



Resort Svatá Kateřina A Place to Find Luxurious Balance

By Cynthia Garibay

Is it me, or does the overindulgence marathon of the holiday season start to feel more like a chore than something one absolutely wants to do?

Don't get me wrong: I adore getting together with friends for warm drinks, organising lengthy knitting sessions, taking a walk to admire the street decorations, and the overall enthusiasm attached to the Christmas break.

However, I find it more and more difficult to comply with the "all-you-can-eat" mood that seems to have taken over the very well-intentioned celebration of virtues and good deeds.

With this in mind, I hope you can understand how excited I was to visit Resort Svatá Kateřina for an Ayurvedic introduction weekend in early January. As a yoga teacher and complementary-therapies enthusiast, I was excited to finally have an excuse to get some me-time, put my phone down, and push my daily routine aside.

It seems to me that nowadays we need to remove ourselves physically from our "usual hangouts" (our offices, the gym, sometimes even our homes) to allow ourselves to disconnect.

I reached Resort Svatá Kateřina after a beautiful three-and-a-half-hour train journey from Prague. Check-in was smooth and the staff were very friendly.

After receiving the programme for the day, I proceeded to wander around. As I explored, what struck me was the realisation that this wouldn't be your "typical" spa adventure.

The complex is imbued with an atmosphere that offers not only the opportunity to have a relaxed holiday break, but also to plunge into the profound, warm waters of self-care. A place – aided by the somewhat spartan look of some of their rooms – where one can delve into a whole different universe, a whole new daily routine in which the epicentre is you.

Having the possibility of spending your whole stay in silence, doing yoga or horseback riding, is certainly part of its charm, but what made this place so special to me was its focus on Ayurvedic medicine and Ayurvedic living.

Ayurvedic medicine is one of the world's oldest holistic healing systems, nowadays considered in the western world as a form of complementary or alternative medicine.

Developed in India more than 5,000 years ago, Ayurveda is based on the belief that health and wellness depend on a delicate balance between the mind, body, and spirit, as well as on our dialectic relationship with the environment. According to Dr Sanjay Das, resident Ayurvedic doctor at Svatá Kateřina, Ayurveda is "the science of life," a way of living and a practical system of medicine, in which the main goal is to preserve health by restoring our inner balance in complete harmony with our surroundings.

Since 2016, Resort Svatá Kateřina, in close cooperation with the Kairali Ayurvedic Clinic in Kerala, India, has been offering several programmes, as well as consultations with its resident Ayurvedic doctor and treatments performed by Indian therapists trained and certified by the clinic.

The meticulously planned programmes are designed to address particular needs: an Ayurvedic programme for women, a programme focused on back pain, metabolic balance, or an Ayurvedic weight loss programme. They include doctor's consultations, tailored Ayurvedic therapies and massages, yoga lessons, and three Ayurvedic meals a day, masterfully prepared by Rahul Gopalakrishnan, sous chef and certified Ayurvedic nutritionist, who, given the opportunity, will happily lecture you on the magic of spices and the beauty of a simple, traditional style of cooking.

While sharing a delicious Ayurvedic dinner with Dr Sanjay, as he was explaining the complexity of Ayurvedic medicine's profound knowledge of human nature, I was struck by the fact that he wasn't telling me anything I hadn't come across in recent years. Not only in the circles of "alternative" yoga-loving yuppies and New Age fanatics, but also in scientific papers from medical researchers around the world, it is clear we are facing an era marked by the sharp rise of stress-related diseases, along with mushrooming ailments linked to a sedentary lifestyle, malnutrition, and the abuse of technology, and we urgently need to address these issues.

Preventive medicine has been identified as a way forward by health systems such as the NHS in the UK.

As Dr Sanjay put it: "We have started to live, eat, and act against nature like never before, and we urgently need to find a way to rebalance and reconnect with ourselves. Holistic systems such as Ayurveda have been showing the way for thousands of years."

My first day in the resort was over, but not without visiting the spa area and passing under the miraculous hands of Resmi, who gave me hands-down the best massage I have had in recent years. Believe me, never underestimate the power of a soft, gentle touch, decadent oils, and an hour-and-a-half full-body massage. I left semi-floating towards my room and was sleeping like a baby within five minutes of my head hitting the pillow.

The next day I visited the new Ayurvedic Pavilion, which will open in late February. It is a state-of-the-art Ayurvedic treatment centre and spa, built with all-natural materials and ceiling-to-floor windows. Together with the Kairali Ayurvedic Clinic, it has been designed to comply with every characteristic an Ayurvedic centre of the highest standards would have in India. Not only the design of itself, but also the materials, gardens and views, were planned in minute detail to be able to offer visitors genuine Ayurvedic treatments of the highest quality. Resort Svatá Kateřina truly has everything in order to become the leading Ayurvedic centre in Central Europe.

After an amazing yoga class and an Ayurvedic Sattvic lunch, I packed my things and headed to the reception to wait for my shuttle transfer to the train station. New Year's Resolutions and esoteric theories aside, I left with an acute sensation of having found something very special, as if I had connected with an internal source of strength and peace to face the New Year with the sole purpose of seeking a more balanced existence.

