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METRO word of mouth

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Luxury with a love for the landscape



THIS WEEK: LUXURY, SUSTAINABILITY AND WILDLIFE IN INDIA'S WESTERN GHATS BY JANE MULKERRINS

THE Hilton Shillim Estate Retreat and Spa has been a labour of love and has taken nine long years to create and build. It sits on the 3,500-acre Shillim estate in the Sahyadri mountains in India's Western Ghats, two-and-a-half hours by car from Mumbai (or far less if you use the on-site helipad). The estate is made up of 99 deluxe villas, each with its own dedicated butler service, set among the lush forest, rice fields and bamboo plantations. Luxury does have a conscience, though. 'No trees were allowed to be removed for the building of the

estate,' says general manager Andreas Kraemer. 'The vision was to create a world-class sanctuary to preserve this small but increasingly vulnerable area of the Western Ghats. The project grew out of a love for the landscape with sustainability as a core commitment.'

As expected, there is an abundance of wildlife including leopards, barking deer, mouse deer, flying squirrels, birds and butterflies. There are plenty of ways to see them from walking and bike tours to picnics, fishing and horse-riding trips.

The hotel's spa is one of the most extensive in Asia, with 17

therapy rooms and more than 150 treatments.

'We combine ancient Asian and modern Western techniques, including acupuncture, fire healing, Ayurveda, Reiki and more than 50 different massages,' says Kraemer.

The spa also features a meditation cave on the part of the estate with the highest concentration of underground crystals, designed to channel their positive energy. If more positive energy is needed, the estate is home to India's largest wine cellar, which holds up to 3,500 bottles.

From £213 per night.
www.hilton.com

ALSO CHECK OUT

Set your hotel sights High
 With the opening of the High Line Hotel (pictured) visitors can now stay a stone's throw from the popular elevated park that runs along New York's west side. Originally built in 1895 as student housing for the General Theological Seminary, the 60-room red-brick hotel has a private courtyard and cloistered gardens.



In the centre of Chelsea, and a grand, wood-pannelled refectory with a 6ft-high fireplace.

From £180 per night.
www.thehighlinehotel.com

Bothholes for two

Whether you're on honeymoon, celebrating an anniversary or simply craving some serious couple time, chances are one of Boutique

Retreats' new bijou boltholes in Cornwall will fit the bill. With the luxuries of a high-end hotel but the addition of absolute privacy, properties include a beach hut hideaway accessible only by foot, a whitewashed fisherman's cottage in the pretty village of Mousehole, and a boathouse on the water, with its own private beach.

From £282 per person for a long weekend.
www.boutique-retreats.co.uk

TRAVEL NEWS

Trailfinders has claimed the top spot in an annual survey by Which? Travel that looks at the best and worst holiday companies. More than 5,781 people were surveyed about the companies they had used to book and provide their holidays in the past two years.

Good news for impatient flyers: from Monday, British Airways will become the first European airline to allow customers to switch on their mobile devices as soon as the plane is off the runway post-landing. Previously, passengers could only power-up again after the craft had stopped. But the Civil Aviation Authority has said it's 'satisfied' that there are no safety implications.

Milan, the most international of all the Italian cities (pictured) is



enjoying a burger bar revolution, which has been put down to an obsession with American food and a separation from traditional Italian mealtimes that involve hours at a table and various courses. The new 202 Hamburger & Delicious on Corso di Porta Ticinese, a famous shopping street, is proving to be one of the movement's shiniest stars.
www.202hamburger.com

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