

DETOX YOUR LIFE

GET 2008 OFF TO A HEALTHY START

At this time of year, people want to detox after Christmas and new year parties have left the old framework worse for wear.

» Detox programmes are tailor-made for individuals depending on their reasons for checking in. While some want to detox for a general recovery, others seek treatment for alcohol or drug dependencies, or depression.

» Detoxification is the process of eliminating or neutralising toxins in the body. It's one of

the oldest known medical treatments, which, back in the day, was achieved by not eating. This unhealthy approach isn't recommended these days, even though some parts of Hollywood clearly didn't get the memo.

» A detox programme (which can be between five and 21 days long) is likely to include the following: consultation with a qualified Ayurvedic doctor, daily Ayurveda massage, advice on herbal remedies, daily yoga sessions and meditation sessions, counselling sessions, nutritional and dietary guidance and vegetarian meals.



Buckland Hall

up his company. He had checked into a retreat himself for a month after suffering a heart attack.

"My stress levels were so bad I would wake up in a sweat every morning," Mylvaganam says. During his stay in Kerala he met Linju and Dr Steephani, a qualified Ayurvedic doctor and yoga teacher. Both now work between their homeland and Mylvaganam's retreats.

Ayurveda is a 5000-year-old holistic Indian science ('ayur' means life, 'veda' means knowledge), which originated in Kerala. It is the world's oldest health system with an emphasis on prevention rather than cure.

Herbal Ayur Retreats aim to combine the three sister sciences of Ayurveda, yoga and meditation in an affordable weekend break, at a place that blends in with the company's philosophy.

The weekend I attend takes place in Buckland Hall, an elegant country mansion in the Brecon

Beacons in Wales. We start by learning the principles of Ayurveda. This involves getting lifestyle and nutrition advice according to our 'dosha', which Dr Steephani diagnoses. Doshas are determined by a combination of our genetic make-up and lifestyle. I am Pitta-Vata, which, among a list of things, means I have poor memory, a spiritually perceptive and disciplined mind and should avoid eating tomatoes. It's complicated, but interesting.

The yoga we practise is Hatha, which includes breathing exercises and special postures. Even for beginners it's easy to get the hang of, and by the end of the weekend and 10 hours of bending my body, I feel as if I could do the splits. Almost.

The most soothing part of the weekend though, is the meditation. During my three sessions, I manage to drop off to sleep every time. Snoring vibrating the ground indicates

NEED TO KNOW

GETTING THERE The nearest train station to Buckland Hall — where the yoga retreat is held — is Abergavenny. Take a train from London Paddington station to Newport and get a connecting train to Abergavenny.

ACCOMMODATION Buckland Hall is a grand old mansion, peacefully positioned in the countryside — the perfect setting to enjoy a four-star weekend of yoga and meditation. There are also retreats held at Tekels Park Holistic Centre in Surrey.

VITAL INFO All meals are vegetarian. If you have any allergies, specify at the time of booking.

SEE www.herbalayur-retreats.co.uk and www.bucklandhall.co.uk



that I'm not the only one.

While there is a schedule to follow, it's completely up to you what activities you participate in. If, like me, you venture off the beaten track to explore the surrounding sheep-filled hills, keep an eye out for the pheasant hunters. You don't want them ruining your zen vibe now.

» Kim Smith travelled to Wales with Herbal Ayur Retreats (012-7650 2609; www.herbalayur-retreats.co.uk). A two-night, full-board retreat at Buckland Hall costs £185. Transport was provided by First Great Western (www.firstgreatwestern.co.uk).

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