

Mahasukha Spa at Menla Mountain Retreat, Phoenicia, New York, USA

[The Mahasukha Spa at the Menla Mountain Retreat](#) located in the **Catskill Mountains** in **Phoenicia, New York**, is exquisite in its concept by **NenavS.Thurman and Robert Thurman**, design by **New York City-based architect Duke Beeson** under the guidance of acclaimed **award-winning designer Clodagh** of **[Clodagh Design](#)**, and its impressive menu of Spa treatments. The two-story, 4,000 square foot luxurious Spa offers the utmost in relaxation and services in a stunning, tranquil setting.

We stayed at the Menla Mountain Retreat during an R&R Healing Cleanse Weekend in October 2013 and experienced the Mahasukha Spa and had the opportunity to meet Nena vS. Thurman, Managing Director and Robert Thurman, and the designer, Clodagh. The Spa, which opened in 2013, was a labor of love that took five years from Nena Thurman's initial conception to the realization of the Spa. Her concept was to create a Spa and Tibetan Medicine Healing Center on what she described as, "a shoestring budget, and the help of pro-bono designer, Clodagh, and architect, Duke Beeson." Nestled on a 325-acre private nature reserve, 1500 feet above sea level, the setting is spectacular and the services are impressive.



Robert Thurman, Clodagh,

Debra Argen, Nena Thurman

A Spa experience should be about relaxation and nurturing the mind, body, and soul, and as we entered through the red wrought iron gate and walked along the graceful slate walkway to the Spa the experience was a harmonious blend of tranquility and a feast for the eyes that continued with the attractive Mandala Garden.



Welcome to Mahasukha Spa

The exterior design of the building captures the flair of the Orient with its graceful curving lines, and the use of color, golden saffron with red trim in harmony with the lush natural background of the trees in their autumn splendor displaying colors of gold, red, and orange. The expansive wraparound veranda beckons with inviting lounge chairs overlooking the seasonal swimming pool.



Mahasukha Spa

It is the interior though, where the mind takes an imaginary journey; speaking with Nena Thurman, she said that she wanted something different for the Spa, and working with Duke Beeson, Clodagh, and Tibetan master artist Rabkar Wangchuk, she succeeded in her quest. Enter through the wood and glass doors, place your shoes in special cubbies, and let the experience begin. The first thing that one notices is the soaring, colorful, intricately carved two-story Tibetan archway with balcony, and then the eyes take in the ceiling painted bright blue where suspended large white fabric ball lights evoke images of cumulous clouds set against an immaculate blue sky.



Tibetan Archway

Local products from the Catskill Mountains, maple cut from trees in nearby Woodstock, New York for the floor and cabinetry, and granite from nearby quarries, create an inviting lounge area to enjoy a healthful cleanse drink, a cup of tea, converse with a friend at one of the tables and chairs, or simply to enjoy the view from the walls of windows.

During our Spa experience, we enjoyed two different healthful and delicious cleanse juice drinks created by the renowned vegetarian chef Jill Pettibone, personal chef to the designer Donna Karan: Fennel, Asian Pear and Lemon Juice, and Green Juice which was a mixture of green apples, lemons, celery, cucumbers, swiss chard, kale, dandelion, green cabbage, and broccoli.



Edward Nesta and Robert Thurman

The comfortable sitting area features sofas and chairs to relax, there is a stunning embroidered wall hanging as its focal point, and on the wall to the left of the Tibetan archway, there is artwork depicting the practice of Tibetan medicine.

Walking through the Tibetan archway, our experience began in the attractive men's and women's locker rooms where Finnish and far-infrared saunas and steam rooms awaited. A visit to a Spa should be a relaxing and pampering experience, it is your time to spend on nurturing yourself, so one should arrive early

Created by: Debra C. Argen and Edward F. Nesta

to take a pre-treatment sauna or steam, or use them after a massage to help the aromatherapy oils penetrate the skin and infuse the air with their gentle fragrance to maximize the benefits of the treatment, and then indulge in the multi-jet rain showers, which we wanted to take home with us.



Nena and Robert Thurman on Tibetan Archway

Wearing our waffle weave Spa robes and special Spa slippers we walked along the hallway leading to the relaxation room and stopped to appreciate the Tibetan artwork gracing the walls, as well as the intricately embroidered wall hangings, and the bronze Buddha.



