

Spa mantra

India's Spa & Wellness Magazine

MAY - JUNE 2013

₹100



Tracey Poole

Meet the Spa Director,
Six Senses Spa, Noida

Monumental spas

Some of the best spas in Agra

Longevity Centres

Will this trend stick?

Serenity Found

Hilton Shillim Estate Resort and Spa

Serenity Found

The Hilton Shillim Estate Retreat and Spa is a haven in the pristine forests of the Sahyadri Mountains that gives you the space to discover yourself

Writer | Sandhya Chipalkatti

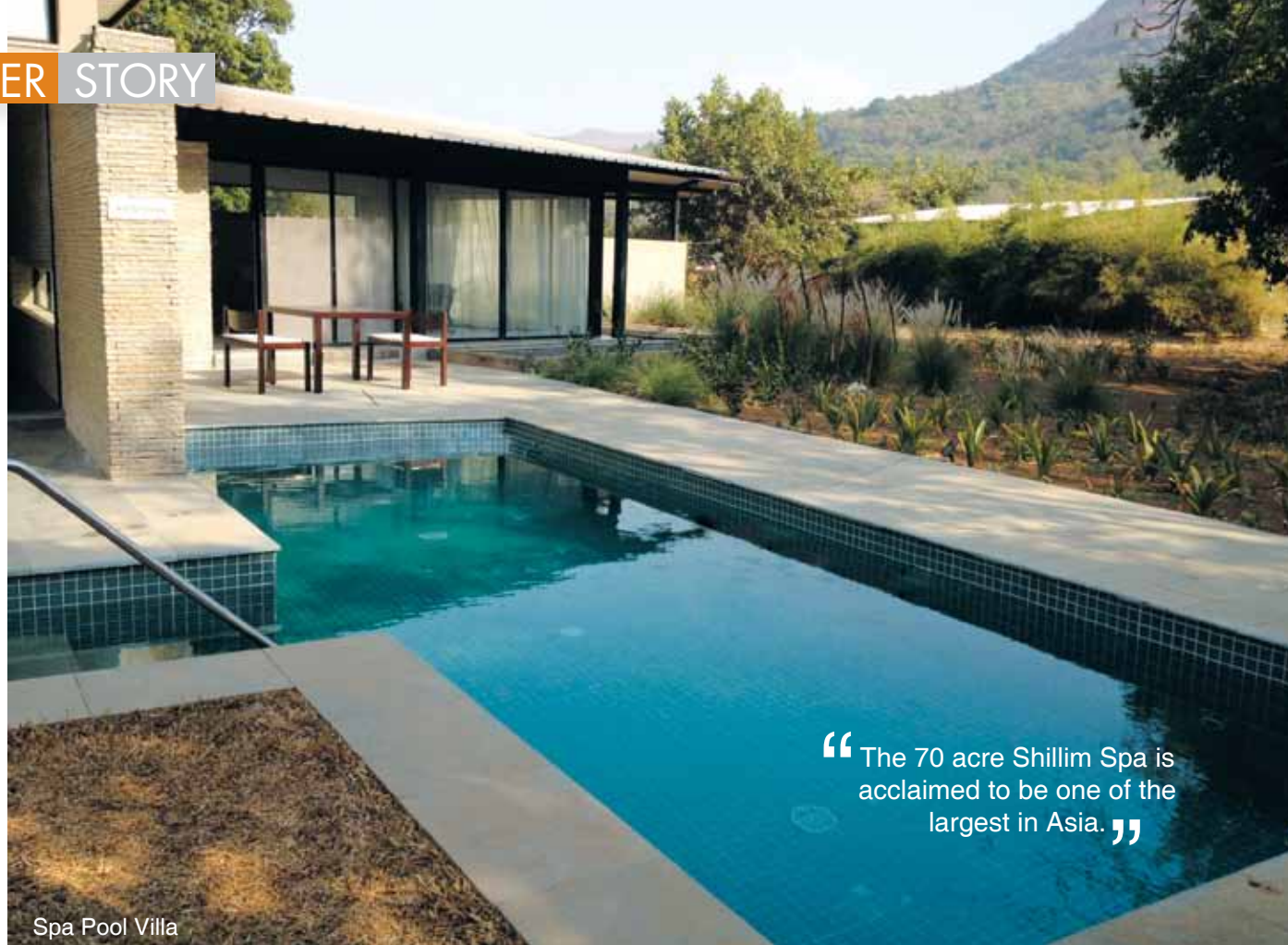
The Meditation Cave

Photography | Arjun Chipalkatti

Cradled in the spectacular Sahyadri Mountains a mere three hours drive from India's busiest megapolis Mumbai, is the massive 320 acre Hilton Shillim Estate Retreat & Spa. Set amidst lush forests of the Western Ghats, paddy fields and thickets of bamboo, the property is a part of the privately owned 3500 acre Shillim Estate, alive with wild peacocks and deer. Inconceivable for a Mumbaiite like me for whom escaping from the madding crowd becomes a priority ever so often!

