

Detox retreats in the Asia-Pacific region are increasingly luxurious and offer opulent spa surroundings, **JUDY CHAPMAN** finds out more



For body and mind

Fresh is best: For those that prefer juicing as a form of detox, there's Puriti Programs for Life at Phuket Pavilions which teaches you about the benefits of juicing, body purification and empowerment

IF YOU'RE looking to detox, you don't have to head for a sterile white clinic or subject yourself to painful deprivation. Detox retreats are increasingly luxurious and offer opulent spa surroundings, with much more than just scrubs and massages. And if you thought the famed – but strict – Chiva Som in Hua Hin is your only detox option, check out the alternatives found across the Asia-Pacific.

Six Senses Destination Spa Phuket

www.sixsenses.com

Reduce your carbon footprint at this new spa on Phuket's Naka Yai island. You will not find smoked salmon from Norway on your plate. Everything served is either grown on the island or caught fresh from the surrounding ocean. And inside each eco-sensitive villa is your own herb garden, so you can make your own tea and bath blends.

The spa facility, a cluster of Chinese, Indonesian, Ayurvedic and Thai medicine huts, is touted as a premier spa for the 21st century. For a well-rounded retreat, book the 14-night "Life Passage" that comprises holistic diagnostics, colonic hydrotherapy and wellness treatments, plus there's a secluded compound of six villas for private hire and silent retreats.

Cost: About US\$1200 a day twin-share for the 14-night programme, including "fishetarian" cuisine, consultations, lectures, activities and two treatments per day.

Spa Samui Resorts

www.spasamui.com

Learn how to give the time-honoured Thai massage when you check into one of the fasting programmes at these resorts on Koh Samui and Koh Chang islands off Thailand. Sleep in affordable jungle bungalows or beach shacks while you embark upon a rigorous schedule of daily colonics, detox drinks, vegetable broth and herbal supplements. Check out the seven-day "Clean-me-Out" programme for cleansing the liver, purifying the blood and strengthening the immune system.

There are also lectures on healthy living, raw-food cooking classes, yoga, qigong, meditation sessions and an on-site Thai Massage school. Spa treatments, customised for deep cleansing, include herbal clay wraps and the Thai Herbal steam bath. Other health-boosting retreats are the "Liver Flush" and "Candida Cleanse".

Cost: US\$300 for 7 1/2 days. Bungalows from US\$28.

Phuket Pavilions

www.phuketpavilions.com

Enjoy eco-dinner under the stars and fresh coconut juice at sundown. With a five-day Ultimate Purification Programme spent in a luxury villa with its own infinity pool, you wake up to a Puriti Super Pure Power Wheatgrass and Burdock Shake to neutralise toxins, support your liver and increase vitality. In the afternoon, receive detoxifying treatments like cleansing salt scrubs and pool-side massages.

Puriti Programs for Life, founded by Deborah Williamson, a UK herbalist, and Marcus Williamson, a former banker turned wellness practitioner, teaches you about the benefits of juicing, body purification and empowerment. The retreat also offers beach walks, horse riding, yoga and slow movement exercises.

Cost: About US\$2,400 for a five-day programme.

Four Seasons Resort Koh Samui

www.fourseasons.com

It's fresh green coconut water, organic juices and raw veggies only when you check in here for a three or seven-night "detox-in-luxury" retreat. Accommodation is sea-facing luxury villas, residences or estates, each boasting an infinity pool. All treat-



ments are customised to each guest and designed to improve digestion, promote healthy metabolism, stabilise sugar levels and shed excess weight. Supportive experiences include *chi nei tsang* "abdominal cleansing massage" plus educational seminars and private daily yoga sessions.

A bonus for those who want to continue the cleansing diet at home is the take-away eight-day Eco-Diet programme that includes recipes and tips. Otherwise, splurge on organic treatments such as tangerine and black sesame facials, crystal-infused massages and indigenous coconut scrubs.

Cost: US\$670 for three days or US\$1,590 for seven days, plus taxes, excluding meals and accommodation. Accommodation rates from US\$700 to US\$1000 a night.

COMO Shambhala Bali

www.cse.comoshambhala.bz

You co-create your own health tonics while learning first-hand the latest trends in healthy cuisine from chefs during the "Cleansing Programmes" at this luxurious resort.

It has a reputation for its celebrity spiritual and yoga master led-retreats – more recently, fashion designer Donna Karan and Robert Thurman have joined the Advisory Board. Amid an environment of lush forest and sacred rivers, the programmes are designed with tissue and organ cleansing in mind, working on the lymphatic system, liver, kidney and skin.

Tailor-made packages comprise health consultations, colonic hydrotherapy and prescribed herbal cleansers. Accommodation is villa-style, some with private pools. Facilities are world-class and the latest in wellness technology. Also, guests depart with a personalised food and lifestyle plan designed by the resident nutritionist and executive chef.

Cost: US\$2,483 for a seven-night Cleansing Programme.

Funkey Forest

www.funkeyforest.com

Rustic-chic meets ashram-living at Funkey Forest, a mountain retreat set on 200-acres in northern NSW, Australia.

Affordable accommodation comprises dorm-style rooms – or pitch your own tent. And it's the three days of pure and sacred silence set in virgin nature that has guests returning year after year.

