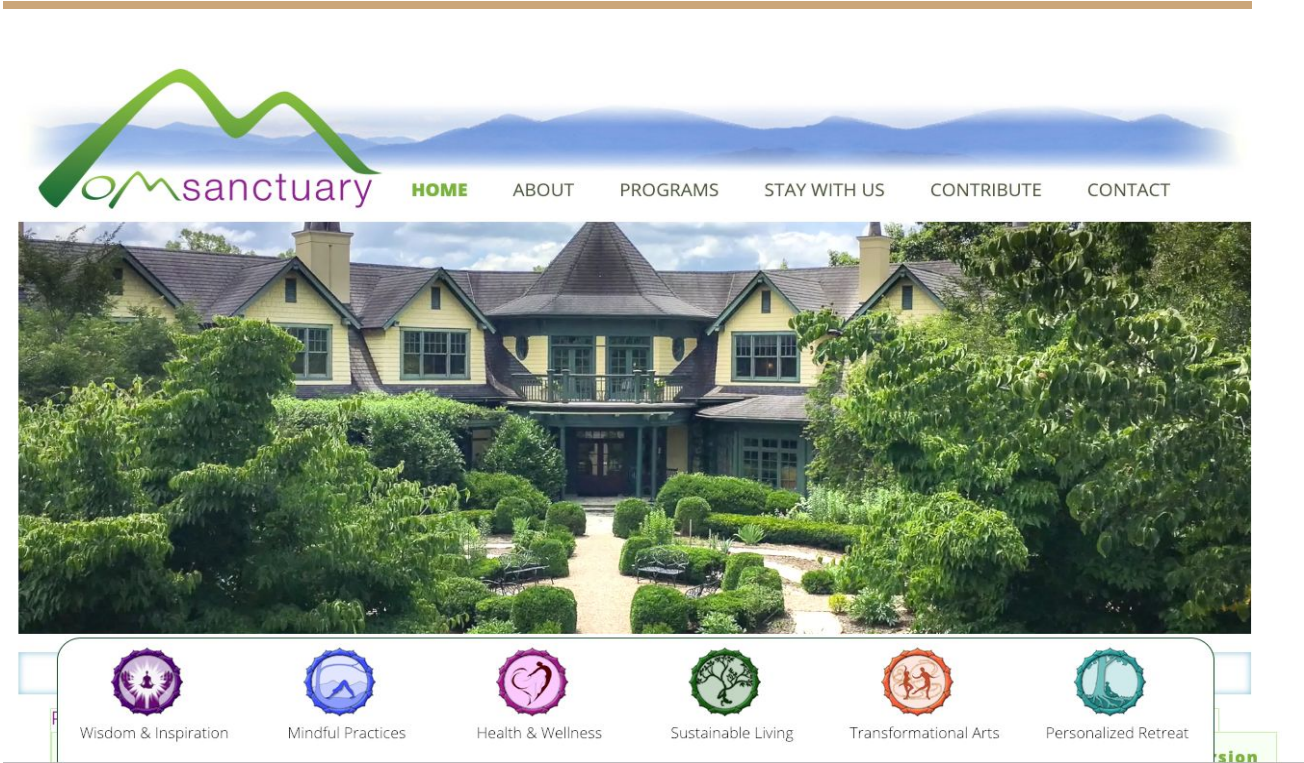


OM Sanctuary website

Findings from usability testing



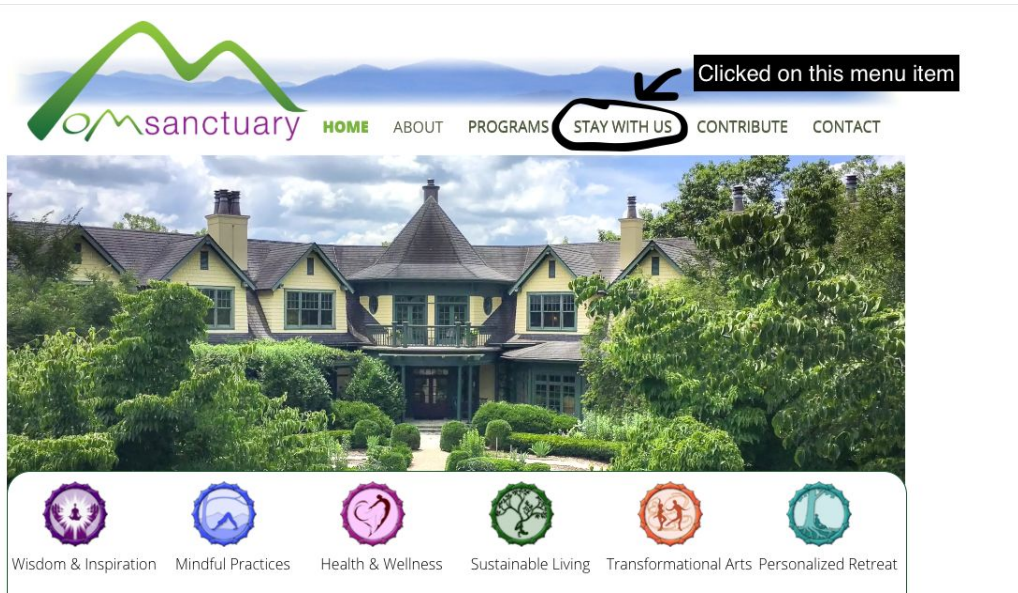
Introduction

The OM Sanctuary is a holistic retreat center located in Asheville, North Carolina. To identify how the organization’s website could be improved to increase usability — and possibly the number of people who end up booking a reservation — I tested the site with two users. I asked them to do three tasks that website visitors might do: 1) book a reservation, 2) find a list of spa service offerings, and 3) find the schedule of yoga and meditation classes.

Insights and recommendations

Insight: Users had trouble figuring out how to book a reservation

The first thing both testers did was click Stay With Us in the main navigation bar:



That takes users to a page that describes all the accommodations, but doesn't allow them to book a reservation:

ACCOMMODATIONS



The OM Sanctuary campus, has (16) elegant sleeping rooms and suites located in the Sanctuary Pavilion with guest reception and a dining hall/program room. It is a short, slightly uphill walk from the pavilion to the Renewal Center program room and Wellness Arts treatment rooms.

Sanctuary Pavilion Accommodations

Many of the pavilion sleeping rooms have fireplaces and all feature private baths and views of the natural-escape. The third floor Sanctuary Pavilion rooms have skylights in the bathrooms.

