



Head to Nirvana at Bangkok's S Medical Spa

The World's Best Prescriptive Spas

Need to align your chakras? Cleanse your liver? Quit smoking? Welcome to sanctuary tourism where life-changing treatments and therapies guarantee to create a brand new you. By Judy Chapman

One are the days when beach lounges and cocktails defined a relaxing vacation. With holistic health now high on our radars, every guest in a five-star resort demands a yoga mat in their room and organic ingredients on the menu. After all, if you're on a vacation, why not depart from the destination in better condition than when you arrived?

We want boot camp, hardcore detox, healthy food and the best diagnostic therapies as part of our holiday package. Not only do we wish to improve our wellbeing, but we want to take it to the next level.

Feeling off-track? Book into a retreat where you can connect with your deeper self. Are you fatigued and emotional? Would you like to slim down, improve your digestive system, deal with allergies, and refresh yourself all together again? Do it differently at these retreats.

ALL-OVER WELLNESS

Santé Winelands Hotel & Wellness Centre, near Cape Town, South Africa

Check in for A trim and fit adventure.

The crowd Business executives, international

travellers and experienced spa goers. Where else in the world can you stay in five-star luxury and detox, get fit and lose weight alongside mountain biking, fly fishing and canoeing on 160sqm estates in the heart of the South African Winelands?

Philosophy Personal attention, customised programmes and effective treatments geared to improve one's lifestyle and wellbeing.

Diagnostic therapies The 3,000sqm Wellness Centre is where you take medical and nutritional consultations, fitness tests and laboratory tests for anti-ageing and hormone profiles.

A typical day Begins at 7am with a drink of hot water and lemon, a walk through the vineyards, fitness and personal training and treatments. For the anti-ageing programmes, diagnostic blood tests, hormone profiles and anti-ageing screen tests are performed.

Benefits Detox, weight loss, quit smoking, anti-ageing and stress reduction. Helps deal with health problems like arthritis and diabetes.

Programmes Weight loss, detox, the grape diet and vinotherapy, anti-ageing with diagnostic tests and therapies, corporate wellness and executive health, and Fit for Golf.

Treatments & therapies Chakra-balancing

rainbow hydrotherapy, vinotherapy and Affrostone massage; yoga and *tai chi* as well as optional non-surgical procedures like Botox.

Food Organic gourmet.

Accommodation Five-star spa suites and manor rooms. There are 15 villas with individual vineyards and swimming pools.

Wow factor Must-tries are the Chardonnay cocoon wrap and Cabernet Sauvignon bath.

www.santewellness.co.za

AYURVEDA

Somatheeram Ayurvedic Beach Resort, Kerala, India

Check in for To re-balance your dosha; if you want to learn how to take better care of your health and find some peace within.

The crowd Celebrities such as Christy Turlington and Madonna use Ayurveda to empower their lives. Medical doctors worldwide travel to Somatheeram to learn how to integrate Ayurveda philosophy into their own practices.

Philosophy Ayurveda is considered one of the world's oldest medical systems. Through food, treatments, herbal medicines and exercise, one's being is returned to balance. Treats

diseases such as paralysis, obesity, nervous disorders, sexual dysfunction, mental and physical disorders, skin problems and certain rheumatic ailments.

Diagnostic therapies The team of doctors spends up to two hours thoroughly diagnosing your body, including pulse and body checking, iridology, and blood and stool testing.

A typical day Yoga classes begin at 7am, followed by treatments and appointments with the physicians.

Benefits Panchakrama is a 28-day intense detoxification and rejuvenation programme where herbal medicines and drinks are taken alongside treatments such as sweat detoxing and healing baths.

Programmes Seven- to 14-day packages for stress management, body purification, rejuvenation therapy, slimming and beauty. The 28 Body Immunization programme helps reverse the ageing process and is recommended to those aged below 60.

Treatments & therapies Immerse in oil head massages, herbal face packs and medicated baths to name a few, apart from tailor-made treatments prescribed by the physicians.

Food Custom-designed with herbs and supplements to complement.

Accommodation There is accommodation for all styles and budgets — from traditional wooden houses to bungalows and cottages.

Wow factor Somatheeram has recently opened its second property, Manaltheeram, also in Kerala.

www.somatheeram.com

The Ashram in the US and Spain

Check in for Hardcore bootcamp.

The crowd Lots of celebrities love it here. Ideal for those who like a physical challenge.

