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Easy Living, the UK magazine in the Conde Nast group features Barbelyn Beach Resort in their September 2008.

WHAT'S YOUR SPA PRESCRIPTION?

There's more to spas than pampering massages and swimming pools, with those in the know booking in to have everything from dodgy digestion to stress and insomnia treated. Four *Easy Living* staffers head off for some TLC... with life-changing results

The magazine selected four venues around the globe:

- Centre De Thalassotherapie Thaglo, in France
- Barbelyn Beach Resort in Sri Lanka
- The Mayr Health Spa in Austria
- Como Shambhala in Bali,

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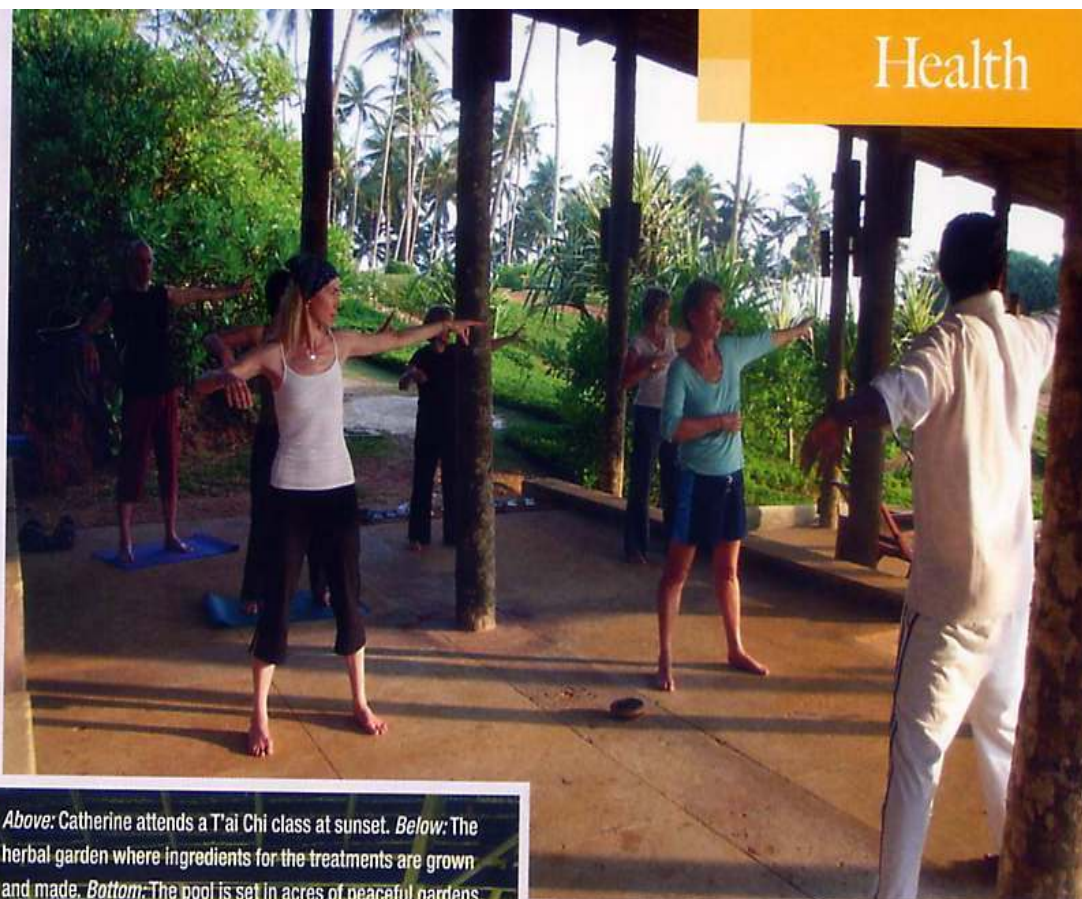
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THE PATIENT: Catherine Turner, *Easy Living's* beauty & health director

THE COMPLAINT:
Stress, lack of focus and anxiety

THE PRESCRIPTION:
Ayurveda

The ancient health system used widely across India which works on the principle that we are made up of three elements, known as doshas – Vata, Pitta and Kapha. Each person has a dominant dosha, and it's thought any imbalance can lead to tension, insomnia, pain and depression, as well as serious illness in the long term.