Garden View and Garden View Veranda Rooms (9): Some of these accommodations offer sleeping rooms with one queen bed and others have two queens. The bathrooms have separate tubs and showers and the third floor Garden View bathrooms have skylights. Each room has a view of the gardens. The second floor Garden View rooms have verandas that step out to the gardens.

Luxury Garden View Rooms (5): These tastefully furnished accommodations are larger than the standard Garden View rooms, have additional windows and either a queen or king bed. Most have bathrooms with a separate tub and shower; one has a Jacuzzi tub and separate shower and another a large double-headed shower without a tub. All feature an additional indoor sitting area.

These look a lot like links, but aren't



When both users got to that page, they said they expected to be able to click on the room types, and book from there, which isn't possible. To actually reserve a room, users have to select Lodging from the Stay With Us dropdown menu, which wasn't immediately clear to either person I tested the site with.

Recommendation: put a button to book a stay front-and-center on the home page

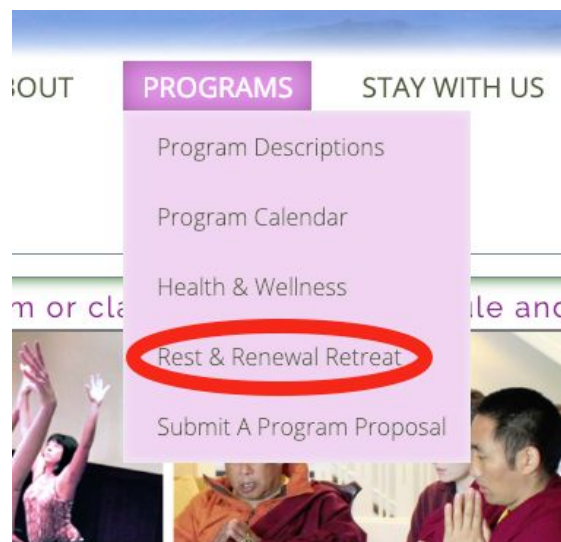
Users wanted to be able to book with one click, and not have to select from a dropdown menu.

Insight: Users had trouble finding a clear path to spa services and weekly class offerings

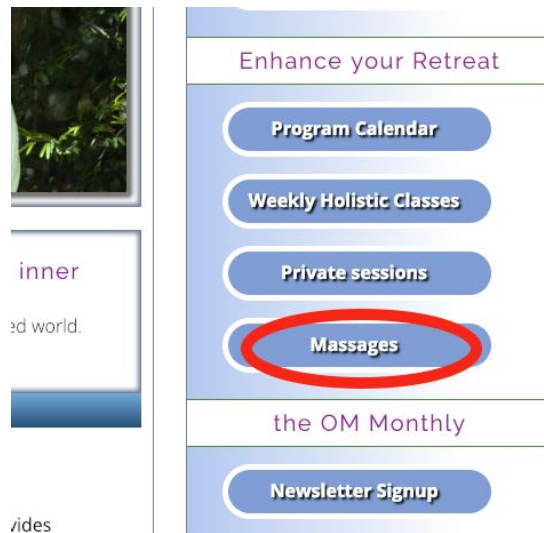
Both users were able to find the weekly class schedule by clicking on the Program Calendar option in the Programs menu, but both said they'd expected it to be called something like, "classes," or "yoga class schedule."

