

CONDENA ST TRAVELLER

Where to stay

★ CNT EXCLUSIVE ★

HILTON SHILLIM ESTATE RETREAT & SPA

MAHARASHTRA Jasreen Mayal Khanna discovers a luxe new getaway in the Western Ghats, just a three-hour drive from Mumbai

Winding through the Western Ghats to the newly-opened Hilton Shillim Estate Retreat & Spa on Pawna Lake, it's hard to believe I'm just 100km outside Mumbai, and a mere 80km from Pune. The hotel—and its sylvan setting—make a perfect retreat for both Mumbai crowds who are hungry for more getaway options, and international travellers looking to experience the countryside.

All accommodation at the 350-acre Shillim Estate is in private villas, and each comes with butler service included. There are 99 villas in total, 15 with private pools attached. The Spa Pool Villas, with their exposed stone walls and open air verandas, allow the resort's surroundings to set the mood. Cool winds and birdsong come drifting in from

outside; completing the experience is an outdoor shower, private deck and pool, where guests can book a Watsu massage while floating on the water.

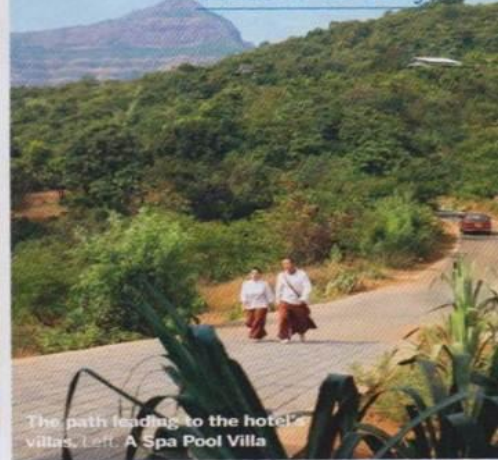
The 70-acre Spa Zone is a special focus at Shillim Estate. Carefully located on the part of the estate that has the highest concentration of underground crystals, the idea is to channel their positive energy into the 17 therapy rooms, where an impressive 145 treatments are on offer. A meditation cave and yoga pavilion offer further relaxation options.

Wellness is a theme throughout the resort. All food at The Green Table restaurant is organic and my lunch there was a delight, from the chilled beetroot and orange soup to the superb imported Black Angus fillet. Beef aside, all ingredients at this restaurant are sourced from local farms, and the resort is in the process of planting an organic vegetable garden. There are four more restaurants at Shillim Estate serving French, Mediterranean and Asian food, as well as customised food experiences, where guests can pick a scenic spot on the property to dine in private.

After lunch I trekked up to the highest point on the property, a grassy plateau with grandstand views of Lake Pawna. From here, the resort's isolation becomes wonderfully clear. The lake and its surrounding peaks are all you can see for miles around. Bike riding, trekking, fishing, picnicking and paragliding are the main guest activities on offer; there are also future plans for horse-riding at an equestrian centre. A helipad and chopper service from



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The path leading to the hotel's villas. Left: A Spa Pool Villa

There are 99 private villas with butlers, 145 spa treatments and a host of activities to choose from.

Mumbai are also in the pipeline, as well as plans to produce honey from beehives on the estate, and to bottle Shillim's own natural spring water.

As the day drew to a close, I headed to the Valley Bar at the glass-walled Clubhouse, which has an outdoor deck for cigar enthusiasts. Sipping on a glass of Henschke Julius Eden Valley Riesling wine as the hills glowed orange in the setting sun was a suitable end to a spectacular day.

In addition to the luxurious experience Shillim Estate has created, the retreat's real achievement is giving guests the chance to dissolve into nature and truly escape from the world, while still being close to home. 📍

HILTON SHILLIM ESTATE RETREAT & SPA

Pawana Nagar
Taluka Maval, Pune
(021 1471 2468;
<http://shillimretreatandspa.hilton.com>)
Doubles from
₹33,040

GETTING THERE

The Hilton is a three-hour drive from Mumbai and a one-and-a-half-hour drive from Pune.

WHAT TO DO

The Hilton offers yoga sessions in the open-air with experienced instructors, which guests are encouraged to avail of. You can also go trekking and mountain biking on the Western Ghats with the hotel guides, or take a picnic on the grounds or in the surrounding mountains.

The pool at a Spa Pool Villa in Hilton Shillim Estate Retreat & Spa