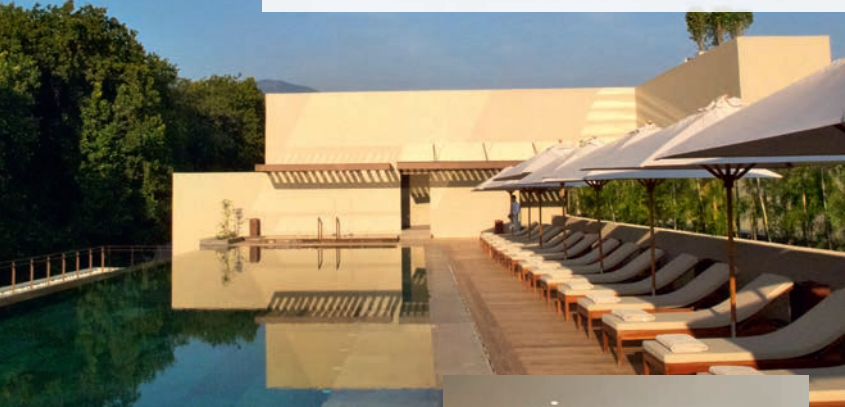


# FOR THE MIND

THOUGHTFUL ZONES WITH SOLID STRATEGIES TO GAIN A FRESH PERSPECTIVE



**VANA**

WEIGHT  
LOSS

UTTARAKHAND, INDIA

THE HIMALAYAN BIG HITTER KEEPS GETTING BETTER

In the six years since it opened, this sleek enclave has quietly become India's star spa. Less than an hour's drive from Dehradun in the north, surrounded by quiet forest and the sound of birdsong, it's a place to come for deep rest and gentle recuperation. The gorgeously slick surroundings, softened with huge bowls of marigolds and Ganesha statues, are merely a backdrop to the real magic – ritualistic therapies rooted in ancient holistic cultures. There's an Ayurvedic wing, a natural therapy centre with superb acupuncture, shiatsu and reflexology (do at least three sessions) and Sowa Rigpa, the Tibetan medicine centre. Beautifully calibrated treatments blend chanting with herbs, oils, massage, scalp releasing and hot flannels on the feet. You'll leave warm to your kidneys and fully released of tension, from both muscles and mind. Downstairs are various meditation nooks, the corridors are lined with beautiful pictures of Buddha and therapists serve smoky herbal tea. Each guest is on a different programme, as prescribed by the most compassionate of doctors who tackle health with a 360-degree approach addressing the physical, emotional and mental. It's incredible what they can tune into just by reading your pulse: low energy, loss of faith, fear. The key to feeling superbly looked after is to trust their judgement. There are daily yoga classes, silent meditation, a hi-tech gym, indoor and outdoor pools, cookery workshops, movie nights and lectures on the yoga sutras. The retreat atmosphere is taken seriously – mobile phones are banned in communal spaces – and the minimum stay is five nights. It's all about

## THE REMOVAL OF DECISION-MAKING AND DISTRACTION OF OUTSIDE INFLUENCES NUDGES YOU TOWARDS LETTING GO

peeling off layers, physically as well as emotionally: each evening a fresh white cotton kurta pyjama set is left out – there's something freeing about not having to think about clothes. The removal of decision-making and the distraction of outside influences nudges you towards letting go and slowing down. For those who need to escape the bubble, there are morning treks into the mountains – they are not for the faint-hearted, but the steep inclines are worth it for the tiffin-box breakfasts with a view. It's up to each individual whether they get weighed or not, but generally it's accepted that what most

guests need is to de-stress. The lack of rules is liberating in comparison to European detox clinics. Here everyone finds their own way. The food is sublime: masala omelettes, pistachio milk, yogurt and papaya for

breakfast, help-yourself lunches of curries, dal and paneer, and exquisite micro puddings at supper. The grace and sweetness of the staff is utterly beguiling, and no detail is overlooked. With its beautifully hushed ashram environment, the property has matured into a centre of mental and spiritual balance. No wonder the Vana experience has found its following.

**INSIDER TIP** Kick back in the lobby and order a ginger and turmeric latte that's more delicious than the ones in London, Tulum or Canggu.

**BOOK IT** Healing Holidays (+44 20 7843 3592; [healingholidays.com/conde-nast](http://healingholidays.com/conde-nast)) offers a seven-night Ashram programme from £2,890 per person, full board, including flights and transfers. Healing Holidays is the only UK tour operator that works with Vana.