

ALTERNATIVE HEALTH RETREATS AT AYURVEDA RESORT MANDIRA

Blending the world's oldest system of self-care with ultra-modern alternative health treatments to produce long-term better wellbeing.

Anyone keen to address health niggles, emotional issues, or who needs to simply rest and recharge should check out Ayurveda Resort Mandira. Like many of Europe's leading spas and wellness centres the Mandira is in Austria, a go-to region for holidays that do you good. Surrounded by farmland and forest in the south of the country, the award-winning 60-room Mandira opened only three years ago but is already becoming known for its well-priced alternative-health retreats.

'Ideally, we like guests to spend two weeks with us, so we keep our rates as affordable as possible,' says the Mandira's CEO, Christina Mauracher.

'We have two doctors on our staff. A conventional doctor who grew disillusioned with mainstream medicine and realised alternative treatments often give better results, and an Ayurvedic doctor. Two weeks let them and our therapists really dig into the issues – and with treatments, yoga, good food and nature all around the results can be transformational.'

Those results also mean some guests are telling her they're now prioritising health – rather than hedonism – when it comes to booking a holiday. But however long a guest can stay, Christina says, she and her staff are on a mission. 'To do the best possible for every single guest. Physically, mentally, spiritually. We want everyone to return home with new insights into how they can maintain improved health and wellbeing. We don't use pills or drugs or medication – and we are wholly focussed on long-term solutions.'

Christina grew up in her family's hotel in the Tirol, eventually running the spa there, has an MSc in Ayurvedic Science, and took over the Mandira when her father died shortly after buying the property. Passionate about Ayurveda, she was thrilled when the Mandira was recently named Global Winner in the Best Luxury Healing Retreat category at the 2023 World Luxury Awards.

Ayurveda & Beyond

The world's oldest system of self-care, Ayurveda originated in India around 5,000 years ago – Traditional Chinese Medicine is based on it – yet its main tenets remain valid today. Ayurveda is based on the philosophy that each of us is completely individual but possesses a constitution, appearance and mindset reflecting our particular balance of the three Doshas: Pitta, Vata and Kapha. Good health depends on our living – eating, moving, working – in a way that best suits our individual Dosha. If ill-health occurs, rebalancing the Doshas allows the body to heal itself.

Guests start a stay at the Mandira by having their Dosha pulse-diagnosed by the Ayurvedic doctor. After that, and a consultation with the conventional doctor, treatments, meals and an exercise programme are individually prescribed. As well as deep, rhythmic Ayurvedic massages such as Abhyanga and sleep-inducing Shirodhara – warm oil poured slowly and continuously over the forehead – non-Ayurvedic treatments include IV drips to fast-track vitamins, minerals and amino-acids into the bloodstream, cutting-edge Global Diagnostics' cellular analysis, and ESQ, or Emotional Status Quo, which incorporates Kinesiology to address psycho-emotional issues.

Naturally, given its location in Bad Waltersdorf in the green heart of Austria, where the thermal water that gushes from the ground provides healing for the entire village, the Mandira has its own thermal pool. Lolling in the warm, soothing, mineral-rich 36C water can be especially beneficial for anyone with stiff or painful joints or rheumatism.

Sleep problems, chronic tiredness, and digestive issues are among the conditions the Mandira staff address most frequently. The doctors and therapists also treat everything from long covid, Lyme disease complications, depression, mental-health issues, and plain old stress to acne, exhaustion, burn-out, fertility problems, and just a crushing need for rest. A dramatic Ayurvedic ritual puja, conducted around dancing flames, outdoors, at night, by psychotherapist and Ayurvedic practitioner Malini Häuslmeier, offers the chance to symbolically cast-off unwanted thoughts, habits and attitudes.

At the end of their stay, quite a lot of guests tell Christina they are no longer interested in the kind of holiday where they lie on a beach or drink cocktails all day. 'I think that represents a sort of societal shift,' she says. 'They say they want to come back from a holiday feeling great, having lost weight, and been inspired to live more healthily.'

Some British guests, she adds, have mentioned problems with the NHS mean they have become interested in preventive care as well as treatment for health issues, and are also now careful about what they eat. 'I am so pleased to hear this! Good food alone can have a profound effect. Everyone knows how damaging ultra-processed food can be; our chef sources over 90% of the produce our kitchens use from local farms. And above all, Ayurveda teaches us how to let the body heal itself.'