A maximum of 13 people partake in daily meditation, gentle yoga, forest walks and cleansing organic green juices – hand-blended by an on-site naturopath. As regular retreat-goer Louise Barry says: "I just go for the silence. No need for small talk or spiritual lingo. Three days without my mobile, laptop and boyfriend feels great."

As well, a team of facilitators are on hand to ensure your experience is safe and nurturing.

But be prepared for initial symptoms like fatigue as you withdraw from extreme foods and liquids like coffee, tea, sugar and dairy.

Cost: About A\$40 for accommodation but minimum expenditure of A\$400 is required, which means you'll need to get a group together or join one. Meals about A\$35 a head.

Shreyas Retreat

www.shreyasretreat.com

Want to give back while on vacation? Volunteerism is part of your retreat experience at Shreyas, one of India's newest luxurious yoga retreats, where guests heal themselves while helping others.

Set on a tranquil estate not far from Bangalore, accommodation ranges from well-appointed cottages to elegant tents (all with broadband connection but TV-free).

Food is strictly vegetarian and alcohol-free.

However, it's the corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives that leave guest most inspired. Learn about permaculture, the future of sustainable agriculture while you help out in the organic garden.

Or even better, prepare, cook and serve food to the local kids. Solar-heating, rainwater harvesting and organic gardens add to the eco-atmosphere.

Year-round wellness retreats offer daily yoga, meditation and chanting plus time-tested Ayurvedic treatments for mind, body and soul rejuvenation.



Indulge: Left, splurge on organic treatments such as tangerine and black sesame facials, crystal-infused massages and indigenous coconut scrubs at Four Seasons Koh Samui. Right, reduce your carbon footprint at Six Senses destination Spa Phuket as everything served here is either grown on the island or caught fresh from the surrounding ocean

Cost: US\$2,300 plus taxes for a six-night package.

Chiva Som Hua Hin

www.chivasom.com

This health spa stalwart has gone through a six-month refurbishment, resulting in 19 new treatment rooms. That and new wellness director Anthony Perillo, who studied with Deepak Chopra, is introducing a new VIP personalised approach that will set a benchmark in the retreat industry.

Mr Perillo says the future of wellness is about individual treatment – cutting-edge tests followed by an individually prescribed diet, yoga, fitness and even emotional healing. New is the "Holistic Health Retreat" that has a strong Traditional Chinese Medical focus and is tailored to those with chronic conditions who want to investigate unexplained symptoms or resolve challenges that conventional medicine could not solve.

Spa-wise, the "Maya Massage" is a deeply cleansing colon massage that is highly beneficial during detox, not to mention cleansing juices and wheatgrass shots on tap.

Cost: Starts at US\$3535 twin-share for seven nights, including diagnostics, treatment and food.

Gwinganna Resort

www.gwinganna.com

Fancy some boot-camp detox? "After the initial 48-hour dip of caffeine and sugar withdrawal, rejuvenation kicks in and you'll depart feeling sensational," says Sharon Kokhla, general manager of Gwinganna Lifestyle Retreat in Australia. Now two years old, the monthly "Gwinganna Detox" remains the most popular offering. Tailored to groups of up to 50, expect seven vigorous days of "optional" activities on-the-hour plus sunrise bushwalks, lifestyle seminars and spa therapies.

Organic meals are sugar, dairy, coffee and alcohol-free and served at long communal tables to encourage conversation between guests. Holistic offerings include blood testing and other diagnostic procedures. Gwinganna recently unveiled a new "Spa Sanctuary" – two suites built around a spring-fed billabong with a treatment menu bursting with organic



Holistic offerings: Gwinganna recently unveiled a new "Spa Sanctuary" with a menu bursting with organic treatments

treatments. Book the signature ritual and therapist Stephen McGuinness may play the didgeridoo live as part of the package.

Cost: A\$2790 for twin-share for a seven-day detox.

Kalari Kovilakom

www.kalarikovilakom.com

Among India's new crop of Ayurvedic wellness retreats, Kalari Kvilakom, set in a restored palace, offers authentic programmes for detoxification. Ayurveda, when managed correctly, can do wonders for health and longevity.

Popular is the 28-day "Anti-ageing: Rasayana Chikitsa" reported to counter cellular degeneration, where two weeks of detoxification is followed by a series of rejuvenating treatments, warm oil massages and herbs. Even better, many of the fruits and herbs are plucked fresh from the surrounding garden.

Exercise disciplines include yoga and martial arts, many of which improve suppleness and alleviate stiffness and joint pain, as well as therapeutic meditations and slow movement exercises. Accommodation-wise, royal-like suites are decorated with four-poster beds, 1930s tiles and hand-painted frescos.

Cost: About US\$21,000 twin-share for a 28-day retreat.

The Farm

www.thefarm.com.ph

While a raw salad and juice diet is not for everyone, living food, when managed correctly can benefit insomnia, digestive problems and re-boot your energy levels.

At The Farm, at San Benito in the Philippines, the philosophy is: "Let food be your medicine, medicine be your food". And the operators provide a lush environment to learn about preventative health and resolve chronic conditions.

Accommodation caters to various budgets and styles, and the medical focus is supported by a landscape of holistic treatments, colon hydrotherapy and kidney, liver and gall bladder cleansing. There are traditional and machine-based diagnostic therapies – all geared towards prevention and cure of acute and chronic degenerative diseases. As well, food preparation classes and lectures by medical doctors present information on how to integrate the raw food lifestyle into your at-home meals.

Cost: About US\$3,200 for a seven-day detox.