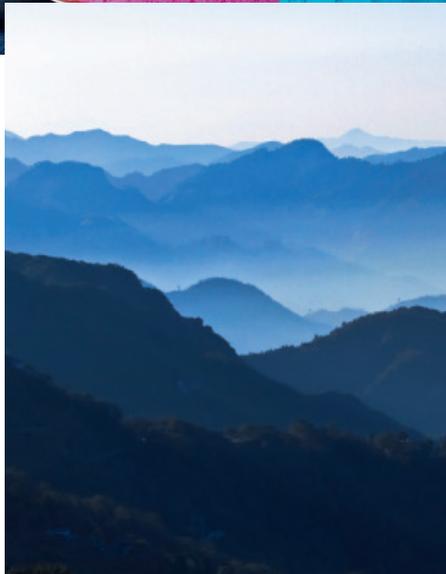




WHERE EVERY DAY IS PYJAMA DAY



VANA

Uttarakhand, India

No one likes a loudmouth, especially in a retreat – those Dom Joly-style ‘I’M IN A SPA!’ moments where some eejit in a dressing gown is hollering into his iPhone do not go down well. Which is why Asian grande dames Chiva Som and Kamalaya have been restricting the use of devices for years now – the idea being that it forces you to actually *be* in the moment instead of constantly trying to capture it.

But the spectacular new Vana takes digital detoxing a step further. At check-in, I’m asked to sign a disclaimer agreeing not to use handheld devices in any communal areas. It’s a leap of faith, but that’s why I’m here, so sign I do.

Yet the surrounding forests, and calm wood and stone of Vana itself, are just screaming to be Instagrammed. But no. If you’re caught pointing a phone in any direction outside your room, you’ll be given a proper dressing down.

More ashram than resort, Vana has a purer-than-pure vibe – but austere it’s not. It has all the hallmarks of a world-class design hotel: shiny mango-wood floors, ethereal lighting, swathes of ethically sourced ash and bamboo, and the minibar in my room is crammed with herb-infused water (nothing stronger, of course).

And then there are the organic cream-linen pyjamas. No normal clothes here, hell no. Instead, you get a pair of freshly laundered PJs each day – very comfy, as it happens, plus it’s amazing how quickly I get used to that *One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest* look. And what better outfit is there for flute therapy, mindful tea-drinking and yogic chanting? Yup, I try all of these to keep me logged into me time.

And you know what, it works. A roster of doctors, consultants, naturopaths and nutritionists have me quietly, calmly occupied. There’s everything from cupping to ku nye, a type of Tibetan healing massage, and an array of body treatments that all open with a Tibetan blessing – two therapists speed-whispering a prayer in each ear (just go with it). The wonderful watsu has me cradled in a warm pool, and there are further treats in the full-blown ayurvedic centre with homemade scrubs and spicy oil massages.

Even the Dalai Lama has given Vana the nod. The sowa rigpa (Tibetan healing) treatments are overseen by a doctor of Tibetan medicine and a team of therapists all trained at the revered Men-Tsee-Khang Medical and Astrology Institute that the Dalai Lama established in 1961 after fleeing Tibet.

And, sshhhh, when I desperately need a Facebook fix, there is internet in my room, although the wi-fi signal is intentionally weak, so I give up in the end.

Restaurant portions are small but creative – vermicelli-crusted potato galettes or beetroot cake with papaya basil compote – all made from produce grown on site, and free from refined sugar, grains or oils. And it takes me a few days, but halfway through my five-night retreat (the minimum stay) I’ve even lost the need to Instagram every plate. Remarkable.

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It’s amazing how quickly I get used to that *One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest* look

SEVEN SIGNS YOU NEED TO SWITCH OFF

- You fancy Siri. It’s that voice. And your satnav sounds a bit of all right too.
- You have a callus on the edge of your thumb from scrolling.
- You have the concentration span of a toddler.
- You behave like a mother who’s lost her child in a shopping centre when you can’t instantly find your phone in your handbag.
- You constantly WhatsApp your partner, even when he’s beside you.
- Your dreams have an Instagram Mayfair hue to them.
- When you shut your eyes, all you can see is Candy Crush. □