

HEALTH FIX

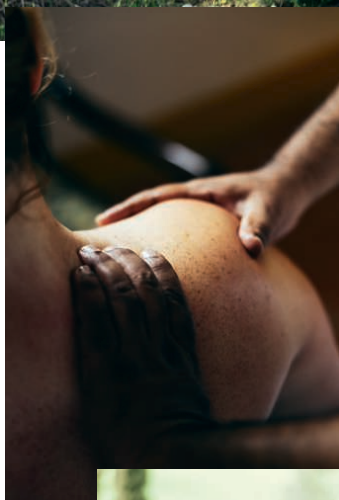
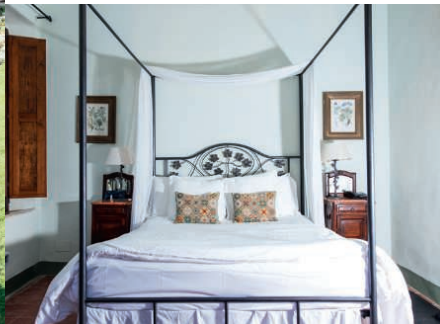
SUBTLE BODIES

AUTHENTIC VERSIONS OF THE AYURVEDIC PANCHAKARMA CLEANSE ARE SPREADING FROM THEIR INDIAN ROOTS AND ROLLING OUT ON EUROPEAN SOIL



PHOTOGRAPH: OLIVER SPIES/BLAUBLUT-EDITION.COM

HEALTH FIX



Clockwise from below: class at Datu Wellness Retreat; massage, pool and bedroom there; Ayurveda Resort Mandira's kitchari, a dhal-like dish; healthy snacks at Datu; Ayurveda Resort Mandira's pond; back to nature; Ayurveda Parkschlösschen. *Previous page:* pure relaxation



ENGEL AYURPURA, ITALY

“Relaaaax! Relaaaaaaax!” intoned Dr Vaidya Swami Nath Mishra hypnotically. He was leading the nightly meditation, for which he suggested lying flat instead of getting backache sitting cross-legged. Then, in the consultation to diagnose my doshas (elements impacting the body and mind), he said: “Everyone is stressed. Everyone does too much. So, have the Ayurvedic treatments. Eat the Ayurvedic meals. Perhaps a short walk. Otherwise, rest. Read. Do nothing. That is vital.” This sanctioned laziness was my idea of heaven. Besides daily yoga at 7.30am and 8.30am, there may have been a Finnish sauna, a simple arts room with paper and pastels, a small library (with most books in German) and weekly cooking classes if I liked, but, otherwise, there was little but the view and a crackling fire to distract me. I visited in winter, when snowfall turned this new glass-walled 15-room mountain spa high in Italy’s Dolomites into something enchanted. The underlit outdoor pool glowed a ghostly turquoise and, across the valley, the densely forested mountainside brooded. Treatment schedules typically occupied an undemanding 90 minutes a day and, with the delicious vegetarian supper starting at 6.30pm, I could be in bed by 8pm. My favourite therapy was the marma treatment: a massage that stimulated energy points. But my biggest Ayurveda inspiration was Engel Ayurpura’s founder, Carmen Kohler – with her perfect skin and hair. I couldn’t believe she was 56 (no tweaks, she swore, but a routine that includes daily early-morning walks). Fifteen years ago, with her cholesterol ominously high, she underwent a panchakarma detox at Somatheeram in Kerala, which cured her. She’s just hired Dr Parth, a practitioner from that clinic, to focus on how Ayurveda can transform mental health. Watch this space. ADRIAANE PIELOU *Healing Holidays can arrange a five-night Ayurveda Fountain of Youth programme from £2,199 per person, including transfers and accommodation; healingholidays.com/condenast*

AYURVEDA RESORT MANDIRA, AUSTRIA

Having always headed to India for panchakarma, it was a surprise to find effective Ayurvedic-style detox in Bad Waltersdorf, a tiny thermal spa hamlet 90 minutes drive from Vienna. Breathing in the meadow-sweet air on the terrace of my chalet, with its amethyst-crystal-themed decor, I was already decompressing. My 60-minute consultation with the medical Ayurveda specialist and owner, Christina Mauracher, included diagnostic pulse reading and a bioresonance scan, which snapshots the organs. She advised a gentle detox. Mauracher’s approach is broadly traditional, but modern