Philosophy To get people to reconnect with themselves. The Ashram started 30 years ago and people who have undergone its programme have called it many things except easy.

Diagnostic therapies None, although a phone interview is conducted beforehand to ascertain if guests are truly willing to succumb to this — there's no sitting by the pool here.

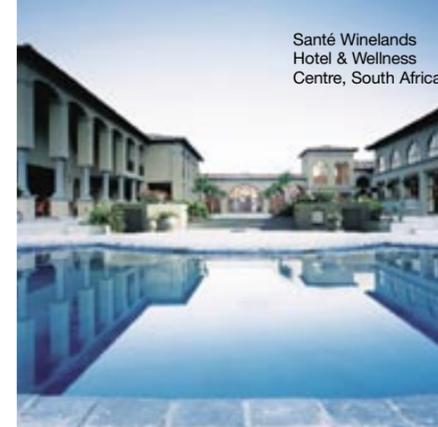
A typical day Rise at 6am for one and a half hours of yoga and daily hikes that build up to around five to six such treks over the week. Water aerobics, weight loss exercises, Pilates and cardio-barree make up the afternoon schedule. Pass out after dinner.

Benefits Weight loss, getting into shape and finding how far your fitness limits go.

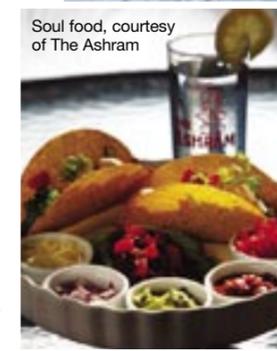
Programmes Weekly schedule — arrive Sunday and depart the following Saturday.

Therapies & treatments There is only time for one massage per day — if you're lucky.

Food Organic Vegan.



Santé Winelands Hotel & Wellness Centre, South Africa



Soul food, courtesy of The Ashram



The Spa Resorts Thailand, Koh Samui



In the comfort of the Gwinganna, Queensland. Below: Gwinganna's fitness and spa offerings, and serene surroundings



Accommodation Double and private rooms.

Wow factor The Ashram also runs the same retreat in Mallorca, Spain. Both are booked out a year in advance.

Tel: +818 222 6900; **e-mail:** theashram@theashram.com

DETOX

The Spa Resorts Thailand (previously known as Spa Samui), Koh Samui

Check in for If you are feeling sluggish, lacking mental clarity and looking for an affordable retreat with superlative reputation.

The crowd Health fanatics, yoga teachers and Hong Kong expatriates.

Philosophy To provide the best place with the best results. This is no pampering resort but one with a down-to-earth approach.

Diagnostic therapies None.

A typical day First detox drink served at 7am, followed by the first of twice-daily colon cleansers, juices and treatments.

Benefits Improves the digestive system and cleanses the liver. The basis for doing the cleanse is that most diseases start in the colon.

Programmes Select from The Spa Resorts' week-long "clean me out", liver flush and a semi-fast programme.

Treatments & therapies Herbal steam rooms, massage, chiropractor, cranial sacral therapy, hypnotherapy, *tai chi* and cooking classes.

Food Organic vegetarian with supplements and herbs.

Accommodation There are two properties on Koh Samui — beach and jungle locations with various priced bungalows and villas.

Wow factor Another property on Koh Chang opened in May.

Tel: +66 7723 0976; **e-mail:** thespa@spa.samui.com

HOLISTIC

Gwinganna Lifestyle Retreat, Queensland, Australia

Check in for To find your inner self.

The crowd Australia's newest retreat destination attracts a clientele who wants to be in a pristine environment while they improve their wellbeing. Celebrities including fashion designer Peter Morrissey have already ventured here.

Philosophy The country's only 100 per cent organic health retreat and spa.

Diagnostic therapies Blood test for liver function and mineral content. Vitality, longevity and anti-ageing assessments as well as cardiorespiratory fitness tests.

A typical day Each retreat is different but usually integrates wellness consultations with *qi gong*, hikes, treatments and meditation.

Benefits Detoxification, learning to cope with stress and taking your fitness to the next level as well as spiritual development.

Programmes Alongside the seven-day Raw Food Detox, there are other customised-length lifestyle retreats.

Treatments & therapies Gwinganna offers the best of east and west treatments. Certified organic skincare specialists, Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) practitioners, nutritionists, naturopaths and counsellors alongside activities such as abseiling, hiking and cycling.

