



A view of the Mekosha Ayurveda massage room



Clockwise from top left: hot compress potli; the riverside; and a corridor at Mekosha

HOTELS

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THE HEALING TOUCH

India's newest Ayurvedic boutique resort, Mekosha offers **Charukesi Ramadurai** a holistic healing journey with in-suite spas, organic food and plenty of massages

For the first time ever, I celebrated World Environment Day with a significant gesture—and no, I don't mean sharing Whatsapp messages about a green, clean planet or outraging over global warming on Twitter. I planted a sapling with my own hands, a tiny *chikoo* plant that will one day bear luscious tropical fruit.

At Mekosha, they take their commitment to the environment and to the welfare of fellow humans seriously. This new wellness resort near

Thiruvananthapuram dubs itself an Ayurveda Spasuites Retreat and, of course, I was instantly intrigued by that idea. What it means is that the guest rooms at Mekosha come with a small spa area, where basic therapies (not involving traditional Ayurveda rituals) are performed.

In the land where Ayurveda was born, and still survives as one of the key attractions for visitors, Mekosha offers bespoke experiences and treatments. Founder Ram Wasan says, "Mekosha is derived from the Sanskrit word *kosha*,

meaning sheath, a covering of the *atman*, or self according to Vedanta philosophy."

And so, I was all set to spa, shower and sleep in an endless cycle when I headed there one rainy morning. But right from that initial warm welcome, the team at Mekosha made it clear it was not going to be just that. The leader of this brigade was Elizabeth Joseph, the charming general manager, who was determined to make it a holistic healing stint for me, rather than just a quick spa break. In this, she was joined by the chef, Anoop Appukuttan

and the Ayurveda physician, Dr Maneesh. They were going to tackle my chronic aches and pains, I was assured.

My regimen started with lunch at the retreat's only restaurant—they promote locally sourced organic food, and discourage the use of room service—a simple but delicious Kerala *thali*. I tucked into the moong salad, followed by small portions of vegetable *sambar*, beetroot *pachadi* (yoghurt-based chutney) and ivy gourd fry to be eaten with red rice.

The good doctor met me immediately after to chart out my treatment plan for the next two-and-a-half days. We went through a detailed questionnaire to understand my body composition according to the principles of Ayurveda, and then decided to stick to two main therapies for each day, focussing on both pain relief and relaxation.

My first treatment was a warm-up of sorts—a light aromatherapy massage in the spa area of my suite overlooking the swimming pool. As the monsoon rain beat a steady pitter-patter outside, I felt myself unwind under the expert hands

of *chechi* (elder sister), my experienced massage therapist.

The next morning, I woke up late—having retired early the day before under strict advice from Elizabeth—and went for a walk around the property. Mekosha is located on the banks of the Attingal Aaru, known as the Vamanapuram river, far away from the chaos of urban life. The trees in the garden hung heavy with fruit, a wide variety from fig to jackfruit. There are plans for a more robust kitchen garden that will also include vegetables, and a butterfly garden in one corner of the property. The river had a brownish tinge at that time, given the spate of rains, but I plonked myself on a chair by the bank with a glass of herbal tea before heading to the spa.

At present, the treatment area is on the terrace of the building that houses the guest rooms, which means guests don't have to walk much after a restful session. The rain had started to come down again by the time I got on the massage table, and the hundreds of coconut trees all around the resort began to sway in a

primeval rhythm. Inside the room, *chechi* once again worked her magic with an intense *abhyangam* massage with medicated oils and then applying *potlis* of medicated herbs.

Although I spent only a few days at Mekosha, I was surprised by how much my system responded to the complete package of fresh air, healthy food and rejuvenating Ayurveda. "Come back soon for a longer stay with us, minimum one week, ok?" Elizabeth said as I got ready to leave after breakfast on the fourth day. I have to admit I can't wait.

THE INFORMATION

LOCATION Alamcode, 30km (1 hr) from Thiruvananthapuram Airport

ACCOMMODATION 11 spa rooms

TARIFF Panchakarma (rejuvenation) package for seven nights, single occupancy from ₹1,24,950

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