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### USA Travel Magazine - California Travel Guide



## Szilvia Gogh Shares Her Escape To The Land of Medicine Buddha In Santa Cruz, CA

Work, work, work... always just work and no time to play. Not to mention never having a weekend off to recharge the batteries and detox my body. It seems like the last year of my life was destined to be spent equally divided between meetings, business lunches, seminars and work related travel.

I closed my eyes at the airport and envisioned a forest with colorful leaves falling; from yellow, to orange, to deep red mixed with purple. As the leaves danced in the slight breeze, my eyes focused on a gold cross legged sitting Buddha sculpture in the background. I could physically feel PEACE. My whole body started relaxing. First, the tension from my neck and shoulders melted. Next the constant frown on my forehead relaxed and eventually my breathing slowed down.

I inhaled the cleansing smell of grass after rain, pine tree and homemade cooking not far. I followed the delicious scent. My favorite yellow vegetable curry was steaming next to a carefully arranged salad palette. Light brown sunflower seeds complemented burgundy dried berries alongside magnificent white mushrooms paired up with crispy green and orange peppers.

I knew it was not a dream when I swallowed the curry and it warmed up my chilled body. I really had taken a weekend off and was at a retreat at the Land of Medicine Buddha in Santa Cruz, California.

I could not believe that I had finally taken a vacation from work emergencies, house cleaning, exercise regime, accounting and business

classes. But most importantly my never quiet Blackberry was silent. I was pleasantly surprised to find that despite my 3G network, my phone showed not one bar of reception. At first anxiety started creeping up in my heart thinking about what I am going to miss, however as time passed the feeling transformed into a liberation and a newly found freedom from my urban life.



Land of Medicine of Buddha offers a comfortable and simple sanctuary on 108 acres of redwood forest with miles of hiking trails. The rooms are clean, uncluttered and without television, music or flashy décor.

The facility is a Tibetan Buddhist retreat center dedicated to healing and developing a good heart. It is located in Soquel, 75 miles south of San Francisco, in Santa Cruz County. The serene surroundings provide an ideal space for relaxing, restoring inner strength and finding a new depth of peace.

Peaceful and beautiful, the retreat offers extensive walking/ hiking trails, sauna, a seasonal outdoor pool and massage therapy. Despite my love for saunas I opted to spend the day walking the Eight Verses Pilgrimage Trail. These verses are from one of the most beloved Tibetan thought transformation texts and are mounted on plaques which are spaced throughout a trail loop. The trail begins beside the little koi pond and small Kadampa Stupa in the North-Eastern corner of a meadow and meanders through the redwood forest until it ends at the Ksitigarbha statue. Each verse is accompanied by a teak bench on which to sit on while relaxing and contemplating the verses. I found myself very much at peace while meditating on the prayers and teachings of the Dalai Lama strolling the path.

The center welcomes yoga groups as well as families. It can be great if you love children; and not so great if you do not have kids and had hoped to enjoy a quiet day meditating.



Aside from the bigger than life Buddha sculptures around the forest I found the power of the prayer wheels the most breathtaking. A sign asks people walking by to spin it for love and peace throughout the world. Prayer Wheels provide this powerful energy by drawing on the prayers and mantras stored within the wheel. In the words of our Spiritual Director Lama Zopa Rinpoche, "turning a prayer wheel containing 100 million Om Mani Padme Hum mantras accumulates the same merit as having reciting the Om Mani Padme Hum one million times. By turning a prayer wheel, in those few seconds, you perform so much powerful purification and accumulate so much merit."The Om Mani Padme Hum mantra is unique in its potency by which it purifies karma and accelerates enlightened realizations. It is considered by

advanced yogis and dharma masters to enhance spiritual powers, accumulate good karma and actualize the wisdom to realize emptiness.

The Dharma center was established in 1983 by two Tibetan Buddhist masters: Lama Thubten Yeshe and Lama Zopa Rinpoche. It was their vision for Land of Medicine Buddha to be a place of ultimate healing. One of my favorite things about LMB was learning that they offer a "Learn and Stay" Program. Those interested in practicing and gaining a better understanding of Buddhism can live on the property in exchange for 25 hours of labor per week.

### Travel Resources For Your Trip



The unique facility offers Buddhist teachings, retreats and healing in a beautiful environment brimming with sacred holy objects.

Read more at [www.landofmedicinebuddha.org](http://www.landofmedicinebuddha.org).

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### - About The Author -



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