Happily, I'm on my way to this newly launched leisure property, driving on the picturesque 6 lane Mumbai - Pune Expressway which goes through the popular hill stations of Khandala and Lonavala en route Pune. After Lonavala we turn off onto a smaller winding road which climbs steeply up corkscrew bends on wooded slopes, affording stunning views of the enormous Pawana Dam bordering the Shillim Estate. The discreet entrance gate of the Hilton Shillim Estate Retreat and Spa opens onto the sprawling wall-less entrance lounge dramatically perched atop a mountain. And I have a 360 degree panorama of the magnificent range of mountains hugging the undulating valley below.

This fabulous bird's eye view is as appropriate an introduction to the property as one can get.



Spa Pool Villa

“The 70 acre Shillim Spa is acclaimed to be one of the largest in Asia.”

A Labour of Love

The concept on which the Hilton Shillim Retreat was built is the vision of the owner, William D'Souza. It was his passion and commitment of creating a 100 per cent environment friendly, sustainable property which would allow him to preserve the 3500 acre Shillim Estate as an unspoiled, natural state. Covered with pristine forests, the property is a part of the Western Ghats, now a World Heritage Site.

Andreas Kraemer, G.M., Hilton Shillim Estate Retreat and Spa who opened the property in January this year tells me “The owners approached many well known hospitality chains for managing this property, but the concept was unique and it was only Hilton who bought into the owner’s vision.”

Almost 15 years in the build, the Retreat is a labour of love. The owner’s passion to create an authentic property is evident in the attention to minute detail. When Kraemer took charge in December 2011, it was still in its raw

No word has been invented yet to describe Shillim. Discover Shillim, discover yourself.

Andreas Kraemer
G.M., Hilton Shillim Estate Retreat and Spa



stage. “I had the opportunity to create a real nice retreat with straight lines and straight concepts and give guests their own journey. No rigid guidelines or rules!” The clean and minimalistic design by Steven Harris Architects, N.Y., reflects understated luxury that is the hallmark of the property. Extensive use of stone for walls, wood and glass make for unobtrusive structures which blend into the surroundings. And what is striking is that the landscaping with ethnic plants creates no boundaries between the natural forest habitat and the new plantation.

The 320 acres house 99 villas and offers guests the option of experiencing the Spa Zone with its 33 Spa Villas or the Lifestyle Zone with 66 Villas. While some villas have private pools,

all come with a personal butler service. The idea is to offer guests maximum comfort and the space to discover themselves.

A Unique Concept

The Hilton Shillim Estate Retreat and Spa is a new concept. New for Hilton, new for any hotel group that would have taken it up. “We are a Retreat with a 70 acre Spa but we offer a complete Lifestyle Zone. So if you are a family and he likes the wine cellar and you like Spa, we have it all.” According to Kraemer, the concept of the Lifestyle Zone for someone who enjoys the good things of life – great wines, cigars, and fine dining works well. In fact, the wine cellars are the largest in India which will stock 3500 bottles eventually.



