

# Condé Nast Traveller

in association with  
Healing Holidays

## THE SPA GUIDE 2016

LOSING WEIGHT, DETOXING, FIXING ISSUES, GETTING FIT, CLEARING YOUR HEAD



### SHREYAS YOGA RETREAT BANGALORE, INDIA

WEIGHT  
LOSS

**IN BRIEF** Deep stillness and organic food in an authentic ashram

**THE LOWDOWN** If you come in on the overnight flight from London, you'll find yourself sweeping along jungle-edged roads punctuated by sleepy villages in the misty light of dawn to arrive at one of India's most beloved retreats just as the sun rises. Relish the understated atmosphere: there's no flashy design concept, no armies of staff. The one-on-one welcome begins with a garland of jasmine, rose and marigold hung around your neck – given as a gesture of the Sanskrit ethos of *athithi devo bhava*: a guest is to be served as God. Ashram discipline and traditional yoga underpin the schedule here, which starts at 6.30am with asana classes (gentle hatha as well as athletic mysore ashtanga), plus meditation and chanting sessions. The concept of community plays a big part at Shreyas and most of the staff live on site so that it feels as if everyone is on the same journey. You can help dig up and prepare vegetables from the organic garden and serve lunch to children at the local orphanage (built with guest donations). Everything is geared towards supporting self-enquiry, such as choosing to go deep with a silent retreat (five days of no talking is a profoundly shifting experience). Naturopathic doctors prescribe a personal programme of mind-and-body treatments, which work alongside the daily yoga schedule. Medicinal, muscle-melting and skin-softening scrubs and massages use hand-picked fresh herbs and go so deep they feel like an out-of-body experience. Techniques such as *trataka* (candle-gazing meditation) improve focus and concentration. And as of June this year, a new spa space replaces the two original treatment rooms, allowing for full panchakarma detoxification. Mealtimes offer the chance to mingle with high-flying types who find refuge here (one group chartered their own jet from LA), many on their second or even third visit. Each vegetarian meal is a three-course feast of traditional Indian food (curry, Bengal gram lentils and barley roti) or European dishes (aubergine and zucchini lasagne), which somehow remain light, including the desserts (orange tart, apple pudding). The abundance of local fruits and vegetables, many of which are grown on-site, means it's easy to go raw or gluten-free. Scattered among the lush greenery of palms and aromatic fig trees are smart tented cottages with showers opening onto private terraces. An infinity pool lined with sun beds is at the centre of the main courtyard, but it's usually empty. Most guests find they're so absorbed in their experience of unravelling mind, body and spirit they never dip their toe into the turquoise water.

**INSIDER TIP** Ask if you can sit with the staff as they perform their daily chanting. No need to join in; simply absorbing the vibration of the Sanskrit sounds is incredibly moving.

**BOOK IT** Healing Holidays (+44 20 7843 3592; [healingholidays.co.uk/condenast](http://healingholidays.co.uk/condenast)) offers a seven-night yoga retreat from £1,989 per person full board, including flights, transfers, treatments as per the programme and daily group activities.