

# Time stands still AT THE HILTON SHILLIM RETREAT & SPA

On a hot summery Sunday morning, winding our way through the beautiful and lush Western ghats, we set out for Shillim, about 30 kms from Lonavla, to experience the beautiful and extensive spa at the Hilton. The drive, though picturesque, was not so comfortable due to the bad roads, but I was looking forward to this lovely experiential.

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Upon my arrival at the Hilton, I was warmly received by Mr Naveen Dogra, Front Office Manager at the hotel. I was amazed to see the lovely retreat, which is spread over 350 acres, nestled so cozily amidst the breathtaking natural beauty of the place itself.

After going through the library lounge, the wine cellar, the bistro, we proceeded to the terrace (one of the restaurants), for a sumptuous lunch. Usually a poor eater, I was pretty famished that day from the travel and a more sandwich on the go. So, I settled for a relaxed and undisturbed meal in the lap of luxury. With a very helpful attendant at the restaurant, I was through a delicious lunch and just as I was about to move for a relaxation regime at the spa, the rain gods decided to descend. It poured for at least over an hour, making the entire wilderness greener and more beautiful from the aftermath of the rains.

Then, heading to the spa, I waited at the reception sipping on some refreshing green tea while my therapist arrived. My therapist, Elizabeth took me to one of the spa rooms, (they have separate rooms, even couple rooms, all over the retreat), which was simple, with minimalist décor and exuded calm. After making me comfortable, she began the therapy. I had opted for a relaxing foot and head massage and Elizabeth liberally using, Sundari oil (which is especially brought down from the US) started massaging my feet and legs, putting me in a deep slumber. I lost track of time, while Elizabeth's soft and expert hands were relaxing my legs. After she was through, she used a warm towel to clean the oil from my legs and feet and gave me an invigorating

head massage. The whole process took about 45 minutes and at the end, I felt refreshed. In fact, I felt as though it should continue for another hour. But time was a constraint and I had to return to Mumbai by late evening. While leaving, I was met by Dr. Rajarajesh Kumar, who is in charge of the retreat. He took me around the lovely spa, which has a meditation cave, where you can simply sit and meditate, or even chant religious mantras. There's a swimming pool, a lovely 'local lounge', where you can sip on different types of teas from around the world and also 'The Green Table' (a restaurant), which true to its name, offers organic dishes.

The Hilton Shillim Retreat & Spa offers a range of signature therapies as well. You can pick from Manushadhi of Shillim - Gifts from the Forest, Bodywork & Energy Balancing, Body treatments, SPA: Face & Skin Therapies, Ayurveda treatments, In villa Treatments, Yoga & Meditation and many more.

The day had come to an end and I had never felt so one with nature in a long time as now, but I would suggest that no matter what your reason to visit Hilton Shillim, it is wise to at least stay for a night. I certainly felt time was short as I had made a one day trip. You can, of course choose to stay longer and am sure, the longer one stays there, the more one would want to be there forever and away from the hustle-bustle of the city life.

Refreshing, rejuvenating, calming, is how I would describe my entire experience! ■