Buddha

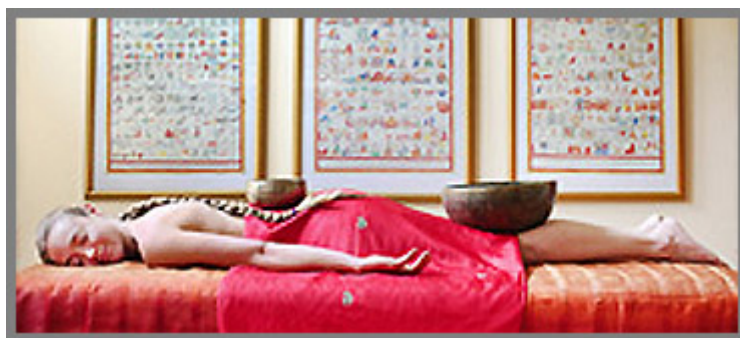
photo by Daniel Aubry

The colors selected for the inviting relaxation room, saffron walls, mushroom cushions on the five chaises dressed with red and gold pillows set against a curved luminous gold wall with textured glass panels overlooking a wall of windows and glass doors create a tranquil oasis. Peacock feathers set in a tall vase add interest to the room, as does the ornate painting hanging over a painted chest and a wood chest set on the opposite wall with its large footed glass water jar, and soothing wind instrument music helps create a perfect ambience. While waiting for our therapists to lead us to our treatment rooms, we enjoyed looking out the wall of windows and watching the interplay of light on the autumn trees and the colorful flowers remaining in the abundant garden.



Spa Relaxation Room

The Spa has 11 well-appointed, state-of-the-art attractive treatment rooms located on two levels that include an Ayurvedic room, couple's massage room, Tibetan herbal soaking tubs, and a 2-person Jacuzzi. The Spa offers an impressive menu consisting of its Spa and Healing Center, Massage and Body Work, Asian Therapies, Tibetan Therapies, Skin and Body Treatments, Yoga and Pilates, Fitness and Activities, including two outdoor tennis courts and a seasonal outdoor swimming pool, and Spa Programs: R&R Getaway Weekends and Cleansing at Menla. Speaking with Nena Thurman, we learned that she plans to add other treatments and programs to the already substantial Spa menu.



Treatment Room

However, it is not the amenities and services alone that create a memorable Spa experience, it is the Spa staff, and the Mahasukha Spa is blessed with a caring, dedicated, and knowledgeable team consisting of Spa Director Lynn Schauwecker, Front of House Manager Chisti Dryden, Dr. Tashi Rabten, and its excellent therapists.

We had the opportunity to maximize our R&R Healing Cleanse Weekend by experiencing different treatments during our stay. The Spa offers diverse facial treatments including the Deep Cleansing Facial, Microcurrent Facial Rejuvenation, Oxygen Purifying Facial, and the Pure Glow Facial. As we have experienced many types of Spa facials over the years, we were intrigued with the Microcurrent Facial Rejuvenation, listed on the menu as, "deep penetrating microcurrent using the latest technology to redefine and rejuvenate the face. The current produces a tightening effect as it stimulates collagen and elastin. Immediate results are youthful, glowing complexion, no matter what your age. 100% organic products used." With an intro like that, how could we not want to experience that treatment? The facial was soothing and the results were wonderful.

We also indulged in massages where our therapists used a combination of various massage techniques: Shiatsu, Swedish, and Thai, that best suited our specific needs and our individual preferences.

During our weekend stay we took a Lalita (Hatha) Yoga class with Megan Leigh and as we gazed thoughtfully out of the wall of windows of the spacious and well-appointed Yoga Studio, a family of deer

Created by: Debra C. Argen and Edward F. Nesta

passed in front of the windows creating a most magical memory that rewarded us for rising early to take a 7:00 am class on a Saturday morning. During our 75 minute class we learned proper breathing techniques and yoga positions so that we could continue them and build our yoga practice when we returned home.



Yoga Instructor Megan Leigh

We also had a medical appointment with Dr. Tashi Rabten, who “received his degree from a Lhasa medical school in the nineties and has been practicing medicine for the last 25 years. Currently he practices Tibetan medicine in New York and Connecticut. Dr. Rabten specializes in the use of Himalayan natural healing products to help his patients find both optimum health and balance in their lives. He maintains a successful medical practice in Valley Cottage, New York and gives lectures on Tibetan Medicine at the Western Connecticut State University.”



Edward Nesta and Clodagh of Clodagh Design

We left the Mahasukha Spa, which means “Great Bliss” feeling healthy, relaxed, and nurtured, which is exactly what one should derive after being at a well-appointed Spa.

The Menla Mountain Retreat and Mahasukha Spa is located in Phoenicia, New York, twenty minutes from the iconic town of Woodstock, New York. Check the website for upcoming R&R Getaway Weekends and R&R Cleanse Weekends at www.MenlaMountain.org.

Read more about the **Menla Mountain Retreat and MahasukhaSpa** in the **Hotels and Resorts** and in the [Chefs' Recipes](#) sections.

 **Menla Mountain Retreat and Mahasukha Spa**
375 Pantherkill Road
Phoenicia, New York 12464
United States
Telephone: +1-845-688-6897
Website: www.MenlaMountain.org
Facebook: www.Facebook.com/MenlaRetreat

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