

# NOWHERE

## IN THE FIELD: CAMP ORENDA

by Sarah Coury

It is quiet in the forest. Even footsteps are hushed by thick moss. Through the canopy, long fingers of light slide over knobby roots, petite flowers and unruly ferns on the forest floor. We forget the subtleties of the smell of wildness until we breathe it in again—pine needles, dark soil, living wood, fallen leaves—smells our ancestors knew as home, touchstones of our origin. Past the tree line, a loon call echoes over open water. A trail winds down the mountainside and ends at a cold, deep lake.

This is the Adirondacks, the southern tip of the Precambrian Shield—solid rock that covers much of Canada and Greenland. At a billion years, it's among the oldest in the world. The mile-high dome of the mountain range is still rising a few millimeters every year, an ancient land stirring beneath our feet. David Webb channeled the grief of his brother's passing here—into the transformation of a 40-acre wilderness where, as kids, they ran wild. He then decided to share the place with others, opening it as a nature retreat. Webb named the outpost Camp Orenda, after the Iroquois word for a spiritual force that drives us toward greatness.

Prior to opening Orenda, Webb spent two years roughing it as a guide on the rugged peaks of New Zealand's south island. The experience was still fresh in his mind when he designed his Adirondack haven. If roughing it is one end of the camping spectrum, Webb ultimately decided to take Orenda to the opposite. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, the psychology theory that humans are capable of fully opening ourselves to aesthetic, intellectual, or spiritual experience *only after* the basic needs of food, water, shelter and safety have been met, comes into play here. When the fireflies flash against a blue-tinted evening and old trees sway like sleepy grandmothers, Camp Orenda comes to life, meeting guests' every need and then some.

Smoke rises from the chimneys of Orenda's six canvas cabins nestled into the trees, each custom-built, but all with thick mattresses, fresh linen, and down comforters awaiting the return of tired hikers. There are cedar, open-air hot showers, a bathhouse, and three farm-to-table meals each day cooked over an open fire by Camp Orenda's chef. There are kayaks, canoes, archery, arts and crafts for kids, optional customized itineraries and guided nature hikes. There's even an on-site masseuse and yoga instructor. After all, it may be the wilderness, but it's only a four-hour drive from Manhattan.

There's something to be said for roughing it—heading for the mountains with your tent, sense of direction, change of clothes, and a few packets of noodles in your pack. But we've all had those moments when we just wish the tent would pitch itself, the firewood were already gathered and lit and the noodles cooked (and much tastier)...so we could just lay back and stare at the stars. That's what Camp Orenda is for.