

Let the land restore you

HENDERSONVILLE'S HORSE SHOE FARM, FILLED WITH HEALING ENERGY, COULD BE THE SEDONA OF NORTH CAROLINA.

BY PAGE LEGGETT

There's a knock at the door of The Loft, the second-floor aerie I've rented on Hendersonville's Horse Shoe Farm.

"I heard you asked about bottled water," says a masked and ponytailed Jordan Turchin, the principal manager of the boutique retreat. "We're on a well, and that water is fantastic. And, I'm a millennial who doesn't like waste, so we don't keep bottled water on the farm."

Nevertheless, they aim to please. When the property manager mentioned I had asked about bottled water, Turchin brought over a few cans of Perrier. It was a lovely touch. The idyllic farm is full of them. The 85-acre property, which opened in October 2018, is owned by the Turchin family, whose business interests include everything from real-estate development to alternative energies. The new owners have transformed the former cattle farm into a rustic-meets-quirky riverside retreat.

WOO-WOO ENERGY

The Farm looks like a slice of Norman Rockwell's Americana, but the owner/manager sounds, at times, like a New Age mystic. It's yin and yang, as Turchin points out.

"There's a kind of woo-woo, alternative healing thing here," he says. "This place is about wellness. When I first walked onto this property, it's what I felt. When I saw the stable, I thought, this is a spa."

The former stable is now indeed a spa, and it's unlike any I've ever seen. Refined rusticity is one way to describe it. But there are touches of whimsy and grandeur, too, in this space where stalls serve as treatment rooms.



PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF KAVEH SARDARI



This *isn't* the place for a makeup tutorial or brow shaping. Instead, you'll find cranial tuning, acupuncture, breath work. With all the crystals, dreamcatchers and woo-woo talk, it reminded me of a verdant Sedona, Ariz.

The Stable Spa, built on one of five vortexes on the property, Turchin says, offers treatments like "vibration healing sessions." I had one of those while also indulging in a foot soak as I looked out onto green pastures below and mountains beyond.

Wendy Morrison, the spa's wellness manager, told me I might see horses, chickens or goats go by as I enjoyed the fresh air and bucolic scene. "Two goats got out yesterday and made their way into the spa," she says, laughing. "But what are you gonna do? This is a farm."

I'm not surprised they moseyed in. One feels unencumbered here at this place its owner describes as "super-casual, eccentric and bohemian." You're free here. Come as you are; do as you please.

The farm has seven homes, including the one-bedroom loft I rented, and can accommodate a maximum of 55 people at once. Besides the resident horses, some guests bring and board their own. Right outside the spa is a riding ring.

The Turchins learned about the property along the French Broad River when their Sotheby's Realty office got the listing right after the real-estate bust of 2008. "It just sat on the market," Turchin says. "No one was even looking. We fell in love with the magic of it."

The family began to see its potential as a retreat center with a spiritual bent. Turchin and his wife, Rachel, moved from California to run the operation. You're likely to meet them and their two young sons during your stay.

BE STILL AND CHILL

You will *not* be overprogrammed, overscheduled or overstimulated while you're here. "We're very hands-off," Turchin says. "We don't push anything we offer. It's about your comfort and your desire." Still, 90% of guests book at least one spa appointment, he says.

There are plenty of places on the property to slow down and enjoy the moment. You can walk the labyrinth, which Turchin built himself, or climb the narrow, winding staircase in the silo and meditate at the top of the tower. Previous guests have scribbled words of wisdom on the walls: "Breathe, darling. This is just a chapter. It's not your whole story" was a good reminder during a pandemic that everything is temporary.

For families, there's a pond for fishing, a "swimming hole," farm animals to meet, walking and biking trails, and a playhouse.

Central to life on The Farm is the farmhouse. It's open all day and offers pingpong, corn hole, board games and puzzles, mountain bikes, and a craft corner with paints and easels. There's a turntable and vinyl record albums and a widescreen TV to watch DVDs.

Nothing is precious here: The farmhouse décor looks like someone raided the attic of a wealthy, eccentric aunt and brought over her old sofas and chairs, coffee-table books, paintings, framed photos and tchotchkes.

MEAL TIME AT THE FARM

While every house (except The Loft) has its own kitchen, there's also a communal kitchen overlooking the Farmhouse. Picnic tables are set out under twinkling lights, and a nightly campfire provides guests a chance to use the s'mores kits placed in the kitchens.

The staff can arrange a private chef, provide catering services or be your personal shopper. Whole Foods and other grocery stores deliver to the Farm. Order in advance and have your groceries brought straight to your cottage.

Turchin says the family is considering adding an on-site restaurant. Meanwhile, downtown Hendersonville has no shortage of great food, and plenty of sidewalk dining. I took my meals off campus at the sublime Postero; the lively tapas joint, Never Blue; and at the fried chicken-and-doughnut mecca, HenDough.

The Farm is a place to unwind. It's expansive enough to allow for social distancing (and then some) and friendly enough that you're liable to strike up conversations with other guests, perhaps even join them for dinner under the stars. All you need to do here is relax and lose — or find — yourself.

"We watch people transform," Turchin says. "It's the most unexpected gift. This is what people need now — space, and to be nurtured." **SP**

Down on the farm. The Horse Shoe Farm is about 12 minutes from downtown Hendersonville, about two hours west of Charlotte. Rates range from \$250 per night for a one-bedroom loft to \$2,000 a night for the five-bedroom Magnolia Manor. Planning a family reunion? Rent the whole farm for groups up to 55. Learn more at thehorseshoefarm.com.

