



SHOBA NARAYAN

KEY NOTES: SHREYAS YOGA RETREAT, INDIA

09.10.07

Step through the gates of this lush retreat and you could be anywhere. Outside is the cacophony of India, inside, all you hear is the humming of birds. The scent of wild herbs (lemongrass, basil, thyme and sage) permeates the air. The décor follows the Zen Balinese aesthetic that seems to be the rage all over Asia. Dark wood, infinity pool, a profusion of flowers, minimal furnishings, and the occasional understated Buddha-head or brass lamp: it could be Bali or Phuket. Set up by an investment banker based in London, Shreyas accommodates 25 guests (many from Europe) who stay for a week or several to get yoga lessons, detox and lose weight.

WHAT'S THE BIG WOW?

The peace and beauty all around, not to mention the silence — a welcome respite from the choking traffic and crowds of nearby Bangalore, India's technology hub. It is sparse and uninspired—marble floors, white linen, flowers, woven blinds, but the rooms are clean and comfortable.

LIKED BEST

The scent of herbs everywhere, not to mention the bougainvillea, jasmine, lotus and frangipani flowers that seem to line every walkway. There is a large organic garden where guests are encouraged to work if the mood strikes, and cows provide a steady supply of fresh milk. The staff is smiling and eager, and thankfully they seem intent on pampering just as much as denying alcohol. (Sir, but would you like chamomile tea while you watch the movie in our private screening room?) Vegetarian dishes including soups, salads and pastas as well as idlis, dosas and steaming hot sambar are light and tasty.

LIKED LEAST

The long ride from Bangalore airport to Shreyas and the yoga-lite element in the group lessons that had to accommodate students of varying proficiency, bringing the whole group to the lowest common denominator.

WHO SHOULD STAY THERE

People who like yoga and want to pursue it in a soft-landing type environment. The yoga teachers here are gentle and tolerant of beginners, so this would be a good place to improve your poses and reach the next level of proficiency. The luxurious surroundings are a nice bonus. Unlike Mysore yoga schools with their four-hour long lessons, this is not a place for hard-core advanced yogis. The slow, gentle pace and the varying proficiency levels in the classes would drive advanced yoga students nuts.

WOULD I GO BACK

Yes, but if I did, it would be for a couple of weeks to get the maximum yogic bang for the buck...and who has that kind of time these days?

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