A Relaxation Lounge

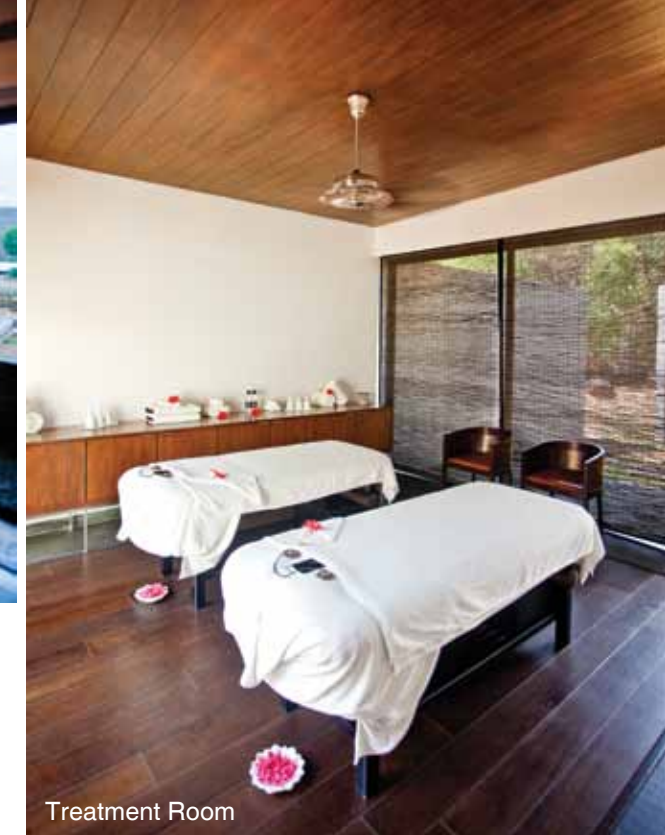
Leisure activities include boating on the Pawana Lake, paragliding off Shillim Peak which is about 620 mts. above sea level, exclusive banquets by the fireside at the Chef’s Table, trekking in the forest and even horse riding. “We will have 10 horses, including ponies for children which are thoroughbreds trained to walk, so no wild rides, here!” says Kraemer who is currently stacking fodder for the rainy season. The Lifestyle Zone also houses the Shillim Institute, established to help preserve the cultural and environmental heritage of the Western Ghats and hosting sustainability focused programmes and discussions. It will also promote local pottery, dance, music and cooking lessons here.

The Spa Zone

With 70 acres dedicated to the Spa Zone, this is one of the biggest spas in Asia, and is listed on the Healing Hotels of the World. Located at the base of the property, it has the highest concentration of natural healing energy crystals. Satellite images were used to determine where they were concentrated most on the property, and the spa was located in that area so as to give maximum healing benefits.

This zone hosts 33 Spa Villas and Spa Pool Villas measuring between 1050 to 2300 sq. feet, each with an outdoor deck and gardens fragrant with jasmine, and cestrum nocturne plants bordered by lemon grass, vetiver and bamboo. The Spa Villas with pools allow for private in villa hydrotherapies such as Watsu.

The Shillim Spa is a unique proposition in the Hilton group according to **Dr. Rajneesh Kumar, Spa Director**. You enter the spa through the Spa Grandeurs Reception, an enormous two storied oval shaped space with soaring stone walls and high ceiling. It is here that the guest is received, and acquainted with over 150 treatments that the Spa offers. Three consultation rooms and the spacious ladies and gents changing rooms complete with lockers, steam and showers are also a part of this area. The Relaxation Lounges, 17 Treatment Villas, and the huge wet zone with an Olympic sized heated swimming pool surrounded by saunas, steam and showers are set amidst indigenous mango, jamun and neem trees and herb gardens, crossed by a seasonal brook.



Treatment Room

Spa guests experience a Spa Journey which starts at the Spa Reception and ends in the relaxation lounge or meditation cave. Flagstones mark your path from one place to the other and you may just be surprised by your butler or spa staff materializing out of nowhere, tray in hand, offering you one of their many delicious detox spa drinks or teas to refresh you.

The unique features of the Spa Zone are two spaces, designed to calm the mind and bring inner peace. The Meditation Cave is a subterranean



Treatment Room

sanctum reached through a curving path that descends below ground level to open out into a large circular cave which allows daylight to filter in through a glass panel in the ceiling. Meditation mats are placed all around a central conical water body which plays out soothing sounds of flowing water, facilitating meditation. The Yoga Pavilion on the other hand is at the end of a winding path that takes you to the highest point of the Spa Zone. Complete with changing facilities, this elevated deck looks out onto the forest and mountains, with only the chirping of a myriad birds to disturb you .

Wellness of Being

The Spa's philosophy of Transformative Wellness rests on three pillars –Physical (Tarunya), Emotional (Vishrama) and Mental (Jagrit) wellbeing. The spa menu offers over 150 therapies, based on the intent and results to be achieved.

Signature Treatments draw from local inspiration, and Vanaushadhi is Shillim Spa's exclusive healing treatments using herbs and flowers from the forest, using local organic honey. Dr. Kumar tells me that plans are in place to create an apiary so that organic honey could be available in-house. The spa has an Alternative medicine specialist on board and Reiki, Watsu, Acupressure, Tai Chi, are some of the alternate therapies available. You could also choose to have treatments

in the privacy of your Villa. Several Spa Programmes from 3 days to 14 are available, which are complemented with dietary programmes in consultation with the chef. Besides, the spa invites visiting Masters periodically.