Neither user was able to find information about spa services. Here's the roundabout route that the first tester took:

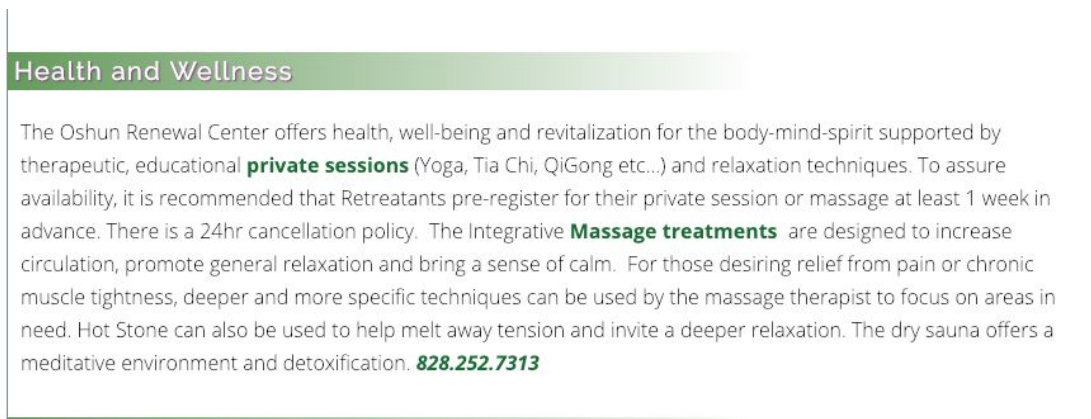
She first clicked on Rest & Renewal Retreat in the Program menu:



She then clicked on Messages in the sidebar menu:



Which took her here:



Clicking on the massage treatments link (in green) didn't lead anywhere, so she got frustrated and abandoned the task.

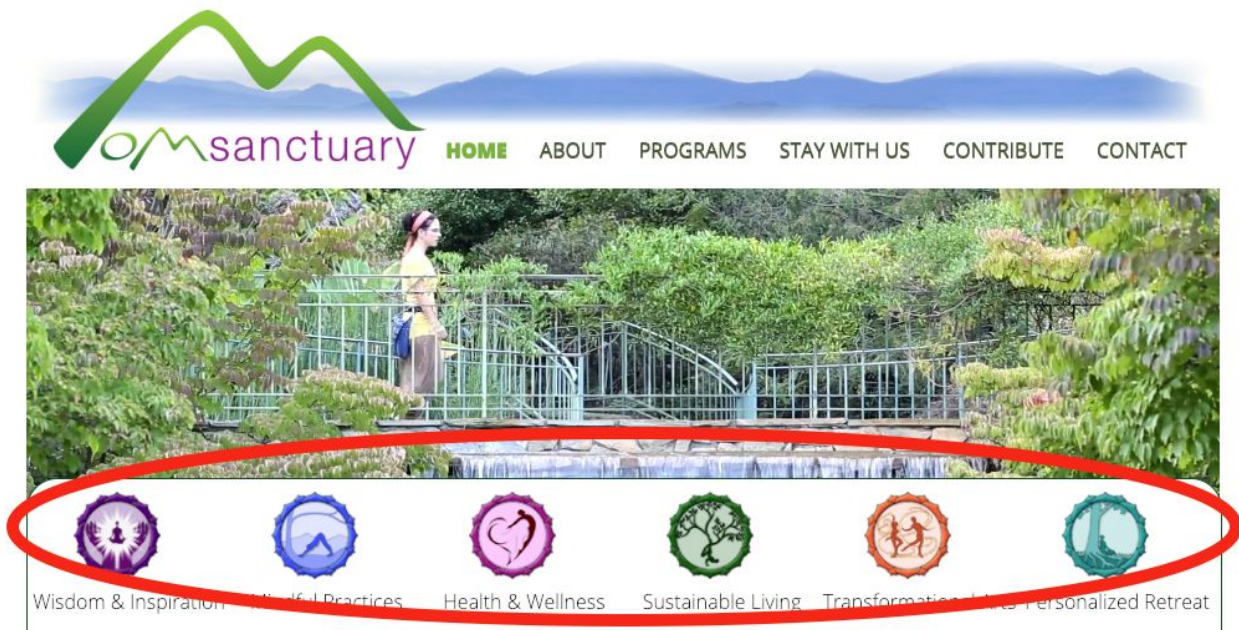
The second tester got frustrated as well, and just did a Google search.

Recommendation: Do further testing to determine expected paths

It was clear that users were confused by some of the menus and menu options, so I'd recommend doing a card sorting exercise to determine what sort of information architecture users want and expect.

Insight: Users found the menu at the bottom obtrusive

This bottom navigation menu that appears (and stays) at the bottom of every page bothered both users. One was using a smaller laptop and it took up about a quarter of the browser height. Both remarked on it a couple times, and wanted the option to minimize or get rid of it.



Recommendation: Remove this menu entirely

These menu options all lead to pages that are either already found in the top navigation menu, or that could be incorporated into those menus. This feature hindered usability without adding value.