

COUNTRY & TOWN HOUSE

A photograph of a line of men in red shirts holding flaming lamps at night. The men are seen from the side, moving from left to right. They are holding large, ornate brass lamps with multiple flames. The background is dark, and the light from the lamps illuminates the scene.

Ayurveda,
yoga, ancient
wisdom and
spiritual
sustenance

**THE INDIAN
WELLBEING GUIDE**

Edited by
DAISY FINER

» NEELESHWAR HERMITAGE, Kerala

For Traditionalists With a Wild Side

This restorative hideaway on North Kerala's untrammelled coast is unashamedly focused on one aim: to offer guests a '200 percent experience'. And the great thing is that ebullient owner Altaf Chapri and his team nail it. This eco retreat is the perfect place to get away from it all – particularly with the hotel's Lotus houseboat which chugs its way along Kerala's serene backwaters. Back on dry land, Neeleshwar is incredibly spoiling. It's not super luxury but that doesn't matter, you'll simply be seduced by the sublime stillness. Modelled on traditional fisherman's huts, there are 18 thatched cottages – all handmade wooden furniture, antiques, teak floors – tucked away among acres of verdant gardens, which brim with hibiscus flowers, frangipani and banana trees. Some have private pools, others captivate with stunning sea or garden views. Each is named after a yogic virtue and sets the scene for the small but perfectly formed spa, with traditional Ayurvedic treatments, meditation and complimentary Hatha yoga. Cycle the roads and soak up local life before choosing between the two excellent restaurants. Open-sided Annapurna serves mainly Ayurvedic-inspired vegetarian plates, but lunch at toes-in-the-sand Meenakshi is a must for its just-caught fish – it'll lull you into a further state of happiness. *Harriet Compston*

BOOK IT: £150 B&B. neeleshwarhermitage.com