



VANA WEIGHT LOSS

DEHRADUN, INDIA

A SOULFUL SOLUTION TO MENTAL STRESS

This is a modern-day maharaja's palace, a cutting-edge cocoon beside an ancient sal forest. Its extraordinary architecture will put you in mind of Bilbao's Guggenheim Museum: vast minimalist public spaces with triple-height ceilings, curvaceous sweeps of cloud-white walls, striking contemporary-art installations and tactile natural furnishings. It feels incredibly glamorous and that, let's be frank, isn't typical of Indian spas, which tend to have all the allure of a retirement home. Fortunately, Vana's beauty isn't just skin deep. Nurturing doctors, trained in both western and eastern medicine, quiz guests to establish their *prakruti* (basic nature) and *vikruti* (imbalances) based on Ayurveda's doshas and carefully construct bespoke programmes for the burnt-out crowd who drift in mainly from Europe in desperate need of some TLC. Schedules include traditional therapies such as shirodhara, but are often accompanied by more conventional treatments. For example, Ashish, the resort's physiotherapist, is in hot demand to tailor-make exercises to counter computer-compromised deltoids, and jogger's aches and pains. Vana doesn't have a calendar of visiting practitioners, preferring to invest in the excellence of its resident team. That commitment shows. This is also

THIS IS THE PLACE TO DISCOVER AUTHENTIC TIBETAN HEALING, AND ALSO HAS THE DALAI LAMA'S SEAL OF APPROVAL

the place to discover authentic Tibetan healing. *Sowa-rigpa* is more than 2,500 years old, and is a subtly effective system, influenced by both Ayurveda and Traditional Chinese Medicine. En route to a limb-loosening *hor gyi metsa* massage, you'll pass the chair the Dalai Lama used during a visit here in 2016. Vana is the only wellness centre that has his seal of approval. You'll probably also hear mesmerising Tibetan chanting, which somehow shoos all worries from your mind. Vana's intelligent, accessible approach to mental clarity is a feather in its cap and one reason why so many guests report life-changing experiences and return time and again. The options go well beyond sitting cross-legged, eyes closed, in an attempt to meditate. There is *tratek*, staring at a candle flame without blinking, which is astonishingly refreshing, raag therapy, a musical pathway to mindfulness, and powerful om chanting with the wonderful Dr Dhanraj. Digital discipline rather than a strict detox is imposed so Wi-Fi is available in the 86 eco-chic bedrooms. Dining is a similar exercise in self-restraint. The food is delicious, though you will refuse to believe that lamb and lentil galette with sweet potato, fish *paupiette* with seasonal vegetable and chocolate mousse really adds up to only 500 calories. You must decide if you need side dishes, seconds or alcohol – just as you'll have to when returning home. And, of course, there is superior yoga several times a day in a smart, glass-enclosed pavilion. The views from almost everywhere within the hotel may be of those sky-high sal trees, but Vana is actually in the middle of the busy town of Dehradun and traffic noise often interrupts the serenity. It is the only discordant note in an otherwise sublime expression of style and substance.

INSIDER TIP The forest-view rooms are in shade much of the day, so if you like to sunbathe on your balcony go for one overlooking the gardens. **BOOK IT** Healing Holidays (+44 20 7843 3592; healingholidays.co.uk/condenast) offers seven nights from £2,399 per person, full board, including flights, transfers and a personalised wellness programme. Healing Holidays is the only UK tour operator that works with Vana.

