



**2020
WINNER**
BEST
AYURVEDIC
RETREAT

WEIGHT
LOSS

AYURVEDA PARKSCHLOESSCHEN

TRABEN TRARBACH, GERMANY

INDIAN PHILOSOPHY AT AN UNFAILING EUROPEAN OUTPOST

This is detoxing the old-school way, a millennia-based method rooted in Ayurveda and still utterly relevant for today. The wildly effective and heavy-duty *panchakarma* (a nine-, 13-, 20- or 34-night stay that removes metabolic waste from the body with medical enemas) is as successful a resolve for 21st-century burnout as it is for good old-fashioned weight loss. Parkschlösschen is the German epicentre for Ayurveda. Founded in 1993 by the late Wolfgang Preuss, a disciple of the Indian philosophy of self-healing by prevention, it provided somewhere smart in Europe to practise it. The retreat is now run by his daughter Carina, whose warm nature lends a softness to what can be a hardcore process. *Panchakarma* gives phenomenal results but involves intense scheduling: wake-up is before 7am, with oil swishing around the mouth, scraping the tongue (a potential organ for infection), lots of hot water and detox drinks, more oil in the nostrils and ears, yoga and meditation. All before breakfast. The rebooking rate is 60 per cent because it really works; devotees include recovering cancer patients, the depressed and the bereaved, all proclaiming that their lives have been turned around. Alcohol, caffeine and tannins are off limits; bedtimes are strict. Proceedings kick off with a visit to the long-time practitioner here, Vanita Kansal, who prescribes a plan based on individual *dosha* balance/imbalance, administers herbs and decides on treatments. Food is seasonal, organic and delicious. Mind-blowing things are done with vegetables: stewed rosemary celery with asparagus in saffron vinaigrette; dark grape cumin gravy and duchess potatoes, for example. Lunch is the largest meal to avoid eating a lot before bed and drinking too much liquid is discouraged. These rigid rules are designed to aid digestion and boost the metabolism. A thermos of hot water in every room is religiously replenished as heat is essential in the philosophy – adding to the womb-like impression of the place. Daily synchronised massages are administered by two therapists using a bucketload of coconut oil and ghee. Treatments are gentle but deceptively powerful, incorporating herbs and aromatic ingredients, and tailored to target problems such as insomnia, back pain and mental anguish. There are also sleep-inducing facials and pedicures by Ila that involve a lot of stroking, rose quartz crystals, lymph drainage, aromatic compresses and yet more oil. There's a gym but no one's in it; everyone is too busy wafting around in a trance to over-exert themselves. Detoxing is considered so intense you're better off sitting still, expending energy only for yoga. It's hard not to feel a tremendous impact of any stay, short or long. It means giving the nervous system, organs and mind a much-needed break, helping to avoid health troubles in the future. The combination of German efficiency with the holistic principles of Ayurveda is a winner.

INSIDER TIP Go alone. This is not the time for thinking about anyone else. And don't go near your phone – the key part is surrendering to switching off. **BOOK IT** Healing Holidays (+44 20 7843 3592; healingholidays.com/conde-nast) offers a six-night Anti-Stress programme from £2,899 per person, full board, including flights and transfers. Healing Holidays is the only UK tour operator that works with Ayurveda Parkschlösschen.