Above: Catherine attends a T'ai Chi class at sunset. *Below:* The herbal garden where ingredients for the treatments are grown and made. *Bottom:* The pool is set in acres of peaceful gardens

MY SPA DIARY

As far as the ayurvedic approach goes, Barberyn in Sri Lanka is the real deal – on-site doctors, hand-made treatments concocted from the centre's own herb garden, a strict ayurvedic diet, and days which start and finish with an hour-long yoga class.

Getting there is no easy feat (it's a 13-hour flight plus a five-hour drive) but the pay-off is worth it. Swaying palms, an unspoilt beach and, better still, peace and quiet. No ringing phones or queues at reception, just one person to greet you with a cool drink and a garland of flowers. My room was simple and spacious with amazing sea views, and my first appointment of the week had already been booked – I was to see the doctor in just 45 minutes.

My no-nonsense, sari-clad doctor, who had studied ayurvedic medicine at Colombo University, went through every detail of my health history – weight, blood pressure, pulse,



mainly delicious – every day, a different array of tasty vegetarian dishes. I never felt hungry or had cravings, and herbal tea or hot water became my drinks of choice.

My timetable was packed with activities (including excursions to local sights). I slept a lot at the beginning and spent most of my time on my own but, by mid-week, I had a burst of newfound energy and started to join the big table of sociable guests at meal times.



THE VERDICT

The ayurvedic approach may seem a little archaic, but there's a lot to be learned from the signals our bodies give us under stress. I came away feeling renewed, detoxed and with bags of energy, which lasted for months.

NEED TO KNOW

A seven-night, full-board stay, including transfers, excursions, classes and treatments costs from £730. Visit barberynresorts.com. Return flights from London to Colombo with Qatar Airways cost from £499. Visit qatarairways.co.uk. →

DIY TIPS

1 MORE INFORMATION Check out these two wonderful ayurveda reference points – *Perfect Health* by Deepak Chopra (Bantam, £14.99) and *The Handbook Of Ayurveda* by Dr Shantha Godagama (Kyle Kathie, £9.99).

lungs and heartbeat were all checked, and intimate bodily functions discussed. It made me think, "When do I ever get this from my over-worked GP at home?" Food is an integral part of the treatment, and the doctors gently police the buffet to encourage guests to make the right choices.

A table is set aside with the tonics prescribed by the doctor, and you eat a full, three-course meal three times a day (including an incredibly bitter soup for me at breakfast to aid digestion). The food was

Ayurveda isn't a quick fix, and Barberyn recommends you go for three weeks to work up to the next stages of detox, which involve a series of 'special treatments' such as medicated enemas and purging to treat specific ailments.

The coward in me was glad I hadn't got to that point, but tales from other guests proved it's worth it. One, a man from a rock band, had cured his tinnitus after a three-week stay; another had endured oily eye baths to soothe and improve his ailing eyesight. Most of all, the long-stayers glowed with health and serenity – which made me vow to stay longer next time.

WHAT TO PACK

- A WATCH - YOUR TIMETABLE IS PACKED
- LONG-SLEEVED T-SHIRTS TO KEEP BUGS AT BAY
- A JOURNAL AND PEN
- OLD BIKINI BOTTOMS FOR OILY MASSAGES

2 EAT REGULARLY AT SET TIMES This is really hard when life is busy, but eating breakfast, lunch and dinner at the same time every day helps even out energy levels and improves digestion. Also, drink hot or warm water rather than cold, especially first thing in the morning. It's soothing on the stomach and easier to digest.

3 AYURVEDA IN THE UK When looking for a qualified ayurvedic physician, bear in mind they must have completed a five-year degree course at an Indian or Sri Lankan university, and hold the title Bachelor of Ayurvedic Medicine and Surgery (BAMS) or Doctor of Ayurvedic Medicine and Surgery (DAMS). Visit apa.uk.com or ayurveda.uk.com.