



## ANANDA IN THE HIMALAYAS

UTTARAKHAND, INDIA

WEIGHT  
LOSS

### RECALIBRATING YOGA AND AYURVEDIC HEALING

Visitors will need to forget the idea that yoga should be hot or fast or dynamic to get the most from Ananda. The word means bliss in Sanskrit, and early-morning classes take place in a wooden pavilion in silence. Convinced that each of us can achieve wellbeing if we are given the right tools and space, hotelier Ashok Khanna and his wife Neelam spent a decade searching for a location that would facilitate their message. In the foothills of the Himalayas, with the silver ribbon of the Ganges glinting below, they found a maharaja's palace surrounded by 100 acres of sal forest. It was in these hills that hatha yoga is said to have originated, while Ayurvedic medicine has been practised here for millennia. At the marbled spa, there's a gym, sauna, steam rooms, a cold plunge pool, foot bath, 24 dark-wood therapy rooms and staff so attentive that a fresh towel envelopes you each time you emerge from water. A wellness journey begins with a trip to Dr Chandan MC, who checks the pulse of each visitor to gauge their *dosha* (one of three body types identified by the Ayurvedic

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system: vata, pitta and kapha), adjusting their plan accordingly. His prescription, which covers everything from the herbs and oils used in the spa to the food eaten in the restaurant, is sent to all the people you will come into contact with. For *pittadoshas*, supper might be roasted pear, pineapple and feta salad with spiced river trout. But staff will turn a blind eye to those who pluck something from the pudding table. Ayurvedic treatments are both pampering and toe-curlingly intense. Each one begins with a ritual foot wash and sung prayer. Designed to regulate sleep patterns, *abhyanga*, a strange and sensuous four-hand massage, involves two therapists working on the body at once. Meanwhile, during *choornaswedana*, the body is pounded with hot poultices to eliminate toxins. They are balanced with daily meditation sessions, plus unmissable yoga nidra with Sandeep Agarwalla that takes you to another form of consciousness. 'It's about exploring your inner state,' says Agarwalla. 'We give people the tools to start their journey inward.' The five- to 21-day programmes, ranging from active fitness and weight loss to stress management, really focus on making lasting change. When Ananda opened 19 years ago it was visionary: India's first luxury retreat. And it remains top class. Whether you believe, as locals do, that this region is charged with *shakti* (divine energy) or not, a trip here will without doubt leave you feeling lighter.

**INSIDER TIP** Extracurricular activities, such as outings to colourful Rishikesh – where the Beatles sought spiritual enlightenment – and sunrise mountain hikes, are as nourishing as the actual programmes.

**BOOK IT** Healing Holidays (+44 20 7843 3592; [healingholidays.com/condenast](http://healingholidays.com/condenast)) offers a seven-night Comprehensive Active Fitness programme from £3,099 per person, full board, including flights and transfers.



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