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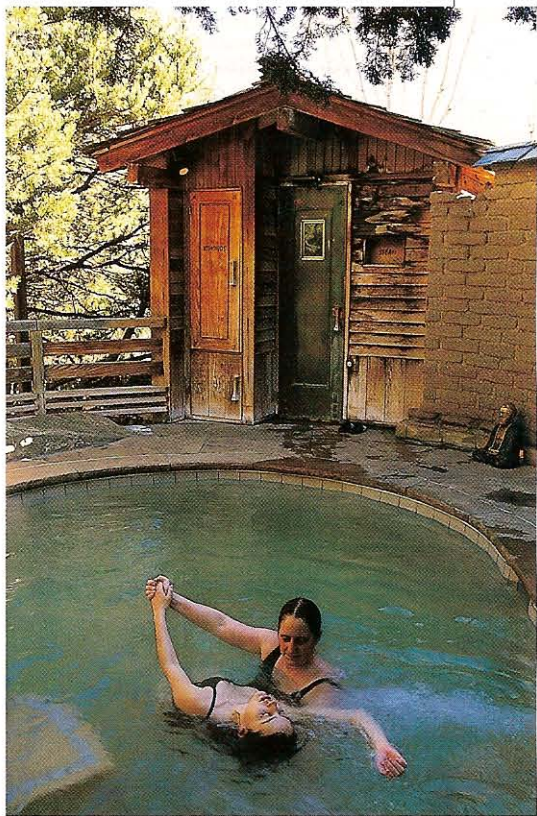
Japanese Adobe

Combine the aesthetics of Japan and Santa Fe, and you get Ten Thousand Waves spa, a one-of-a-kind hybrid in New Mexico.

BY ANNIE OSBURN

With the sound of an Asian gong I'm summoned back to reality. "Hellooo?" a voice coos from a tiny speaker near my ear. "Ten minutes left. Relax." I float for another 600 seconds in the Imperial Ofuro hot tub.

Although a sign in the courtyard of the Ten Thousand Waves spa reads, "Tokyo: 10,070 km," I couldn't be farther from



Releasing limb and mind with a water massage.

that metropolis at this moment. When I finally put my clothes on, I'll find myself in the Sangre de Cristo Mountains 3.5 miles north of Santa Fe, New Mexico.

In this floating world my pace slows into a groove that's a little New Age, a

CATHERINE KARNOW

little high desert, and a little hedonistic. "We're patterned after ancient Japanese bathing traditions, in which hot water is a way of life for people," notes Phil Hindmarch, the general manager. Everything about this oasis of tubs and rejuvenating treatments—from the pungent scent of piñon pines and juniper bushes to the soothing smell of steaming water—vaporizes the stresses that arrived with my other baggage.

Celebrating its 20th anniversary in 2001, the Waves (as locals call it) has perfected its "Japanese adobe" aesthetic by melding traditional Japanese design, architecture, and tranquillity with the natural elements of the Southwestern landscape. Spa treatments are described as "real," meaning only the most authentic versions are offered—Swedish and hot-stone massages, Asian hot-oil treatments, even a Japanese Nightingale Facial, which uses "processed nightingale droppings" traditionally favored by geishas. Only the most qualified therapists are invited to join the staff.

My first visit to Ten Thousand Waves was just for a tub and a rub, but when I discovered the Houses of the Moon, I knew I'd be back for more. These eight guest suites, dubbed with lunar names—Crescent Moon, Full Moon, Blue Moon—are tucked into the tree-shaded hillsides and are each made of native stone, wood, and adobe to combine the simple elegances of Japanese and Southwestern motifs. Though the suites vary in size and decor, each is furnished with authentic Japanese prints, hand-painted Mexican tiles, natural all-cotton sheets, scented soaps and lotions, mini-refrigerators, coffeemakers, and fireplaces.