Products used for treatments range from locally sourced herbs and pure Ayurvedic oils, to international brands like Sundari and Kerstin Florian. The spa also offers a range of delicious detox juices to guests before and after treatments.

Despite the huge spa facility, respect for a guest's privacy is paramount. "We know that for many Indian guests, spa is something new, and we want to bring them closer slowly, not rush them. Healing is very important, and we want the journey to be theirs" says Andreas Kraemer. He should know. He has seen guests warm up to a consultation after a day or two at the property, and become regulars at the spa thereafter.

Spa Cuisine

The Spa Zone boasts of an organic food restaurant, the Green Table which serves a range of fusion cuisine and



Outdoor Relaxation Lounge



Green Table Restaurant



A Relaxation Lounge

About Hilton: Established in 1919, Hilton is a global hospitality group, with 10 brands which include the Waldorf Astoria and the Conrad. In India, it has presence in major metros with over 10 properties.

whips up exclusive recipes under the watchful eye of **Chef Basha**. While organic meats and fish are sourced from overseas, the organic vegetables and herbs are mostly sourced from their own plantation in the property. But for those who love their tea, the pristine white Tea Room with low seating and a choice of bespoke organic teas,

SPA SNAPSHOT

Name of the Spa: Shillim Spa
 Address /Contact: Hilton Shillim Estate Retreat & Spa, Shillim, Taluka – Maval , Pune 410406, Maharashtra. T: +91 8879679123; www.shillimretreatandspa.hilton.com
 Owner: Writer Lifestyle Pvt. Ltd.
 Operator: Hilton Worldwide
 General Manager: Andreas Kraemer
 Spa Director: Dr Rajneesh Kumar
 Spa Area: 70 acres
 Spa Team (No. of Staff): 15
 Full Capacity (Max no. of Treatments a day): 60
 Spa Facilities (Sections in the Spa): Spa Grandeurs Reception, Changing Rooms Male / Female, Relaxation Area, Meditation Cave, Yoga Pavillion, 3 Consultation Rooms, 17 Treatment Villas, Salon, Spa Central Pool, Spa Central Facilities consisting of steam, sauna, whirlpool.
 Spa timings: 10 am -9 pm
 Treatment Prices (Range): 3800-9500 INR
 Awards: Member of the Healing Hotels of the World.

specially blended by an expert in the Himalayas promises an entirely new experience.

Experience Shillim

The location of the property is its biggest uniqueness. Where else could you find a world class leisure experience in pristine wilderness just hours away from Mumbai and Pune, surrounded by three of Shivaji's forts and the historic Karla caves where you see Buddha's thumbprint?

But Shillim is about experiences. It's

about climbing up Shillim Peak to see the sunrise over the Western Ghats and see the expanse of Pawana Lake. Or, going on horseback to picnic in a fort. Or, trekking through the woods to see tumbling streams and waterfalls. "We want to give experiences where you can touch and feel. Take off your shoes and feel the earth; touch your horse; smell the flowers" says Kraemer.

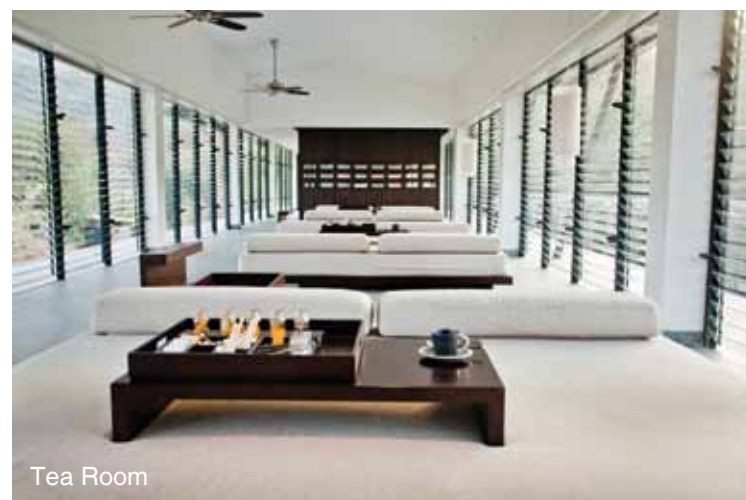
Discover Yourself

So, go to Shillim to be one with nature. Slow down and find yourself....🍌

The Vanaushadhi of Shillim are our customized healing treatments using natural herbs and plants from the forest.



Dr. Rajneesh Kumar
Spa Director, Shillim Spa



Tea Room



Bedroom in Spa Pool Villa



Yoga Pavillion