

Clockwise from here: the façade of Naad Wellness; shirodhara therapy at the property; the swimming pool; and a room to relax in



HOTELS

CHECK OUT 26 NAAD WELLNESS, KUNDLI **28** RAJBARI BAWALI
30 VIANAAR ESCAPES, GOA **34 FRESH SHEET** AMAN KYOTO

[CHECK OUT]

THE SOUND OF SILENCE

Wellness has a sound, and it's called Naad. Best part: it's pretty close to Delhi.

Amit Dixit checked in and came away renewed

What does it take for someone to step off the treadmill of life and sign up for that much needed break? Sometimes, it's a health scare or a grievous injury. But if you're smart—or plain lucky—you'll be preventing, not curing. The mushrooming of wellness retreats is a testament to our testing times, the call of the hour.

My body was calling to me too, and I finally listened. A new wellness retreat had opened near Delhi—proximity makes it easier to commit—and I decided to sign up. But such is my punishing schedule and web of commitments, it took me nearly a year to check in. The minimum stay is three nights,

while the longest programme requires four weeks. I just about managed the introductory programme.

The location was unexpected, in the middle of Ansal Sushant City in Kundli, but once I was past the gates, I could have been worlds away. The first thing that struck me was the sheer verdure of the setting, layer upon layer of greenery shielding the building from heat, dust and noise. There was a traditional welcome ritual—the washing of hands—a symbolic way to signal the start of the healing process.

Every programme at Naad Wellness—that's what the retreat is called—begins with a doctor's consultation. A tailor-made regimen is created. The doctor also decides exactly what you will eat

and when. After that, the days fall into a pattern: yoga in the morning, breakfast, treatment, lunch, treatment, some more yoga, dinner, and bed. There's a top-notch gym, but it can only be used as prescribed by the doctor.

The first yoga session, which I groaned my way through, made me realise what a wreck I was. There was a lot of work to be done. Hardev, my first therapist, came to the rescue. An impressively brawny lad from Himachal, he administered the classic *abhyanga*. This oil massage administered with long strokes is the cornerstone of Ayurvedic healing. Other therapists followed over the next couple of days, bringing their own repertoire of massages and novel techniques, culminating in the deep relaxation



of the *dhanyamladhara*, where two therapists poured a mixture of warm water and therapeutic oils over me in a synchronised rhythm. Meanwhile, I was surviving my yoga sessions better.

Half the healing was the food. A typical day's menu will give you a sense. For breakfast, I had a coconut milk, ginger and pineapple smoothie, followed by a strikingly green *moong dal chilla* topped with shredded beetroot and carrots and a tangy tomato chutney. Lunch was a steamed salad, roast pepper and pumpkin soup, chapati noodles and a mixed-veg *sundal*. Dinner was a fruit salad, broccoli soup and a ragi dosa topped with raw vegetables. This is the sort of food I could eat every day for the rest of my life. The chef at Naad is quietly inventive, creating lip-smackingly tasty food even within each guest's stringent dietary restrictions and requirements. Some of the produce comes from the organic kitchen garden on the premises. The kitchen is state-of-the-art and even includes a special steamer from Germany that prevents any nutritional loss from vegetables.

All that pummelling and cajoling was taking effect. By the second day, it was as if a fog had lifted from my brain. By the third day, I was a man transformed.

Part of the healing effect has to be

attributed to the physical space as well. The building, with its deft use of natural light and conscious materials, was designed by green architect Vasant Kamath, who passed away recently. Everything in the design is geared towards promoting tranquility. The rooms are spaced well apart, stylish sanctuaries in their own right. There are calming water features everywhere, including the stunning water wall in the lobby. A muted green colour scheme dominates, displayed at its best in the custom tiles from Rajkot (they're eco-friendly, made with 60 per cent recycled material).

The landscaping, done in strict accordance with the architect's vision, has created a veritable Garden of Eden. Floral arrangements with blossoms collected from the garden, which was overflowing with frangipani, periwinkle, jasmine and more when I visited, are made afresh each morning. There's a pebble-strewn reflexology path shaped like the yin-yang symbol and a nice, temperature-controlled pool.

Naad is not just another wellness retreat, with much to set it apart from the crowd. As with many good things, it begins with the intent. The owners never wanted it to be the sort of place you could

walk into and ask for a massage. And they only wanted to use the best stuff, from the solid wood Ayurveda massage table to the therapeutic oils. Manoj Khetan, one of the founders, told me how the name Naad was chosen unanimously overnight. He also told me their vision was to create a serious, no-nonsense holistic retreat, not too far from Delhi. Indeed, once guests check in, they can't leave the premises until it's time to check out.

The verdict: it was nothing less than a reboot and I wish I could have stayed longer. Quite unexpectedly, a digital detox too, since the use of mobile phones is discouraged outside one's room. I don't think you'll find another such place so close to the NCR. I enjoyed every minute of my time there. Okay, maybe not the yoga!

THE INFORMATION

LOCATION Naad Marg, Ansal Sushant City, Sector 62, Kundli, Delhi NCR. 48kms from Indira Gandhi International Airport

ACCOMMODATION 39 rooms: 31 premium, 2 luxury, 4 royal suites, 2 naad suites, one with access to a private garden (note: kids not allowed)

TARIFF Packages from ₹49,000

CONTACT +91-124-6030400;
namaste@naadwellness.com, naadwellness.com