

NEW SKIES

# KNOWLEDGE OF LIFE

I'VE COME TO KERALA, ALMOST AT INDIA'S SOUTHERN MOST TIP,  
FROM WHERE AYURVEDA HAILS, TO EXPERIENCE ITS HEALTH  
BENEFITS FIRST HAND. AND HOW SKILLFUL THEY ARE.

Words & Photography: Kerry Walker

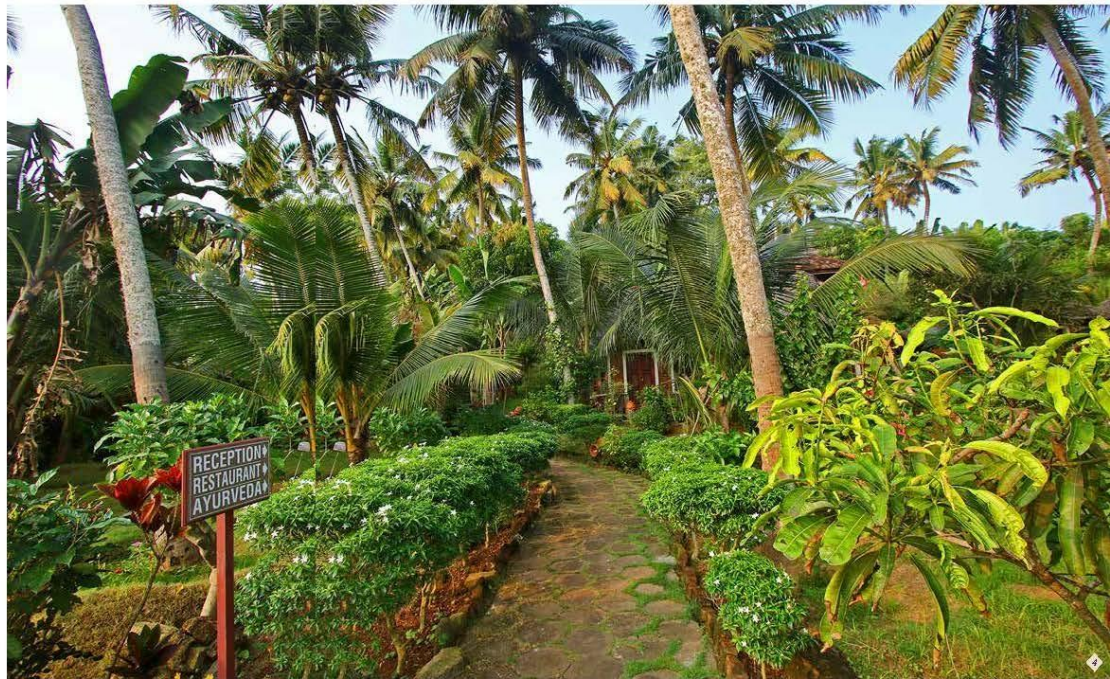
Houseboat in the  
backwaters of Kerala



© Kerry Walker



The chic new boutique Ayurveda resort features 11 luxurious spa suites in pared-back contemporary style, each with its own in-room treatment area and pool views. After a few wrong turns, the tuk-tuk driver locates the inconspicuous track to the retreat, tucked away in blissful seclusion on the banks of a tea-green river bounded by tall palms.





“Time is not relevant at Mekosha,” the general manager Elizabeth tells me, as she shows me around the Ayurvedic herb, organic vegetable and butterfly gardens, pointing out hidden relaxation areas screened by bamboo fronds. The mood here is intimate and I am alone as I walk the grounds, spotting the occasional electric-blue flash of a passing kingfisher.

Dr. Maneesh meets me for an initial consultation to ascertain the best course of action for my all-too-brief three-day stay. Pulse diagnosis and a questionnaire reveal that my *dosha* is *vata* dominant and that my *pitta* is out of whack. As I don’t have time for the full two- to three-week *panchakarma* detox, he recommends a series of daily treatments to restore balance.

I leave myself in the capable hands of my therapist, Athira, whose mantra-chanting voice, as sweet and high as a child’s, soothes me like a lullaby during treatments. These include *podikizhi*, where medicated herb poultices are applied to alleviate aches and inflammation and stimulate the nervous system, *abhyangam* massage with warm medicated oil to improve circulation and good sleep, and *pizhichil* – a soporific combination of warm oil and soft massage.

Few guests make the atmosphere at Mekosha quite special, with the doctor, chef and ever-smiling yoga teacher, Abheesh, always on hand to provide individual attention and instruction – whether you want to learn *asanas* (yoga postures) or the principles of Ayurvedic cooking. High in fresh fruits and vegetables, meals are nutritious, carefully balanced and masterpieces of texture and flavour, including the *uttapam* (fermented rice pancakes) for breakfast, and a lunchtime *thali* platter served on a fig leaf. Opened in 2018, Mekosha is still in its infancy, but the aim is for 90 per cent of the ingredients to come from the kitchen garden in the near future.

To see true results, Dr. Maneesh recommends returning for a full two- to three-week *panchakarma* programme of cleansing, purging and rejuvenation. “Panchakarma has the power to reverse chronic conditions,” he admits. “The effects are so powerful that the difference in patients is like day and night.”

For now, though, I content myself with feeling more energised, relaxed and calmer. The evenings there will always stay with me,



5. Strolling in the riverside grounds of Mekosha.

6. A therapist applying the *skirodhara* oil treatment.

7. A healthy lunchtime *thali* (platter) served on a fig leaf at Mekosha.

as this is the magic hour when day fades into a watercolour sunset, cicadas and frogs strike up, and the evening *puja* (prayer) drifts from Hindu temples, sweeping me up in its hypnotic chant. ♦



#### GETTING THERE

Thai Airways operates seven weekly flights to Bengaluru and Chennai. Somatheeram Ayurvedic Health Resort ([somatheeram.org](http://somatheeram.org)) and Mekosha ([mekosha.com](http://mekosha.com)) can be reached by the hotel transfer service or by private taxi.