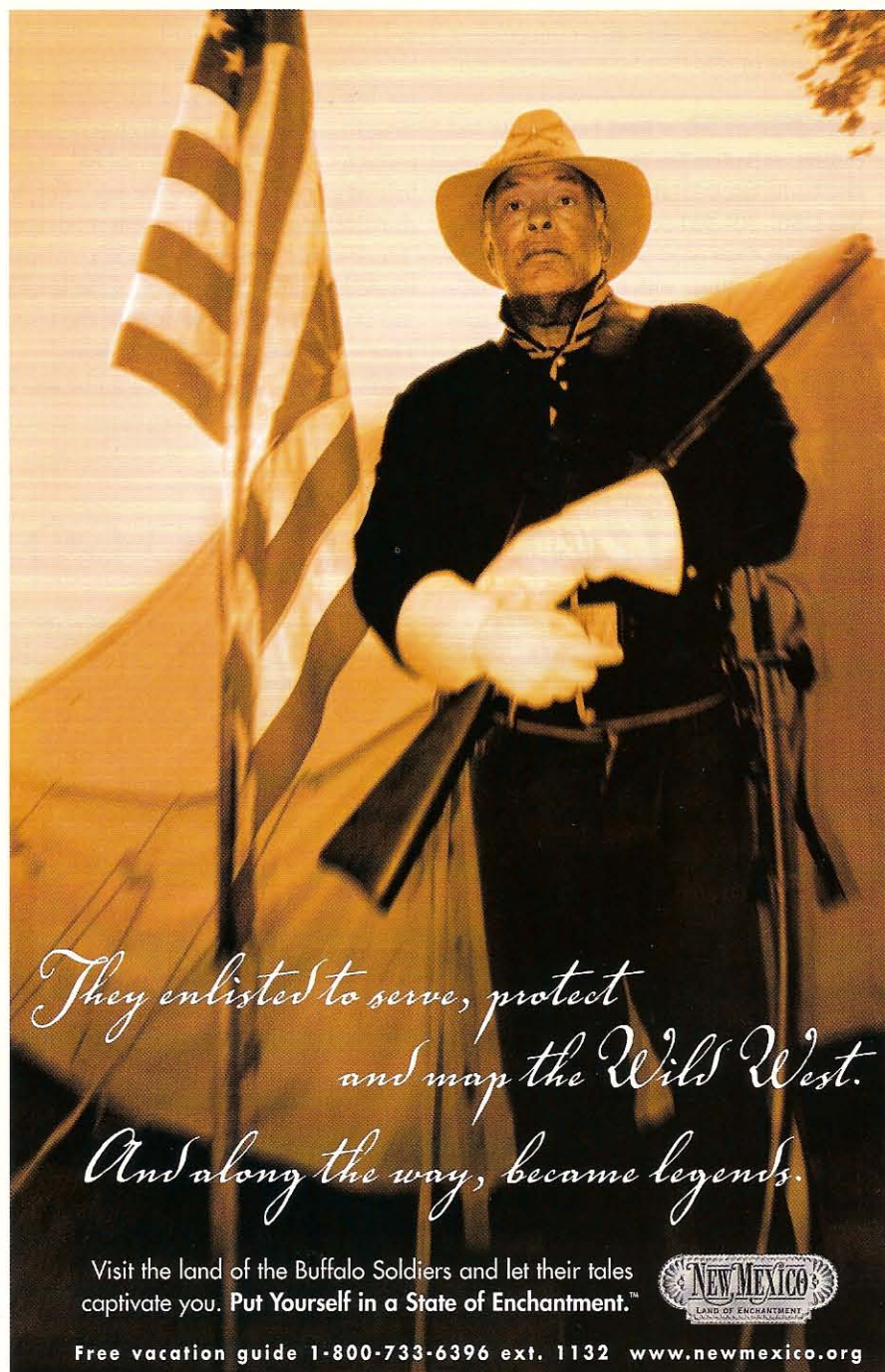
My favorite suite, the Zen-simple but cozy New Moon, is hidden along a serene path through the piñons. I'm delighted with the extra-thick futon spread out on the sleeping platform on the floor, the blue-tiled fireplace, and the private little courtyard. Hindmarch has a soft spot for the New Moon, too. "It's a real fusion of Japanese and Southwestern architecture and deco design,"

he notes, "with lots of luxurious details."

I looked forward to sleeping on the hillside, listening to the crickets during the evening and sipping a pot of green tea in my private courtyard the next morning. But first I needed a long, warm soak, so I put on the kimono and sandals the spa furnishes and strolled over to the tubs, two communal and seven private. Shy types pass over the communal tubs,

which accommodate up to 25 people (one is for women only), and choose instead among the private tubs, each of singular design, which are set in private outdoor settings on cedar decks (don't miss a nighttime soak—the stargazing will bowl you over).

