

Mekosha Ayurveda Spa Suites Retreat



Sitting lazily on the banks of a palm-fringed river, Mekosha feels a million miles away from the frenetic, traffic-clogged pace of Kerala's capital Trivandrum, just over a half-hour's drive south. This blissfully secluded resort is one of the first luxury Ayurveda retreats of its kind, with just 11 spa suites – all with in-room treatment areas – slick, contemporary decor and dreamy pool views. The vibe is, as you might expect, intimate and boutiquey, with almost as many staff as there are guests, lush gardens stretching out along the river, with hidden nooks screened by bamboo fronds and areas given over to medicinal herbs, vegetables and butterflies.

After arriving on crazy, tuk-tuk-clogged roads in the sweltering heat of a November day, the mellow mood here is both refreshing and highly welcome. The general manager Elizabeth makes me feel immediately at ease. "Time is not relevant at Mekosha," she tells me, as she ushers me up to my chic, understated spa suite, a cotton-draped king-size bed, bespoke handcrafted teak furnishings, and a balcony for gazing out across the pool and river. The all-important little touches are there, too, including a cafetiere and real coffee (a rarity in this part of India), a retro-style Marshall radio and a small library.



Since opening in 2018, Mekosha has carved out its unique niche as a boutique Ayurvedic resort – and it delivers. My three-night stay begins with a consultation, questionnaire and pulse diagnosis with Dr Maneesh to ascertain my *dosha* (constitution) – of which there are three, vata, pitta and kapha – and draw up a tailored programme of therapies to address any imbalances. I’m feeling somewhat stressed and tired after the journey but am promised that I will notice visible improvements even during my short stay.

Over the following days, I leave myself in the capable hands of my therapist, Athira, who chants mantras in a sweet, childlike voice during my therapies. 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 ensure good sleep, and *pizhichil* – a sleep-inducing combination of warm oil and soft massage.



The head chef, Anoob, a man with a ready smile and a cunning use of spice excels himself at mealtimes, creating winningly fresh and nutritious vegetarian dishes, which are rich in Keralan influences, carefully balance flavour and texture, and make maximum use of local (and organic garden-grown) produce. These range from delicate *uttapam* (fermented rice pancakes) for breakfast to a lunchtime *thali* platter served on a fig leaf. The aim is for 90% of the ingredients to hail from the kitchen garden in the near future.

Between therapies, pool time and strolls in the gardens, where the occasional kingfisher can be spotted flitting amongst the reeds, a number of activities are on offer, ranging from Ayurvedic lectures to cookery workshops, excursions, and regular yoga and meditation classes with teacher Abheesh.



Free from the diversions of Wi-Fi and smartphones (the majority of the resort is tech-free), I find myself relaxing more and more as the days pass, and my energy levels starting to rise after restful sleep. This is a place where you are actively encouraged to shut out the world and unplug. Stay for several weeks on a *panchakarma* programme of cleansing, purging and rejuvenation and the results are apparently even more profound and long-lasting.

On the evening I leave, there's a milky pastel sunset over the river. I sit on a chair and watch the flow of water, listen to the drone of cicadas and the hypnotic sound of the evening *puja* (prayer) emerging from Hindu temples. I do nothing: just sit, observe and plan my next trip to Mekosha. Next time it will be for longer, of that I am certain.



The Details

Mekosha Trivandrum Ayurveda Spasuites Retreat, Melattingal, Near Perineum Temple, Alamcode PO, Trivandrum, Kerala 695102, India.

Tel: +91 8800688344

Website: <https://mekosha.com>

Email: info@mekosha.com

Mekosha is located 30km (a 40-minute drive) north of Trivandrum International Airport. All package rates include a car pick-up from the airport, simply tell staff your ETA when booking.

Type of Hotel: Boutique Ayurvedic Resort with Spa Suites

Number of Rooms: 11 Spa Suites, complimentary Wi-Fi

Price Band: Medium to High. The classic Ayurveda package is approximately £122 per person, per night, and includes accommodation in a spa suite, all Ayurvedic meals, yoga, meditation and one to two massages or therapies daily.

Insider Tip: Long stays of 28 nights and more yield substantial discounts. This is the ideal time frame for the full *panchakarma* detox programme.

Reviewer's Rating: 9/10

Author Bio:

Kerry Christiani is an award-winning freelance travel writer, author and MA-qualified translator.

Photographs by Kerry Christiani