



INDIA

ANANDA IN THE HIMALAYAS

THE GENTLEST MIND-BODY-SOUL RESET AT THIS POWERHOUSE OF AYURVEDA AND TCM

"So we have your father lodged in your chest and your mother in your throat," says hypnotherapist Dr Roma Singh, as if we're discussing seating plans for family lunch. "Let's talk to them about letting go." It's not the kind of conversation you expect to have at Ananda in the Himalayas, but this bastion of Ayurveda and Traditional Chinese Medicine is playing hardball with emotional wellbeing: all its programmes now include at least one session with the fierce but tender Dr Singh. My (deceased) parents duly dispatched to the light, we turn to the entity infesting the "dark cavern of emptiness" in my abdomen. This has no name (at least it's not another family squatter) but is sent packing nonetheless. I'm deeply sceptical, but the next day I can't get out of bed. I spend the entire day sleeping. My newly vacant stomach can't countenance the thought of food. The team is pleased: I'm having a total mind-body-soul reset. Reema Saika, the most magical of yoga teachers, comes to my room, emanating comfort and guiding me in yoga nidra while I'm tucked up in bed. Over the next few days, she leads me gently back to life. As my energy returns, we move through gentle asana, pranayama, mudra, bandha and meditation. I listen to vedanta talks each evening. It's a vision of how serene life could look – and it's deeply beguiling. Ananda is introducing a few tweaks – including mantra chanting and sound healing sessions – however, the general movement is to expand outwards. Last year, there were pop-up retreats at Nira Alpina in Switzerland and The Nautilus in the Maldives. Further residencies are in the pipeline. I'm already yearning to return to dive deeper with its unique yogic detox programme which uses shatkriya, a series of hatha yoga cleansing techniques, to heal – a gentler but equally powerful alternative to panchakarma. I'm also keen for a return bout with Dr Singh. Because sorting out our family history, the source of so much trauma, could be the most important work of all. JA

Healing Holidays (healingholidays.com/condenast) can arrange a seven-night Wellness programme from £4,669 per person sharing, including transfers, full board and treatments





ITALY

PREIDLHOF LUXURY DOLCEVITA RESORT

*TRANSFORMATIONAL RESULTS DELIVERED
WITH A QUIRKY SENSE OF FUN*

I saunter into Stefano Battaglia's room full of the joys of spring. But within 10 minutes, the time I'd spent gazing from the rooftop pool across the valley's apple orchards and being pampered with shirodhara counts for nothing. As he manipulates my internal organs, pain radiates from them like a mushroom cloud. Suddenly it's white-hot and and excruciating. I blaspheme, loudly. Then from somewhere – I don't know where – come the sobs. I try to fight them but I can't. They rack out of me as if someone is pulling my chest with a rope. "Finally," says master executioner Battaglia, who hasn't spoken much till now. He is a healer who works through the medium of the body to release trauma. At some point it's over, and I lie there like a shipwrecked child on a distant beach. "Bravo," he concludes. "That was intense. What did it feel like?" "Like ghosts leaving," I reply. He packs me off with a directive: to dance, sing and make art. "You need more joy in your life," he says. You're not wrong, I think. It's not the last I see of Battaglia, who does Watsu water therapy with me just before I leave, exuding a benign, protective masculinity that does me good to be reminded of.

Like Preidlhof, South Tyrol is Austrian in culture (despite the best efforts of the Treaty of Versailles and Mussolini) with Italian splashes. Preidlhof attracts quantities of hiking Germans who eat heartily and get naked in the many saunas. But there's another cohort here: those seeking answers to life in the spa, which is run by an Italian. Patrizia Bortolin is an agent of joy with a tinkly laugh, a sprite-ish quality and the knack of attracting the transformational. There's Martin Kirchler, gifted in Traditional Chinese Medicine and other ancient practices, who sorts out my "texter's thumbs" with Daoyin. Dr Alexander Angerer determines with heart-rate variability that I'm biologically younger, but under huge mental stress. Yaku shiatsu practitioner Andrea Martinelli reminds me of a shiatsu healer I saw in my 20s who saved me, which moves me deeply. But Bortolin also believes in lightening up – and has me doing belly dancing and laughter therapy. It's silly and funny and a great foil. I leave Preidlhof open, sensitive, peaceful, and rippling with life. LB

Healing Holidays (healingholidays.com/condenast) can arrange a four-night Zest Retreat programme from £1,749 per person sharing, including transfers, full board and treatments