

HOSPITALITY

A column which reviews the best hotels in Goa



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New years are meant for new resolutions, and these are almost always health-related. How far these resolutions last is anyone's guess, but getting off to a great start is nothing but beneficial.

To bring in the new year full of promise and still full of luxury, CGH Earth offers the ideal wellness getaway that introduces you to a lifestyle you'll never want to change. The company is known across India for its wellness ventures and most of its hotels are in faraway Kerala. For Goans, a mere 170 kilometres (from Panaji) brings you to unspoiled beaches and CGH Earth's SwaSwara hotel.

The name comes from the Sanskrit words for 'self' and 'sound', and SwaSwara believes that it is not a destination for your rejuvenation at all, but instead the vehicle to transport you to the best version of yourself.

Overview

By virtue of its shape, Om Beach itself seems touched by divine peace. Hidden away from its popular hippie stretches is SwaSwara hotel with 26 acres of sprawling lawns, gardens and hills surrounded by pristine sandy beaches.

With peace at its core, its spaces offer a deep sense of tranquillity and connection to nature without losing

A new you at SWASWARA

Rediscover health and soak in the natural bounty of a pristine forest getaway surrounded by virginal beaches at CGH Hotel's beach-side health resort in Gokarna

out on luxury, while its services and amenities all aim to please the body and mind into a healthy change.

Accommodation

Calling on north Kannada heritage, 24 rustic-looking villas dot the entire landscape at SwaSwara. It promotes Konkan artistry and woodcraft in all its simplistic beauty, and the laterite stone buildings with thick dark chocolate brown thatch blend seamlessly with the surroundings.

From your cocoon of peace, you can look across the stumpy hills nearby and breathe in deeply all the pure air of the Western Ghats. Each villa offers both privacy as well as a direct link to nature, with a quiet, air-conditioned room and semi-open attached bathroom. You can practice your favourite form of yoga or meditate as the feeling arises right on your own deck outside each villa.

Dining

At SwaSwara, food is thought of more

in terms of nourishment than something to indulge in. Still, thanks to their passion and intimate knowledge of ingredients, eating here is easily a highlight.

The cuisine follows the philosophies laid down by yoga, ayurveda and naturopathy, and the kitchen is fed by a constant stream of produce from the CGH organic farms and, due to proximity to the beach, freshly caught



SwaSwara the most ambitious project undertaken by CGH Earth sits on the very frontiers of the concept holiday and answers a futuristic yet ancient definition that a "Holiday" is a pilgrimage to the Self

Jose Dominic



seafood. Other meats and hard liquor do not find a place at SwaSwara and you do not miss it. Indian wines, however, are available.

The focus is on freshness and simplicity, the perfect balance between raw and cooked, quantity and texture. Guests living at SwaSwara under specialised health programmes typically follow the diets prescribed by the in-house experts.

Cuisine styles are mostly Indian but feature global inspiration and it would be out of place to find something fiery hot or full of spice. Dishes change according to the season, and meals are served either at the Beach Kitchen or at the Cocum dining room.

Programmes

SwaSwara offers a variety of wellness programmes including the introductory week-long Swa Holiday, the ailment-related or rejuvenatory fortnight-long Prana Holiday, the 14 or 21-day detox and cleanse Swastha Holiday, the yoga-focused Shanti Vanavasa Holiday, the Vanavasa package deep in the heart

SwaSwara
a cgh earth experience

Mini Chandran
General manager



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of the forest, and other specially designed retreats. Each includes a combination of consultations with doctor or naturopath, yoga sessions, ayurvedic therapies and massages, and a multitude of relaxing 'holiday' activities such as cruises and visits to places of interest nearby.

Amenities & Services

A gorgeous free-form swimming pool takes centre stage at the SwaSwara property, allowing you to lounge in the sun or get some additional exercise. The area is surrounded by lawn so a spot of reading on the deck chairs comes highly recommended.

There is a special Ayurveda Dome and Meditation Centre, where much of the activity – or relaxation – takes place, but SwaSwara brings in a holiday element to your retreat as well. There are boat cruises to see nearby islands or a chance spotting of dolphins, visits into the town to see the local sites, guided tours to the ancient Gokarna temple and town as well as the farmers' market, and cultural programmes including dance and music.

Additionally, you could choose to learn how to make those delicious meals through cooking demos with the staff or engage in *karma* yoga, where guests join the staff in community

activities such as farming, gardening or beach cleaning.

The art studio allows guests to express their new, rejuvenated selves through tribal painting, pottery or other local crafts learnt with talented artists who take up residence here.

And for an intense retreat, away from the distractions of modern life, there is Vanavasa, a getaway offering deep restorative opportunity with days of solitude and no contact with technology, a time of silent awareness in the heart of nature.

Experience

I was looking for a new way to begin this new year and having stumbled on SwaSwara through CGH's other ventures, I knew this was my answer. It's an easy getaway from Goa, and offers a moment in time to nurture a healthier body, a peaceful and calmer mind, and an inspired soul.

On arrival, we were greeted by Mini Chandran, the very warm-hearted general manager of SwaSwara, and her staff. Together, we decided on a three-day destress programme based on my recent lifestyle.

I was floored by the beauty of the architecture and how peaceful it immediately made one feel. We felt secluded in our villa, despite it being one of two dozen, and it had an

extraordinary look and ambience about it. The private garden and outdoor bathroom were my favourite areas, being so in touch with nature as they were. The indoor bedroom, complete with air-conditioning and exquisitely comfortable beds, reminded us that not all luxury was lost.

A consultation with the doctor was one of the first things on the cards after arrival, and a list of therapies was advised for the duration of my stay. Each was specialised in allowing my mind and body to rid itself of the mental and physical stress of the season just gone by.

The highlight at SwaSwara were the meals, particularly the formality of dinner either on the beach front or in the dining room. Every dish was full of health and vitality and almost zero fat. Each course, designed by the delightfully named Chef Joy, was a masterpiece in freshness, appearance, nutrition and taste. By the time I got through the four courses at each meal, I was well and truly full.

Together with the staff and other guests, we brought in the new year, bending the rules ever so guiltily to enjoy a bottle of fine Indian red. It was a celebration of health and wellness and I will certainly be returning to SwaSwara in my unending search for the best version of myself. ■