Food Certified organic.

Accommodation Lovely heritage houses and suites made from recycled timber, set on more than 400sqm of land.

Wow factor Environmentally friendly. www.gwinganna.com



The Kamalaya, Koh Samui

LIFE ENHANCEMENT

Kamalaya Wellness Sanctuary, Koh Samui, Thailand

Check in for Longevity and better quality of life.

The crowd Visiting masters include renowned Tibetan Buddhist meditation teacher Tsoknyi Rinpoche.

Philosophy Self-discovery is the essence of Kamalaya. Through the exploration of diverse healing, cultural and spiritual traditions, wellness can be achieved and sustained.

Diagnostic therapies Medical, naturopathic, TCM and holistic consultations. Each programme starts with a wellness consultation and preliminary diagnostic testing. Guests may opt for more comprehensive diagnostic therapies such as Bio-resonance and standard blood and urine analysis. Ultrasound and x-rays are available.

A typical day Rise at 6.30am for a gentle breath and sound meditation. Kamalaya's Vital Energy practice classes follow with yoga, *tai chi* or *qi gong* and an invigorating morning hike.

Benefits Quit smoking, weight loss, improved fitness, reduced stress and burnout, emotional and psychological balancing, help deal with changes such as loss of job or marriage, restore joy and tranquillity. The detox programme promises improvement in organ function, cellular detoxification and with allergies, weight issues, slow metabolism, liver imbalance and intestinal inflammation.

Programmes Detoxification and Life Enhancement programmes.

Treatments & therapies Modalities include Ayurveda, TCM, naturopathic medicine and holistic therapies. Treatments include acupuncture with facial rejuvenation, Biograph Energy Assessment, colon hydrotherapy with ozone, homeopathy, Flower Remedies and Infrared Sauna. Vital Energy practices include Pranayama, Pilates and Sound Yoga.



Suite, S Medical Spa



Rock tai chi at Kamalaya

Minimalist chic at S Medical Spa



Archery at The Osho, India



The Farm in the Philippines

Food Dietary guidelines are strict here and tailored to each individual's constitution and their goals. Includes naturopathic herbs, traditional Thai herbs, nutraceuticals, homeopathic formulas and Chinese herbs.

Accommodation Villas and suites vary in style and cost.

Wow factor Visiting masters. In April 2006, there was Duncan Campbell's "The Art of Dialogue" retreat where he talked about subjects that deeply affect our individual lives. www.kamalaya.com

LONGEVITY

Sanoviv Medical Institute, Baja, Mexico

Check in for Cutting-edge diagnostics.

The crowd Susie Ellis, president of *Spa Finder Inc.*, believes that Sanoviv is the model healing centre for the future.

Philosophy With no prejudice against either medical or alternative healing methods, Sanoviv marries both in the best mind-body balance treatments.

Diagnostic therapies There are more than 20 diagnostic techniques to determine one's state of health and predict what the future holds.

A typical day Depending on your condition. Each day your personal medical doctor, dentist and psychologist meet with a team of experts to discuss your case in detail.

Benefits Prevention and cure of degenerative diseases such as heart disease, multiple sclerosis, Parkinson's disease, Alzheimer's, arthritis, obesity and diabetes as well as various types of cancer.

Programmes There are five-day diagnostic programmes and one- to two-weeks' intensive detoxification and regeneration programmes available. Whatever your choice, expect life-changing results.

Treatments & therapies Overlooking the Pacific Ocean is the stunning European-style spa. On the menu are massage, bodywork, stress management and mercury-free dentistry.

Food Organic gourmet.

Accommodation Described as the world's most beautiful and most advanced medical facility, this is the Ritz-Carlton of hospitals.

Wow factor "I loved the triple filtered swimming pools which I could enjoy without needing to smell like, or sit in, chlorinated water," says Ellis. www.sanoviv.com

SPIRITUAL HEALING

The Osho International Meditation Resort, Pune, India

Check in for Inner peace and stability.

The crowd Its quiet, passive methods

and techniques attract people of all ages and genders.

Philosophy No proclamations of vision statements here. Instead, an Osho retreat is a joyous, vibrant energy field where people can unwind and drop their masks.

Diagnostic therapies None.

A typical day Dynamic meditation begins at 7am, and throughout the day, there are a variety of active or passive meditations to partake in, plus residential workshops that include dancing and emotional releasing exercises.

