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India: Hilton Shillim Estate Retreat and Spa

RUTH METZSTEIN 24 May 2015

south & central asia

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Set amidst the scenic landscape of the Western Ghats, and with one of the most extensive spas in Asia, this retreat takes the concept of rest and rejuvenation to a different level, writes Ruth Metzstein



Hotel: India: Hilton Shillim Estate Retreat and Spa

THE LOWDOWN:

[Hilton Shillim Estate Retreat and Spa](#) has to be one of India's best kept secrets — but who can blame the clientele from wanting to keep it to themselves? Set in 320 acres of lush countryside in the Western Ghats mountains, just a few hours' drive or a 30-minute seaplane hop from [Mumbai](#), the estate consists of 60 charming villas spread comfortably around the estate.

The peak season for local guests is monsoon time (May and June), when the people of Mumbai and Pune come to escape the frenetic streets of their cities to delight in the green wilderness and magical waterfalls of the surrounding mountains. They can keep the rains. The rest of the year, Shillim is bathed in sunshine.

From the hotel reception, you'll be driven to your stylish stone-walled villa, which would look equally at home in Palm Springs. Spacious living rooms lead onto beautiful bathrooms and calm bedrooms, all finished in invitingly tactile materials. They're thoughtfully designed and simply furnished and I feel at home immediately.

“The hotel's Green Table restaurant is worth the drive from Pune alone”

There's a coffee machine and snacks, and plenty of in-villa dining options, but most of the eating is

done in one of the hotel's restaurants, any of which will rustle up the Ayurvedic menu prescribed by the on-site doctor should you wish.

For those seeking a spot of spiritual enlightenment, there's a perfect yoga pavilion, meditation cave and the nearby Karla Caves to visit (remarkable temples carved out of a mountain). But if you've come to indulge rather than cleanse, the hotel offers various bars, a truly extensive spa — the estate claims to offer the most comprehensive spa facilities in Asia — and regularly changing workshops offering everything from cookery to dance.

THE GOOD:

The hotel's Green Table restaurant would be worth the drive from Pune alone; it's a beautiful space in which to enjoy the region's best ingredients prepared with imagination and care.

The spa is huge (encompassing nearly 70 acres) and offers every single healing tradition you can think of, from chakra cleansing to fire healing.

THE NOT SO GOOD:

There's a fine line between pampering and dependence. Having to call your butler for a lift every time you want to leave your villa is a little off-putting.

THE VERDICT:

An Indian gem which is indulgent without being vulgar, stylish without being pretentious, and healthy without being worthy.

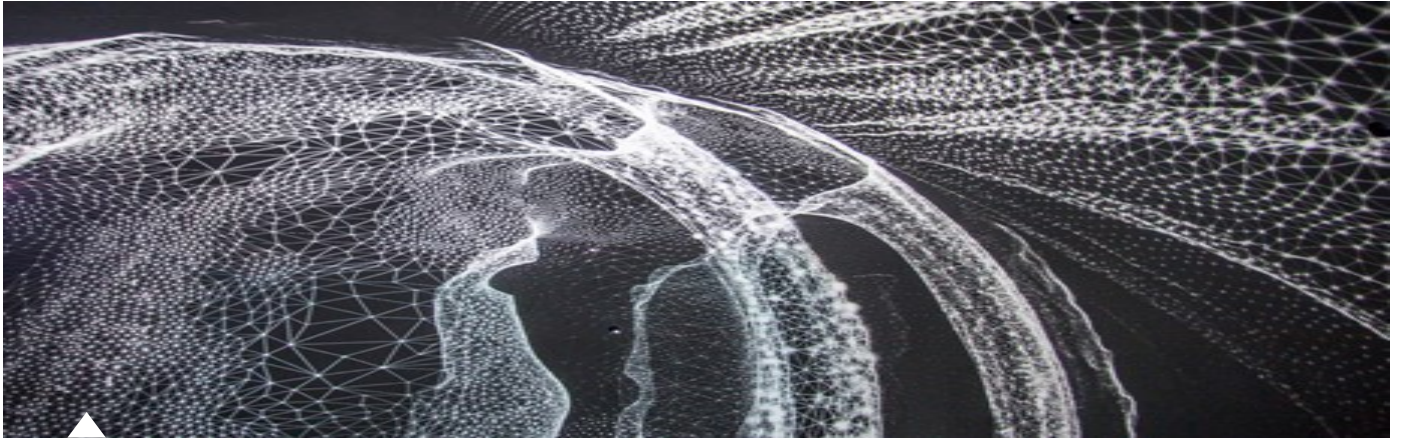
BOOK IT:

Pawana Nagar Taluka Maval, Pune, 410401 (+91 2114 712 468; hilton.com)

Greaves (greavesindia.co.uk, +44 (0) 20 7487 9111) creates tailor-made tours to India and can offer a seven-night itinerary to Mumbai and Shillim from £1,699pp based on two sharing.



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