Which is how I found myself in the Imperial Ofuro, one of three "premium" tubs, along with the Ichiban and the



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Waterfall. Enclosed by only two walls, I had a wide panorama of the Sangre de Cristos while I steeped. After my soak I could steam in a private sauna, then sit out on the private porch. The Waterfall tub, modeled on a warm-water spring in the woods, offers a more rustic experience, complete with a small waterfall, while the Ichiban comes with great views—but I was enjoying feeling imperial.

And maybe later I'd try the Japanese Nightingale Facial, but only if the spirit moved me. That, after all, is the guiding principle of this East by Southwest spa.

TRAVELWISE ■ **Best For:** Adults and couples. ■ **Basics:** Ten Thousand Waves Japanese health spa, 3451 Hyde Park Rd., Santa Fe, NM 87501; 505-982-9304; www.tenthousandwaves.com. Eight guest suites, all with gardens or courtyards (three with full kitchen), \$185-255 a night (includes access to communal tubs and sauna). No restaurant on premises, but self-service snack bar.

AMERICANA

Up with Country

The flame of old-time mountain music burns bright—and proud—at the Carter Family Memorial Music Center, in Hiltons, Virginia.

BY KERRI WESTENBERG

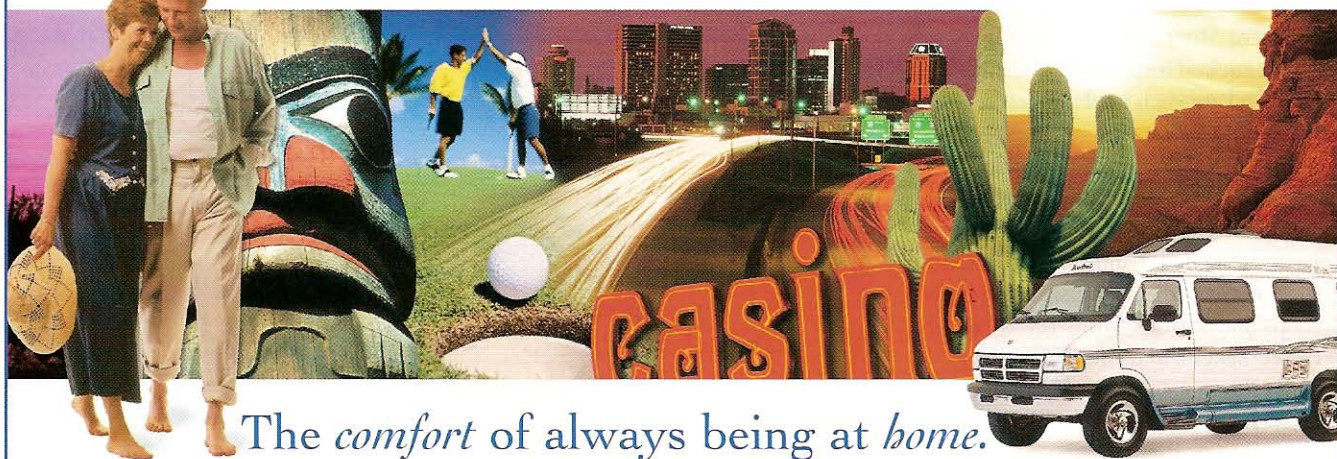
On a dance floor in the mountains of southwest Virginia I'm working my feet like a grape-stomper as I try to keep time with a fast-fiddling bluegrass band. The better dancers near me hold their arms and backs ramrod straight and bounce their feet in dazzling patterns. Fred Skeens, a wrinkled, gray-haired clogger with twice my energy, shuffles my way with succinct advice: "Heel to toe." When I ask my cowboy-booted neighbor for specifics, he laughs and says, "Just tap your toes to the beat. That's how we dance around here."

Mr. Skeens' directions could be more

exact, but adept clogging is a sidelight to the main event at the Carter Family Memorial Music Center, in sleepy little Hiltons, Virginia. That's Carter as in A.P., Sara, and cousin Maybelle, who together made up the Carter Family, "the founding family of country music" as they came to be known. Every Saturday night people make their way to this timbered hall on a remote country road to listen to old-time mountain music, the particular sound of stringed instruments and melodic voices, devoid of keyboards or drums, that got its start on porches throughout the region and became the forerunner of bluegrass and country.

Janette and Joe Carter opened this homespun showcase as a tribute to their parents and aunt, who first recorded lilt-ing ballads about life in the mountains back in 1927; by the 1930s their songs were emanating from radios across the country. Decades later, Joan Baez, Bob Dylan, and Emmylou Harris would be

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