

Condé Nast

in association with
Healing  Holidays

Traveller

THE SPA GUIDE 2017



RAAS DEVIGARH

RAJASTHAN, INDIA

2017
WINNER
MOST
TRANSFORMATIVE
PROGRAMME

IN BRIEF ALL-NATURAL RITUALS IN PALATIAL GROUNDS

This is one of Rajasthan's most beguiling places to stay, where new ownership has injected fresh spirit and polish into the proceedings and, most excitingly, a destination-spa get-up from organic British skincare brand Ila. Come for a week or as a mini add-on to a longer trip to India; either way, a stay here will move you. Not only is the hotel itself beauty manifest – an exquisite 18th-century palace with Marwari-horse murals, wooden swings swaying in courtyards and the sounds of ankle-bracelets jangling – but the Ila-Only spa is a refuge of gentle goodness. Here, Denise Leicester, founder of Ila, has designed a series of next-generation bespoke treatments known as the Devi Blessings, based on the Indian festival of Navratri: a nine-night period of self-reflection symbolising the nine



months a baby spends in the womb. The Devi Blessings take you on a journey through the chakras and combine ancient healing techniques with wild-harvested ingredients of the upmost integrity, many of them sourced in India. Imagine Damascena rose oil, which contains 38 damask roses per drop, poured over your chest to help nurture peacefulness and awaken unconditional love. Or a body scrub of 200-million-year-old Himalayan salt mixed with warmed poppy seeds rubbed over your entire body to soothe internal vulnerabilities. These are treatments as ritualistic ceremonies: subtle om tuning forks, potent purifications using black-amber smoke and Bhutanesse chants, crystal-bowl sound healing in the sacred frequency of omega 432 (which aligns us to the heartbeat of Mother Nature). Hauntingly evocative background music, steaming cups of fresh ginger tea and bowls of flowers arranged like still-life paintings all add to the cocooning effect. Magnetic views of the surrounding Aravalli Hills – older than the Himalayas – pull you both inwards and outwards. The sleek, green-slate swimming pool is a lovely refresher. There's a gym and hot tub, and the most gorgeous variety of places to eat, from the restaurant itself to private open-air rooftop soirées decorated with candles as far as the eye can see. Choose a three, five or nine-night Devi Blessings Journey and you can combine treatments with yoga, workouts that leave you feeling nimble and lose-yourself meditation sessions in secret nooks of the building. Explore nearby Delwara, which is known as the town of the gods, with its numerous Jain temples that look like something out of *Indiana Jones*, before savouring deep rest in the palace itself. Prepare to be carried into a graceful dimension.

INSIDER TIP Visiting masters are in the mix for 2017, including retreats with intuitive English healer Fiona Arrigo, who offers wonderful workshops on feminine wisdom for modern times.

BOOK IT Healing Holidays (+44 20 7843 5592; healingholidays.co.uk/condenast) offers a five-night Devi Blessings Journey from £2,499 per person full board, including flights and transfers.

NEW CHABLE RESORT

YUCATAN, MEXICO

IN BRIEF LATIN AMERICA'S COOLEST SPOT TO RELAX

This place is quite something: a destination spa in 750 acres of steamy Mayan jungle, half an hour from the Yucatán state's capital, Mérida. Ten years in the making, it's a hotel of two halves: a stunning modern spa and painstakingly restored 19th-century hacienda. The original walls now form spaces in which to practise Ayurvedic yoga, walking meditation, qigong or t'ai chi. The grandeur of the main house has been pristinely maintained and rolling lawns frame the building, which includes a library, bar, wine cellar and plenty of corners to kick back in while sipping one of the aged local spirits (Chablé has the world's largest private tequila collection). It's not all

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hedonism and headaches though. This is one of the only spas in the world with its own cenote – a natural limestone swimming hole celebrated by Mayans as the entrance into the sacred underworld. Hypnotic three-hour rituals blend traditional Mayan therapies with Eastern healing methods plus a healthy dose of modern technology (bespoke flotarium; hi-tech gym). If you want to embark on a hardcore detox programme or seek profound transformation, there are hand-picked therapists offering every possible treatment, such as chakra therapy, reiki, Mayan rebirth massages, sound cleansing, three different types of temazcal – a pre-Hispanic sweat-lodge – and sessions with local spiritual guides. But if your idea of wellbeing



is staying horizontal by the spa's pool, or eating and drinking extremely well, that's covered too. The consulting chef is Jorge Vallejo of Quintonil in Mexico City (currently number 12 on the World's 50 Best Restaurants list), and his right-hand man, Luis Ronzon, is in charge of all three restaurants. As well as using the hotel's own organic vegetables and herbs, Ronzon has sourced the best ingredients from around Mexico and keeps menus light and inventive (carpaccio of grilled mamey fruit and avocado; venison tartare with bitter orange and habanero-chilli vinaigrette). Bed down in one of the 40 villas, each with its own pool, hammock and outdoor shower. Just down the road is the village of Chocholá, where you can pick up delicious honey, and Mérida, with its wonderful museums and restaurants, should definitely not be missed.

INSIDER TIP Fireflies take over the lawn leading to the guest rooms at dusk during summer months. It's the perfect spot for meditation. **BOOK IT** From about £620 per person per night, including breakfast and activities (+52 55 4161 4262; chableresort.com).