



## ABSOLUTE SANCTUARY

KOH SAMUI, THAILAND

WEIGHT  
LOSS

### CORE-SHAKING EXERCISE WITH A CURATIVE ETHOS

It speaks volumes that this old favourite should reappear in these pages year after year, along with its devotees who return like nesting turtles to familiar territory for their annual reboot. But a first-timer shown to their room – a homage to Morocco with its Moorish arches and tadelakt walls – might wonder why it has not had a rejuvenation of its own. If high-end aesthetics are paramount to you, this is probably not the place to stay, though a mini refurb this coming year should make things more neutral and muted. The lack of alcohol is a clue: Absolute Sanctuary means business. Here, a compact set of yellow buildings centre around a 65ft swimming pool amid tropical gardens on a hillside, housing three yoga spaces, a health centre, Pilates studio and gym. This place excels beyond comparison in the quality of its practitioners. The Pilates postural analysis alone is invaluable, with one-on-one corrective exercises tailored for each person, while daily classes – using up-to-the-minute reformer equipment – focus on toning and strengthening every part of the body. But the property's secret weapon is yoga supremo Jana Braeuer, a rare teacher whose workshops are both beneficial and fun. Individuals are stretched without being overtaxed in her sessions. With a dozen forms of the art, from familiar hatha to pelvic-loosening yin, the schedule caters to all abilities. Even the most dedicated couch potato will find pleasure in exercise here. There is also a full roster of spa services – wraps, facials, reiki – hugely welcome after a strenuous day (the Thai massage,

which takes place on a terrace surrounded by the scent of frangipani trees, is particularly lovely). But people tend to come with a purpose: remedial therapy following an operation, restorative care after an illness, a life reset post-divorce. Detox plans are popular in this regard, with fans raving about the effects of seven days' fasting and colon hydrotherapy. Alternative offerings include hypnotherapy and EFT (aka 'tapping'), while several new programmes have been introduced in the past year, such as one aimed at insomniacs and another for body realignment. There are few distractions.

### PEOPLE COME WITH A PURPOSE: REMEDIAL WORK FOLLOWING AN OPERATION, RESTORATIVE CARE AFTER AN ILLNESS, A LIFE RESET POST-DIVORCE

Encouraged by the friendly, informal atmosphere, many solo travellers will be found reading over their steamed fish in banana leaves. Daily shuttles ferry visitors to the nearby beach and to street markets in the

early evening. By 10pm, the hotel is dark, with everyone in bed. Food is fresh and healthy, low in calories and high in nutrients. And the poolside juice bar is a treat, with its day-long supply of delicious squeezes and smoothies. Just don't expect someone to come and polish your sunglasses.

**INSIDER TIP** Make sure to take a couple of private classes before embarking on group yoga or Pilates so the instructor can be aware of any physical issues.

**BOOK IT** Healing Holidays (+44 20 7843 3592; [healingholidays.com/condenast](http://healingholidays.com/condenast)) offers a seven-night Yoga programme from £2,099 per person, full board, including flights and transfers. Healing Holidays exclusive: book a seven- or eight-night programme and receive two extra nights with breakfast.