



Rejuvenating body and spirit

The second part of our journey was some much-needed respite at an Ayurvedic retreat located in Kerala – south-western India. Any preconceptions about what India would look like, was quickly a mute subject. This picture postcard retreat was a lush green, tropical haven that became our home for a few days. Our Perth-born host, Julie Baker, from Journeys of the Spirit, joined us on this journey of discovery, making our stay even more enjoyable.

What is Ayurvedic medicine?

Ayurveda is an ancient science of life, said to be more than 5000 years old. The words 'Ayur' meaning life and 'Veda' the science of knowledge. This form of alternative medicine is even older than Chinese medicine.

Ayurvedic medicine is not just about medicine but about a life philosophy to live by through knowledge and wellbeing. It is a firm life belief handed down through generations to allow each individual to find balance and harmony from within, in order to prolong life.

Our Ayurvedic retreat

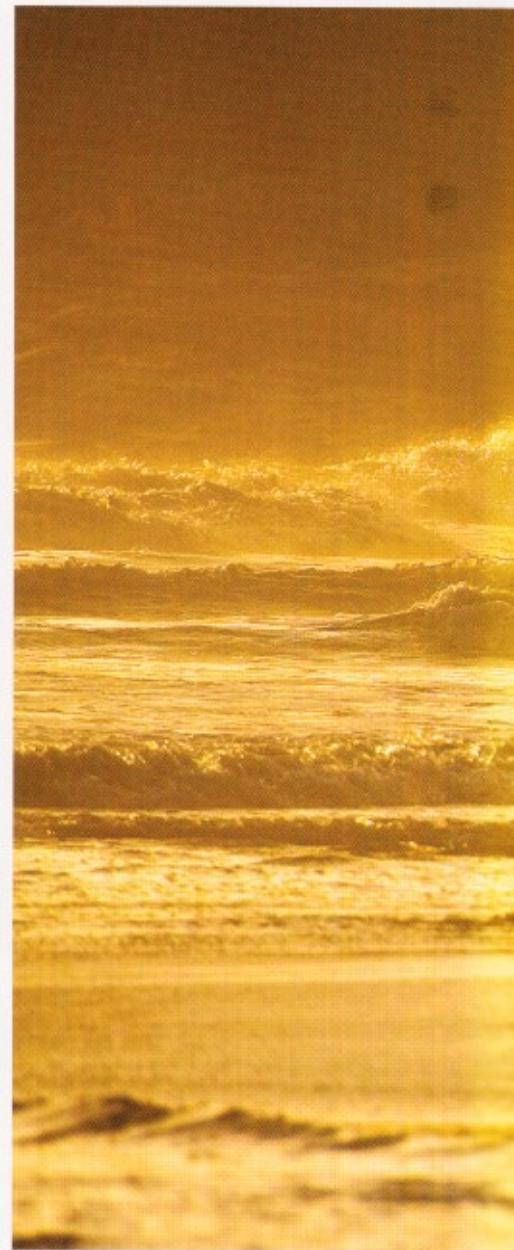
On arrival, we consulted with two Ayurvedic practitioners so they could listen and understand our medical details and also facts about our

lifestyles and wellbeing. The first step of the treatment was to determine the "doshas" or type for each guest. Doshas are broken into three main principles – Vatha, Pitha and Kapha or you could be a combination of these. Once identified (by the doctor), a treatment strategy and individual daily program were devised.

All about the food

The principal of Ayurvedic medicine is to heal from the inside out, through a combination of food, herbal medicines, exercise, meditation and massage. With this in mind, the buffet for breakfast, lunch and dinner was broken into individually marked "doshas" to identify what specific food was best for you to eat. The menu was mostly vegetarian and used the freshest of ingredients, grown on the property.

It goes without saying that no alcohol or caffeine is allowed at the retreat, however you really don't miss it – honestly! Herbal teas and Ayurvedic coffee together with freshly squeezed juices ensure you feel as though you aren't missing anything. My favourite was the pomegranate juice.



The body should be healed from within, so a combination of the freshest of food (mostly vegetarian), ingestion of herbal medicines and daily exercise (yoga or meditation) and daily massage treatments are done to achieve this.

Massage time

This was a deeply personal experience for anyone, so it is probably best left well alone, for you to discover for yourself. Although this experience might be initially a little confronting (depending on the individual), the benefits of massage have me hooked. The beautiful and quietly spoken masseur and her assistant were so respectful in their approach that you felt humbled by the experience.

Massage treatments using herbs (to aid the detox process) last for around two hours each day. Afterwards you are served a warm herbal tea and

encouraged to drink a lot of water for the rest of the day. Resting a little while, you then move to relax in your personal hammock located outside your bungalow.

At the end of just three days, you visibly notice how your skin is glowing with good health and you are feeling energised.

Accommodation at the retreat was bungalow style and although it wasn't luxurious, it was very clean, cool and private. Our bungalows were perched up high, overlooking the Arabian Sea, just a short sprint down a few steps. At night the rolling waves lull you to sleep and in the morning you awaken to the

sounds of fishermen returning from the night catch. As Kerala is known as the Ayurvedic area there are many different retreats. However there is a broad variations in the level of service at each retreat. For this reason, I would recommend booking through Julie Baker's company, Journeys of the Spirit tours, as she has more than 30 years travel experience and has travelled to Kerala many times. Julie's expertise is invaluable, as she understands the routine and procedures of the retreat.

+ For more information phone Julie on 0427 766 716 or visit www.journeysofthespirit.com.au Alison Clarke was a guest of Singapore Airlines and The Singapore Tourist Board.

Singapore Airlines operate Double Indulgence packages for multiple Asian destinations, visit www.singaporeair.com for more information.

Top left, bungalow style accommodation was clean and comfortable; meals are vegetarian, using the freshest ingredients that are grown at the retreat. Right, the retreat masseurs liaise with doctors for daily massage treatments. A local dresses in costume for a harvest festival.

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