



WELL HEALED

Exotic cruises to recharge the spirit, an urban oasis to revitalise the senses and a wellness sanctuary to rejuvenate the soul and beyond

A WHOLE NEW WORLD

Dana Koh journeys to the hidden jewel of New Delhi's crown

There is a magic to India. The kind that grants your wildest wishes and inspires you to pursue brand new horizons. But most of all, it will leave you in awe—starting from the moment you escape into the ITC Grand Bharat, a 300-acre estate and India's first all-suite offering in the ancient Aravalli hills in New Delhi. The palatial structures, flanked by mazes of verdant gardens and glistening lagoons, call to mind Eastern kingdoms of yesteryear and are a vivid contrast to the rest of sprawling New Delhi.

"Your soul brought you here," says Leela Isani, the woman I have been invited to spend a long weekend with at this majestic resort, as part of its first Visiting Masters Wellness Retreat. She is a Reiki master, spiritual teacher and holistic healer; and despite my initial scepticism, something in me believes in her. It's hard not to be swayed when your plush accommodation comes with personalised, monogrammed touches, and a sunset-facing pool.

Such wellness itineraries typically begin with one-on-one conversations to uncover what guests need most out of the experience. After an unexpectedly emotional session, the word "light" is what sets the purpose of my trip in motion—the desire to be relieved of the emotional weight piled on from a high-pressure lifestyle,

something many urbanites can relate to. What Leela feels, through her healing touches across my body, strikes a chord: "There's a lot of untapped energy that's being bogged down, and there's a tension in your chest that's causing you to take mainly quick, short breaths," she deduces. "For this, we will be focusing on exercises to open up the heart, and awaken the Kundalini," referring to the sleeping spiritual energy that lies at the base of one's spine. A range of sessions are planned, from morning yoga with long back stretches; afternoon meditations involving vigorous body shaking and blindfolded dancing; to slow breathing rituals before bedtime. These are interspersed with pampering treatments at Kaya Kalp – The Royal Spa, like the Prana Vitality Massage, where a therapist with "healing hands" employs ancient techniques to encourage Prana (life force energy) to flow upwards, releasing toxins, and restoring inner strength and harmony.

Meals, too, are tailored to one's needs, as identified by the in-house Ayurvedic expert, Doctor Shree. At the main dining restaurant, Aravali Pavilion, a section of the menu is devoted to Swasthya cuisine, which invokes time-honoured Indian culinary principles of promoting wellness; while an off-menu salad order will get you a selection of vegetables and fruits picked straight from the garden. Infusions of herbs, such as mint and moringa, are perfect for savouring out on the veranda, framed by lofty heritage architecture that's been built with ITC's "rooted in the soil" philosophy in mind. I am no Elizabeth Gilbert or Julia Roberts, but eat, pray and love I did at the ITC Grand Bharat. And so should you; your soul will love you for it.



Sangam Lobby



Soak in the serene surroundings



The Ayurveda Suite at Kaya Kalp – The Royal Spa