

Travelling through Kerala's mysterious North- [Martin Symington](#) | 12 September 2021

Healing at the hermitage...



I was lucky enough to be staying at the Neeleshwar Hermitage 'beach retreat', which specialises in meditation, yoga and holistic therapies. Kerala is the cradle of Ayurveda, the ancient Hindu philosophy of healing and wellbeing as offered at numerous centres and ashrams in the state, many of them ascetically vegan and teetotal. The Hermitage understands that wellness does not have to be part punishment. Rather, it works in a sublime setting of lush tropical gardens sprinkled with thatched bungalows, hammocks and an infinity pool.

Dr Deepa, the on-site Ayurvedic practitioner, told me with the certitude of a true believer that "a *kati basti* will be most efficacious for your spinal stiffness." This turned out to mean having heady-scented medicated oils poured into a rope ring placed on my lower back. It felt great, especially when the oil seeped deep into my tissues. That evening, I prescribed myself (with equal certitude of efficacy) an ice-cold Kingfisher Premier beer to complement the barbecued tiger prawns, spicy sauces and sounds of crashing waves at the moonlit beach restaurant.