



## ANANDA IN THE HIMALAYAS

UTTARAKHAND, INDIA

WEIGHT  
LOSS

NEWLY REVIVED MOUNTAIN OUTPOST FOR A HIGHER STATE OF CONSCIOUSNESS

In 1968, the Beatles put Rishikesh on the map when they came here to learn meditation. Fifty years on, the birthplace of yoga is still attracting names such as Melinda Gates, Oprah Winfrey, Uma Thurman and Heidi Klum – though where they all bed down, at Ananda, is nothing like the band's humble ashram. The hotel is set within the 100-acre estate, with carpets of lawns where peacocks parade and the backdrop of the Himalayas. For atmosphere, you can't beat the suites in the antique-filled maharaja's palace, while the three pool villas win for privacy, and the 70 rooms in the main building have recently been given a multi-million-pound nip and tuck. The new mood board is fresher, with a palette of creams and greens, huge sleigh beds and balconies overlooking the gardens or a lazy stretch of the Ganges. Ayurveda informs every detail. An initial consultation will establish your *prakriti* (constitution) and the almost inevitable imbalances of your doshic energies: vata (wind), pitta (fire) and kapha (water). Days start (and usually conclude) with yoga, sleep-dust still in eyes and mist shrouding the mountains as you hurry to the open-air pavilion in your kurta (a freshly laundered set is delivered to your room each evening). The yoga practice is slow and deceptively simple, leaving your muscles surprisingly worked and ready for the spa, a sprawling complex reminiscent of an upmarket department store. Massages often feature two therapists who greet guests with a song. Afterwards, covered head-to-toe in a bespoke herbal paste, you steam for 15 min-

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utes and emerge feeling squeaky and fresh, to be sent on your way with a bindi dot on your forehead. The kitchen juggles dozens of personalised meal plans. You may feel peckish on the weight-loss diet of dainty dishes such as lentil stew with carrot couscous; try not to glance at those on the 1,500-calorie-a-day fitness regime tucking into pasta with chicken and tomato. In turn, they must avert their gaze from the plates of those skipping discipline altogether and enjoying white chocolate doughnuts for breakfast. If you succumb to the latter, book a fat-burning trek up to Kunjapuri Temple, passing waterfalls and villages with

more barking dogs than people.

The only other reason to leave the sanctuary of Ananda is for the chaotic but charismatic aarti ceremony in Rishikesh. As dusk descends each evening, a throng

of visitors and locals head to the banks of the Ganges to join cross-legged monks chanting with their bearded guru. It's not quite the Beatles' *White Album*, written while they stayed here, but it is a priceless souvenir for your memory bank.

**INSIDER TIP** Seek out the humble dwelling on the palace terrace that was once home to the late spiritual leader, Ma Anandamayi. It's a great spot for some quiet contemplation.

**BOOK IT** Healing Holidays (+44 20 7843 3592; [healingholidays.co.uk/condenast](http://healingholidays.co.uk/condenast)) offers a seven-night Wellness programme from £3,999 per person, full board, including flights, transfers and treatments and activities as per the programme.