

Robb Report INDIA

Inside Ananda in the Himalayas: A Five-Day Journey Through Stress Management and Healing

The stress-management programme at Ananda in the Himalayas is a way for those living life in the fast lane to slow down.



Yoga and meditation are one of the five key pillars of Ananda's integrated wellness programmes.

I am at Ananda in the Himalayas for a comprehensive five-day Stress Management programme. About a 50-minute drive from Dehradun airport, the destination spa is spread across 100 acres of the former palace estate of the Maharaja of Tehri-Garhwal. Only a small percentage of the estate has been converted into one of the world's finest centres for Ayurveda and holistic wellbeing. The rest of the property is covered in greenery with sal, cedar, and pine trees.

It's a relief to be far removed from the toxic smog of Delhi and to ensconce myself in the comfort of nature. The Himadri suite, located on the third floor of the guest wing of the 75-key property, is my home for the duration of my stay. My balcony overlooks the lush city of Rishikesh.



The wellness retreat is located in the former palace estate of the Maharaja of Tehri-Garhwal.

Image courtesy: Ananda

My mission is clear: de-stress, de-compress, to not overthink, and soak up some much needed “me-time”. Ananda believes in Ayurveda-forward practices and my first appointment is with Dr Sreelal Sankar, the head of Ayurveda at Ananda. After a quick de-briefing session, he promptly diagnoses my dosha as vata-pitta. The meal plan during my stay is devised according to my dominant dosha: vata. After all, “treatment is like food for the body,” he says with a smile. The objective is to enable every guest with “the ability to bounce back”



The restaurant serves global cuisine based around Ayurvedic principles.

Image courtesy: Ananda

Nestled in the Himalayas, Ananda's integrated wellness facets are determined by five pillars: holistic therapy, healthy cuisine, yoga and meditation, emotional healing, and spiritual awareness. The emphasis is given to how you feel.

My meals are made of ingredients that align with my constitution. I particularly enjoy the roasted pumpkin with cannellini cr me, leafy greens, pepitas with maple vinaigrette, carrot potato and puy lentil bake, the thali of okra, yellow mung dal with kalonji khamiri roti, and the saffron oatmeal I am served at breakfast. It's light but filling. And I'm served a sugar-free dessert on special request. I am a happy soul.

I am also prescribed a schedule encompassing physical and mental wellbeing. With over 80 variations of massages available at Ananda, each guest is recommended treatments that will be most beneficial for them.



Ananda's wellness offerings include acupuncture, cupping, and moxibustion; herb-infused sesame oil is used in Abhyanga, also known as the "four-handed massage."

Image courtesy: Ananda

Over the next few days, I am in and out of treatment rooms: 75 minutes of grounding aromatherapy to de-stress.

My therapist kneads the knots in my shoulders until they loosen. The Ananda Touch, a 30-minute neck and back massage, helps with a gnawing headache; and the traditional ayurvedic massage, the Abhyanga, also known as the “fourhanded massage”, uses herb-infused sesame oil that helps me rejuvenate. In Shirodhara, lukewarm herbal oil is poured in a steady stream on my forehead to pacify the doshas and release muscle tension. But the stand-out for me is the Tibetan Kyu Ne Massage where hot Himalayan crystal salt poultices and stones are used to restore the body and stimulate energy glow; my otherwise tight shoulder knots give in. The massage therapist is swift and understands the pressure points to ease my pain.

Along with massages, I am also directed to the Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) expert Dr. Jitendra Uniyal. A local of Rishikesh, Dr Uniyal has studied Traditional Chinese Medicine in Beijing. He counts the pulse of both my hands and informs me that my constitution is yang, but my ying has an imbalance. Diagnosed with low lung energy, the treatment begins with cupping to boost the lungs, acupuncture to maintain the flow of energy, and moxibustion to improve the spleen energy and balance serotonin levels. I come out feeling lighter.



Meals are specially tailored to meet individual requirements.

Image courtesy: Ananda

On my last day here, I have an emotional healing therapy with Shikha Sud, a transpersonal healer. A former advertising professional, Sud switched course to study at The Hypnotherapy School of India and has been practising since 2013.

Those 90 minutes (which seemed eternal!) help me out of a spiral of chasing stress. I round off my stay with an Amethyst Rejuvenation facial that uses an amethyst crystal web mast to provide a healing facial. I am nimbler, I feel radiant, and also like I can take a pause with my thoughts.

Ananda in the Himalayas has the power to transform. The spiritual energy here (Indian saint Ma Anandamayi is said to have visited the family often and even had her own room in a corner of the terrace of the Viceregal terrace) is palpable, if you allow yourself to connect. It's the antithesis of stress and drama, and a place where one can find oneself.

Ananda's Stress Management programmes start from C5.25 lakh onwards for one person.