PHOTOGRAPHS: MARCO DIANNI; MICHAEL HUBER; HERBERT LEHMANN; KATHRIN MAKOWSKI/BLAUBLUT-EDITION.COM; HANRU MARAIS



wellness is woven into yogic wisdom by a crack team of Indian and European Ayurvedic and holistic specialists. Jürgen Lassinger offered a wizard-like blend of osteo release and Indian marma moves that melted my frozen shoulder. Dr Alexandra Koller made IV infusions painless, as I lounged in the peaceful Ganesha's Garden, wearing trippy colour-therapy glasses while listening to a mantra by Ayurvedic therapist Sebastian Anish, whose live Vedic chants infused stillness into his massages and yoga sessions. Even Dr Akhil Balachandran's nasal oil baths were peaceful. Detox dining wasn't too spartan: there are guests who don't delve into Ayurveda. Most days I breakfasted on spelt porridge dotted with dates, rose petals, cinnamon and local honey. Golden kitchari and coconut pudding were nectar after a purge day of rice soup. Braving the mixed naked sauna – in a low-lit labyrinth of heat, salt, cool, steam and thermal pools – raised my body confidence. Private shamanic meditations with a visiting practitioner, the agelessly glowing actress Gabrielle Scharnitzky, lightened my emotional baggage, and Malini Häuslmeier, a psychotherapist and Ayurvedic doctor, gave me a new, quasi-cosmic perspective on nutrition. I left with my Agni (metabolic health) reignited after only six days – and with no jet lag to contend with. CATHERINE TURNER *Healing Holidays can arrange a seven-night Light Spiritual Detox programme from £2,299 per person, including transfers and accommodation; healingholidays.com/condenast*

AYURVEDA PARKSCHLÖSSCHEN, GERMANY

In Germany's leafy Rhineland-Palatinate region, Ayurveda Parkschlösschen – created by the late entrepreneur and Ayurveda enthusiast Wolfgang Preuss in 1993, and still run by his family – is the most well-established European wellness institution for tailor-made panchakarma detoxes. Still recovering from a nasty chest infection, I wanted to strengthen my immune system and regain energy, so opted for the gentler Anti-Stress programme. After a consultation and pulse taking, which diagnosed my doshas, a plan was shaped, based on a finely tuned combination of traditional Ayurvedic treatments and cleansing preparations, including enemas and oil-based massages. I became more physically aware as I edged away from distractions to concentrate on being present. Parkschlösschen exudes ease and calm. Its interiors are stripped back, with a focus on small creature comforts such as fresh flowers on the tables, flasks filled with herbal teas and hot-water bottles underfoot during massages. The view from the rooms is of a magnificent sequoia beside a stream. Like chi in ➤





Clockwise from below:
 Datu oil massage;
 courgette vegetable bowl
 at Engel Ayurpura;
 washing the stress away;
 suite at Engel Ayurpura;
 pool area there



Chinese philosophy, flowing movement is valued in Ayurveda. As the days passed, so did the sloughing off of my self-neglect. During daily four-handed massages, lavish amounts of herbal oils were applied to release tension, stimulating detoxification. I felt them working deep in my tissues. Countless gentle gestures and the attentive care of the therapists brought immense healing. When I left, I retained an understanding of how to sustain balance, as well as strengthened pulses and the impetus to eat more consciously and slow my frenetic lifestyle. SARAH SIESE *Healing Holidays can arrange a six-night Ayurveda Regeneration programme from £2,899 per person, including transfers and accommodation; healingholidays.com/condenast*

DATU WELLNESS RETREAT, ITALY

Not being a big one for self-care, I arrived at Datu – a Renaissance-pretty hilltop borgo near Siena – full of uncertainty. But, ground down by work and drained of hope, I felt in need of the transformative benefits of ancient Eastern wisdom bestowed by some of India’s leading practitioners of Ayurveda, yoga and Tibetan Sowa Rigpa – but in Europe. My co-guests were international retreat folk clad in energetically positive white kurta pyjamas and ponchos. Some were there to grow; others to heal. We would all be bound together by our encounter in this safe haven. We plunged into a busy timetable, which, as well as nourishing Ayurvedic meals, included chanting, pranayama breathing, yoga, sound healing therapy, tratak candle meditation and sun salutations, all unfurling across the garden, cave and piano room, or around the fireplace. Consultations with holistic doctors and practitioners with more than 40 years of experience peppered the days. The impressive treatments included myotherapy (body work that focuses on soft tissue and joints), chi-enhancing acupuncture, cupping and oil massages. During myotherapy with Vlad Mizikov, my long-standing body and health issues were identified at a glance, then a session of deep-tissue bodywork released toxins and tension I didn’t think possible. Therapists also focused on the energetic lines of the body with cranial work, shiatsu, reflexology and reiki. Deep gratitude followed the expletives. I swerved yoga nidra for days, believing it to be exercise, before discovering it was a meditation with a focus on relaxing every part of the body, and it left me with a feeling of profound rest. I departed with a sense of harmony and freshness, my energy realigned, my channels unblocked. MARTHA WARD *From £1,850 per person for a seven-night retreat; datuwellness.com*

PHOTOGRAPHS: FLORIAN ANDERGASSEN/ENGEL AYURPURA; HANRU MARAIS; TIBERIO SORVILLO/ENGEL AYURPURA; KARINA TWISS/TRUNK ARCHIVE