

Ayurveda Retreats

You don't have to travel to India to experience the benefits of an authentic Ayurveda retreat—here in the U.S.

By **Tara Bradley Connell**

Ayurveda, an ancient science developed in India, restores the mind and body. But you don't have to be a globe-trotting yogi to appreciate the practice. After a consult with an Ayurveda specialist, treatments feel more like a day at the spa than a holistic medicine session.

Once reserved for India's royalty, the regimen includes a variety of therapeutic oil massages that attend to all ailments of the body. In the U.S., Ayurvedic practices are becoming more mainstream and credited with addressing everything from allergies and menopause to chronic pain, weight loss and constipation. →

The Raj

"Ayurveda gives us tools to better understand the way we think, feel and act," says Kristen Schneider, National Ayurvedic Medical Association Board Certified Ayurveda Practitioner and creator of Wellblends products. "By utilizing Ayurvedic principles we can reclaim our health and prevent disease, beginning first with awareness. In Ayurveda, we achieve balanced results through balanced means," she continues. "Whether it be through food, lifestyle, herbs, or more detailed techniques."

Here are five Ayurveda retreats that are just a quick flight away.

The Raj

The Raj is a French-style manor set on 100 acres of Iowa countryside. Its location in Maharishi Vedic City has been pesticide- and herbicide-free since 2002. Since the retreat's opening in 1993, The Raj ensures an authentic Ayurveda experience with routine consults by a committee of Maharishi Ayurveda experts from India. Stays here feature villas scattered throughout the property, lounge areas and a library. Dining is primarily organic, vegetarian and can be served privately or family-style, catering to both groups and solo travelers.

After a consultation from a private Ayurveda specialist, all-inclusive packages include a customized program with dietary and lifestyle recommendations, herbal enemas, healing oil massages, Maharishi light technology with gems and aromatherapy. theraj.com

The Art of Living Retreat Center

It's all about the mountain views for guests at The Art of Living Retreat Center, located on 380 acres of forested landscape in North Carolina's Blue Ridge Mountains. Accommodations range from shared spaces to apartments equipped with a kitchen, washer and dryer, flat-screen TV and private bathroom. The menu serves fresh ingredients straight from the on-site garden in dishes inspired by the local harvest.

Stays start at the property's Shakara Ayurveda Spa with a preliminary one-on-one consultation and pulse assessment by an Ayurveda health counselor. From there, days are a mix of yoga sessions, guided meditations, herbal exfoliation treatments and warm oil massages focusing on the joints, ear canals, nasal cavities and eyes—to calm the doshas, remove toxins and rejuvenate the body. artoflivingretreatcenter.org

Sivananda Ashram Yoga Farm

For a more intensive Ayurveda experience, Sivananda Ashram Yoga Farm is located in Grass Valley, 150 miles north of San Francisco. The working ashram acts as a spiritual learning center. Built for practitioners who don't mind a stricter regimen, yoga and satsang sessions are required daily. Fresh water comes from a well, meals are vegetarian and conservative clothing is encouraged.

Ayurveda Massage Rejuvenation Retreats are on the monthly calendar. After a 90-minute Ayurveda consult, treatments include four-handed warm herbal oil massages and full-body steams. Weekly teaching sessions touch on Indian cooking and Ayurveda nutrition. During free time, guests cool off in the nearby swimming pond, walk the Peace Miracle Labyrinth, or hike the Moksha Trail—a 108-step climb to the top of Siva Temple Hill. sivanandayogafarm.org



The Art of Living Retreat Center

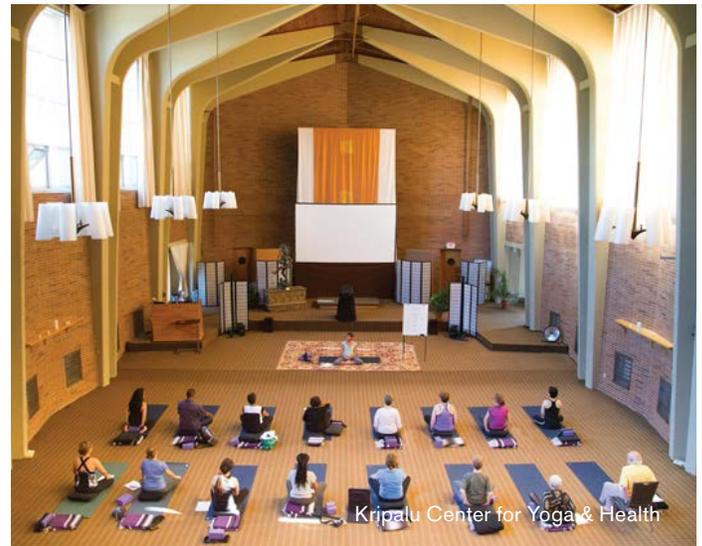


Sivananda Ashram Yoga Farm

Kripalu Center for Yoga & Health

Lake Mahkeenac is at the center of Kripalu Center for Yoga & Health, located in Stockbridge, Massachusetts. Situated on 100 acres of hilltop landscape, guests take a break from treatments with a private beach, hiking paths and running trails. Good for both groups and singles, housing options range from dorm room-like facilities with shared bathrooms to private rooms and baths.

A la carte menu options keep schedules flexible for guests focusing on different ailments. The agenda features exfoliating body treatments, massages with herbal clays and oils, Marma-balancing acupressure and Shirodhara, an oil massage on the forehead and scalp that soothes the nervous system. In addition to Ayurveda meals served daily, other on-site action includes indoor and outdoor yoga, Ayurveda-themed workshops, kayaking, paddle boarding and a walking labyrinth. kripalu.org



Kripalu Center for Yoga & Health

Ayurveda Health Retreat

Florida's Ayurveda Health Retreat is nestled in the historic town of Alachua, 20 minutes from Gainesville. Instead of palm trees and beaches, guests can expect a humbler oasis with freshwater springs, parks and rivers.

Weekend refresher courses and 21-day retreats are offered with an all-inclusive rate that includes private guest rooms and daily Ayurveda vegetarian meals. For a more intense experience, Panchakarma, a practice that removes ama (toxins), can last over two hours with a four-handed massage, aromatherapy, nasal therapy and Shirodhara. The daily regimen for guests is laid-back with guided meditation, breath work, morning and evening yoga classes and Ayurveda cooking classes. ayurvedahealthretreat.com



Ayurveda Health Retreat



Kripalu Center for Yoga & Health