

Wellness escape to revive body and mind - **Maria Shollenbarger**, September 19 2021

Easy Ayurveda meets beach bliss.



And finally, to the far northwest corner of Kerala, and the coast at Kasaragod, where there's a little place that's made it on to the favourites list of some very worldly people. Neeleshwar Hermitage isn't an Ayurvedic retreat in the strict sense, though the cuisine and therapies it offers across the airy pavilions of its 12 oceanfront acres do incorporate many elements of Ayurveda. Nor is it a five-star proposition, so those obsessed with thread counts and 2am room service should probably book elsewhere. What Neeleshwar is, is a sanctuary in the most absolute sense. It is safe, both in Covid-19 terms (Kerala had one of India's most successful vaccine rollout programmes and its fastest recovery, and is open for tourism again) and in the personal one (I rode my little bicycle – each guest is given one for the duration of their stay – all over the area, all over the area, morning and early evening).



It is generous: the portions of clean, fresh, fish-and-vegetable-based curries and rices are robust, the breakfasts vast and varied, the staff chatty and smiling. Oil treatments and massages are often delivered by two therapists working in tandem, and the shirtmaker located at the resort's entrance will happily spread out bolt after bolt of sorbet-shaded cottons for you to admire. And finally, Neeleshwar is very pretty: the cottages are large and breezy, with wood floors and white beds, and patios across which rattan furniture is arranged and hammocks strung. The restaurant is the literal manifestation of feet in sand, with rich violet and pink table linens. And the sun plunges spectacularly into the Indian Ocean, a nightly spectacle that seems to happen just for you, and has got to be food for the soul.