a.m. to 8 p.m. But ....

**TAKE SOME TIME TO JUST BE.** There is something magical about those red rocks. Take a few moments every day, at different times of the day, to absorb the awesome surroundings. ♦