

On a soul

VACATION

A stone's throw away from Delhi, a wellness centre becomes a healing weekend escape

BY KALYANI PRASHER

A dusty industrial town an hour's drive from Delhi with no tourist attractions, Sonapat is not exactly first pick for a weekend getaway. That is precisely why it works perfectly for Naad Wellness—you check-in and stay in, for the duration of your break, and it doesn't matter what's outside.

Tired of feeling unhealthy and looking for a break from the routine, Naad became an ideal weekend escape for me, combining health and holiday. I checked in for a weekend in last June, when it had just opened, with the idea of resetting my system.

Over three days I spent quiet hours by myself, listening to the soothing classical music ringing through corridors lined with floor-to-ceiling windows flooding in the daylight, and my mind untangled gradually from the web of worries and negativity I'd picked up—as we often do—from being connected to the world. With no television, weak Wi-Fi and a bad mobile phone reception, I was forced to disconnect, an act that relaxed me more than the massages.

What sets Naad apart from other wellness centres I've been to is that it takes the concept of wellness to the last mile—from what you eat, do and see, to what you use. The building itself is part of your wellness process. Made with locally sourced leftover natural stone and wood, the property adopts a zero-waste policy for building materials. The large central courtyard, the leafy pool area, the big garden with an outdoor yoga pavilion, and the indoor yoga hall with French windows

Mornings at Naad Wellness begin with an hour-long yoga session.

all incorporate natural light and greenery. Until the sun sets, Naad is filled with light and wherever your eye rests, you see soothing greens and simplicity in design.

I didn't know what to expect from my massage—I had five different ones for my six sessions—but the well-trained therapists worked their charm to put me in a state of relaxation that only a good massage can get you to. I got a Swedish massage, Choornaswedha (Ayurvedic potli massage), aromatherapy, Thai massage, Turkish hammam experience and abhyanga, and not one of them left me disappointed. The most unique experience, however, was the Himalayan Salt Cave, a heated room with walls of natural salt sourced from Pakistan and a large tree made of the same salt in the centre. Spending 10 minutes breathing in the salt—supposed to be good for respiratory problems—after an hour's massage was great both for the mind and body.

The biggest surprise at Naad, however, came on a plate. Not a fan of simple vegetarian fare, I went into the weekend prepared to ignore taste, and focus on the benefits of eating well. In my experience with health food, I've found that it is usually bland and tasteless or just about okay at best. Imagine my surprise then, when meal after meal, I got a range of delicious dishes. The simple vegetarian fare with ragi rotis, curries and dry sabzi, and dal was flavourful and spiced just right. Never once did I feel like I was on a diet. Breakfasts were the best—a plate of fruit followed by ragi dosa or uttapam with coconut and tomato chutneys, and a warm drink with ginger, lemon, honey (you can't have caffeine here). The healthy desserts, such as ragi or atta halwa and ragi chocolate cake, are equally delicious.

Fixed meal and therapy timings meant I had found a rhythm to my day. I would wake up at 6.30 a.m., go for an hour's yoga at 7 a.m., have a glass of fresh juice (melon, papaya, pomegranate or sweet lime), go for an hour's therapy, and then rest till lunch. Evenings were for meditation and another massage followed by some more resting until dinner.



From innovative fitness regimes such as aerial yoga (bottom left), to soothing massages (top) and wholesome yet delicious vegetarian meals (bottom right), the packages at Naad concentrate on a well-rounded healing of both body and mind.

The downtime proved restorative. My tiredness melted away and I felt light. My schedule was flexible but my consulting doctor was strict about the right things. I could shift yoga to evening if I wanted, but I couldn't snack in between meals.

Eating light, sleeping on time, daily exercise and looking after myself—these were habits I'd let go of. Naad reminded me how simple corrections in our daily routine can make us feel so much better, so quickly. With it being just an hour's drive from my home in Delhi, I might return for frequent reminders.



ESSENTIALS

Naad Wellness is in Sonapat, about an hour's drive from Delhi. This year Naad has introduced 'The Healing Series' programme, which will have well-known healers conducting sessions and workshops that will be weaved into the existing wellness packages. The series begins this month. (www.naadwellness.com; single accommodation packages from ₹49,000; minimum stay 3 nights).

PHOTO COURTESY: NAAD WELLNESS