Benefits A beautiful setting that is mind-paradigm shifting.

Programmes Life-changing retreats. This is deep stuff that may involve screaming, pillow bashing and group sharing as part of the cleansing process.

Treatments & therapies East and west therapies, esoteric sciences, mind-body therapies, martial arts, Tantra and Sufism.

Food Organic vegetarian.

Accommodation There are dozens of guesthouses surrounding the ashram, but if it's luxury you desire, then check into the stunning Osho Guesthouse.

Wow factor The world's largest centre for meditation and personal growth, and possibly most beautiful new-age destination. www.osho.com

S Medical Spa, Bangkok, Thailand

Check in for First-class pampering.

The crowd First Ladies and Asian celebrities.

Philosophy Rejuvenation through integrated health care. This is a one-stop shop that provides beauty and health services with the latest in medical hi-tech know-how set in a luxurious spa environment.

Diagnostic therapies Physical assessment, blood analysis, mammogram, bone scan, ultrasound, and mind and energy analysis.

A typical day None.

Benefits Detox, weight management and anti-ageing.

Programmes Its six main types of services (spa and relaxation, vitality, beauty, figure, holistic and purification) include weight management, nutritional and personal trainer programmes, mesotherapy, Botox, hormone replacement therapy, stress management, colon hydrotherapy and lymphatic drainage massage.

Treatments & therapies There are 15 physicians specialising in dermatology, anti-ageing, gynaecology, psychiatry, rehabilitation and holistic health, apart from a support staff of nurses, nutritionists and physical therapists. Treatments include Thai massage, colon hydrotherapy, Botox and laser work. There's also a gymnasium and indoor pool.

Food Light meal/low carb/no sugar/no dairy.



Auditorium, The Osho

Accommodation It occupies 2,700sqm with suites that come with a personal care attendant and therapist and room service.

Wow factor Interiors by a New York design team. Currently considered one of Thailand's best medical spas. www.smedspa.com

SILENT WORKOUT

Vipassana Retreat (worldwide)

Check in for Peace and reconciliation.

The crowd People who are looking for a deeper spiritual experience. Singaporean Gek Tiang Yeo, who attended the course last year, reports that Vipassana teaches one how to free the mind of tensions and negative thoughts and feelings.

Philosophy It's a self-exploration course where you are given a meditation technique that you can practise at home.

Diagnostic therapies None.

A typical day It is rigorous and can be tough! Rise at 4am and the day includes up to eight hours of meditation — all shrouded in complete silence and stillness. A discourse is held every evening. Lights out at 9.30pm.

Benefits Calming the mind, creating inner peace and contentment. Vipassana teaches one how to deal with emotional reactions.

Programme The standard course lasts 10 days and there is a further, annual 10-day course for advanced students.

Treatments & therapies Re-balancing through meditation.

Food Vegetarian.

Accommodation Dormitory-style, but varies from centre to centre.

Wow factor There are no fixed charges. These retreats run entirely on donations.

www.dhamma.org

FOOD GOODNESS

The Farm, San Benito, the Philippines

Check in for A full detox.

The crowd Local and foreign celebrities (including Woody Harrelson and raw food guru David Wolfe) and government officials.

Philosophy An internationally renowned medical and holistic retreat based on the Hippocrates philosophy of "Let food be your medicine, medicine be your food".

Diagnostic therapies Live blood cell analysis, blood chemistry study, body resonance imaging, ultrasound and psycho-emotional diagnostic techniques.

A typical day The detox package includes colon therapy, juice fast, living food (raw food) cuisine with massages, meditation and yoga.

Benefits Advance detection of illness, and prevention and cure of acute or chronic degenerative diseases. Nutritional therapy for cancer and other immune diseases, digestive and endocrine problems, chronic insomnia and fatigue, hypertension and respiratory disorder.

Programmes Five, seven, 14 and 21 days of medical detoxification and wellness.

Therapies & treatments Colon hydrotherapy; life-coaching sessions; massage, ionizing meridian and craniosacral therapies; organ compresses; kidney, liver and gall bladder cleansing; and plant-based supplements.

Food Organic vegan, vegetarian.

Accommodation 25 tastefully designed rooms equipped with air-conditioning and full bathroom facilities to suit all budgets and styles.

Wow factor The divine signature Hilot massage where you are lathered in organic nourishing coconut oil and wrapped in banana leaves.

www.thefarm.com.ph ■