Meet The Experts

Christina Mauracher: CEO and Founder of Holistic Ayurveda

The owner and CEO of Ayurveda Resort Mandira is Christina Mauracher. A practitioner of Ayurveda for over 20 years, thanks initially to her health-conscious hotelier parents. She is engaged to media owner and entrepreneur Andreas Drexler, has two small children, and is a qualified Ayurvedic therapist, with a Master of Science in Ayurvedic Medicine. Today, the forward-thinking spirit of her late parents lives on in Christina's development of Holistic Ayurveda at the Mandira. This is a practice which resonates with the growing interest in the West in alternative approaches to health and wellbeing and preventive care.

Dr Alexandra Koller: the Mandira's conventional doctor

Trained as a surgeon, Dr Koller worked in a hospital in Austria for six years. Setting up her own private practice freed her to adopt treatments that she could see yielded real benefits to her patients. She was especially impressed by the results of orthomolecular medicine – the use of high-dosage supplementation, often via infusion therapy. She oversees the Mandira's increasingly popular IV infusion therapy programme.

Dr Akhil Balachandran: the Mandira's Ayurvedic doctor

Growing up in Kerala, Akhil watched his spry grandmother start each day with Ayurvedic rituals – yoga, self-massage, oil pulling, tongue scraping. That gave him an early insight into Ayurveda and inspired his future career. After earning his degree in Ayurvedic Medicine and Surgery, he spent three years practicing in hospitals in India, then helped set up the Centrum Szczecin, Poland's first Ayurvedic centre, before joining the Mandira. He uses pulse diagnosis to discern a guest's predominant Dosha – Vata, Pitta, or Kapha – and plan personalised treatments.

Michael Dalcher: the Mandira's newest Ayurvedic therapist and yoga teacher

Half-Austrian, half-American, Michael grew up in Vienna, moved to the US for university, and until his early 30s had a corporate career at the US telecoms giant AT&T. Starting yoga classes and discovering Ayurveda, however, led to a complete career change. Before joining the Mandira he spent six years in Peru, running retreats at the Ayahuasca Foundation and

working with the Shipibo people, whose deep appreciation of the spirit of each plant chimes with Ayurveda. He finds giving hour-long massages with oil, 'A deeply meditative experience.'

Malini Häuslmeier: Traditional Ayurveda specialist

Born in southern India, Malini trained in her native country and put her skills into practice at several Ayurvedic centres. The Ayurveda teacher, therapist and advisor has been working in Austria for the last 35 years – both in her own practice and at other establishments. She and her husband, Mike, are also practising psychotherapists – trained in India and Europe– and mind coaches specialising in nutrition, lifestyle and everyday life choices. Their approach is based on Ayurvedic principles and adapted to a western way of life. Malini is a seminar facilitator with 30 years of experience as a social therapist and runs annual Panchakarma treatment programmes with the assistance of a medical supervisor.

The key to Staying Healthy the Ayurvedic Way

1. Prevention is better than cure. Get up early, and start each day with a few simple rituals – yoga or stretches to exercise your muscles, tongue-scraping to get rid of the toxicity your body has thrown off overnight, and a glassful of warm boiled water to cleanse your gut.
2. Food is medicine. Fresh, nutritious food, that is. Medicinal herbs can also help with various health problems.
3. Detoxing regularly stops ill-health developing. If you cleanse your digestive system every six months or year, what Ayurveda calls ama, or toxicity - the root of much illness -doesn't have the chance to build up in the body and cause serious problems.

Staying at Ayurveda Resort Mandira

Two-night Ayurvedic Taster programmes start at €209 per person excluding accommodation. Five-night detox programmes cost from €811 excluding accommodation. A standard double room is €172 per person, per night. There are personalised Holistic Solution packages as well as 7- 10- 14- or 21-night panchakarma cleansing detoxes. Guests can join daily yoga and meditation classes, use the spa with its steam rooms, sauna and infrared sauna, thermal indoor and heated outdoor pools, and attend evening lectures. Nordic sticks and bikes are available for exploring the 200km of hiking trails and 170km of biking trails in the surrounding countryside with its vineyards, orchards, hills and forests. Guests can arrive by train to Graz, 44km away, and those arriving at Vienna airport can have a free 90-minute transfer to the Mandira.

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