



Shirodhara: warm oil applied to the “third eye” at Ananda Spa

distance, to China and Tibet. The smells of roasted corn, cumin and turmeric leaves waft from a small village nearby. One afternoon, we traveled down the mountain to Rishikesh, a world-renowned spiritual center and yoga mecca, where some say yoga was born. We took part in the Aarti (Fire) Ceremony, a joyous celebration along the banks of the Ganges, where we were made to feel quite welcome.

Perhaps there is a reason why everything falls into place here: authenticity.

“Ayurveda is just one component of it,” says Mr. Khanna. “It is an Indian wellness spa based on Indian principles. Spas around the world talk about body, mind and soul, but they don’t treat them,” he continues. “They treat the body and not the soul.” At Ananda you emerge feeling truly whole. anandaspa.com

—Rona Berg

Jodhpur

Taj Ummaid Bhawan Palace

At first, I think it’s a mirage: a golden-hued sandstone palace rising out of parched earth, its turrets shaped like crowns. But the Taj Ummaid Bhawan Palace is no illusion. On arrival, I’m greeted by a shower of rose petals, a garland, and a welcome bindi—a red dot between my brows that represents the third eye, or sixth primary chakra ajna, the seat of concealed wisdom.

Descending the stairs to the Jiva Grande Spa, I enter another world. “Jiva Spas are rooted in the philosophy that jiva, or ‘life force,’ is the foundation of wellness,” says Spa Manager Dr. Praveen Nair, a trained Ayurvedic physician. I’m eagerly anticipating “Indian Cupping”—an ancient treatment where heat in a glass creates a vacuum to ease knots and sore points in the body, extracting toxins. To create the heat required for suction, my therapist lights the tips of rock salt pouches soaked in a blended oil of lime, rosewood and Ashwagandha, an oil that treats sore muscles. Post-cupping is an hour-long deep tissue massage. I leave feeling like putty, my chronic back pain significantly eased.

The next morning I rise early for Samattva (Balance), a three-hour one-on-one yoga session comprised of vigorous Asanas, body and mind postures; Pranayamas, controlled breathing techniques; and Kapalabhati, forced exhale breathing sequences. After pushing through these strenuous exercises, steady flame gazing slows the pace and challenges my concentration. I’m led through a guided meditation on colored gemstones, each corresponding to a chakra, and chakra chants. Finally, my therapist presents a tray of contemplation cards and invites me to choose one and meditate on the word for the rest of the day: “Forgiveness.” tajhotels.com

—Kristin Vukovic

The Taj Ummaid Bhawan Palace in Jodhpur, Rajasthan

