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Spain's Hottest

A rooftop lounge area at dusk. In the foreground, there are several white daybeds with white cushions on a dark wooden deck. A swimming pool is visible in the middle ground, reflecting the ambient light. In the background, a city is lit up at night, with a large, prominent mountain (likely Table Mountain in Cape Town) silhouetted against a twilight sky. The overall mood is serene and luxurious.

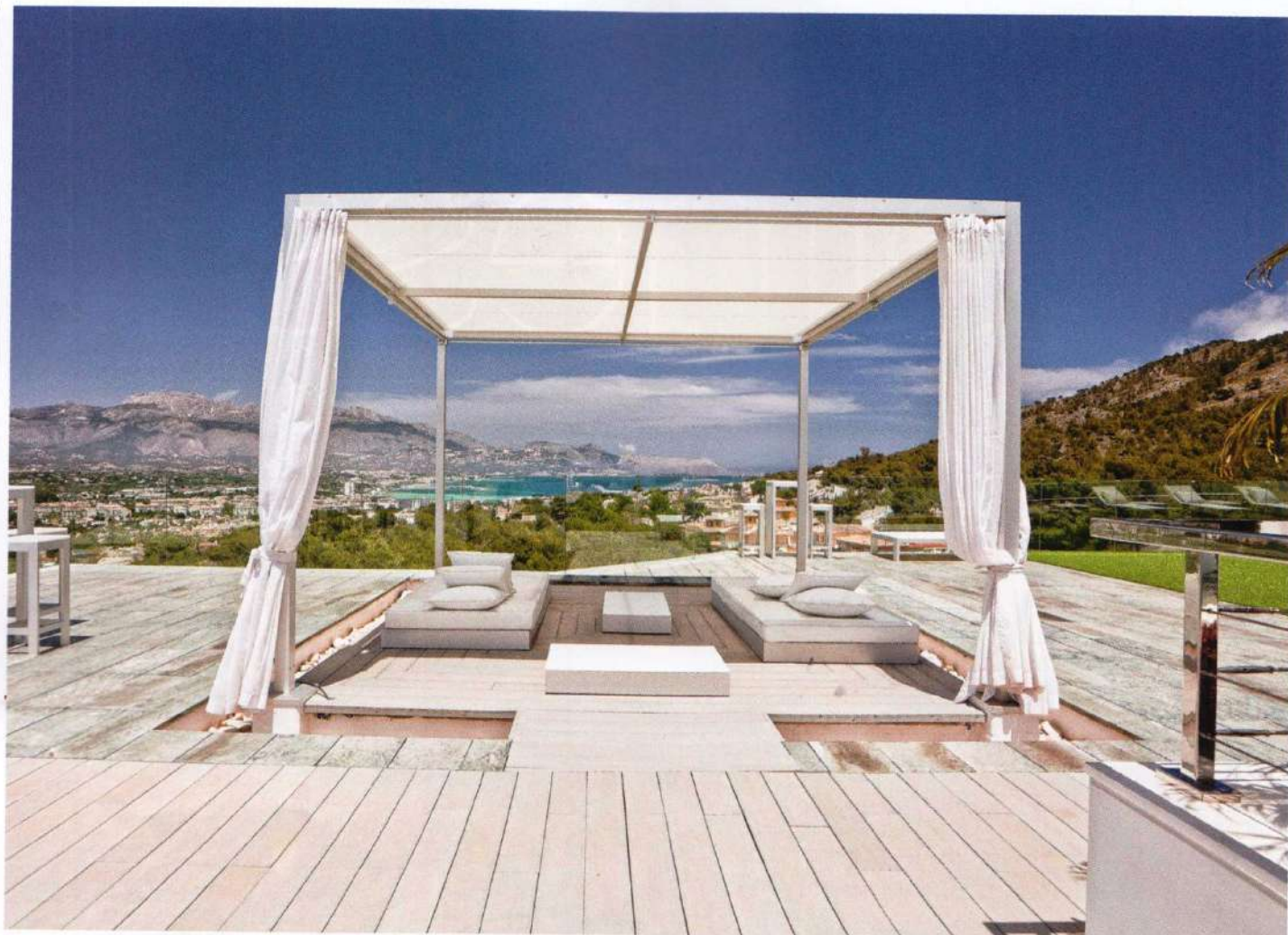
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Wellness Address

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This summer, all eyes are on Spain's trendy SHA Wellness Clinic, where luxury travellers are investing in long-term health and wellbeing, through tailored diets and advanced treatments

WORDS NISHA SHROFF



A little over an hour's drive from Valencia Airport, I stepped inside the doors of SHA Wellness Clinic, that lies on Spain's Costa Blanca, overlooking the Bay of Altea. My first impression: a mecca of wellness — brimming with futuristic technology, incredible amenities; with 300 expert physicians, psychiatrists, psychologists, osteopaths and professionals in 'bioenergy,' nutrition, and the guests (*read: mostly in their robes*) making their way from one treatment to another.

Looking at the clinic's unique approach and advanced treatments, the number of Indian visitors to this uber-luxe Spanish wellness clinic is on the rise.

THE SPANISH SUNSHINE

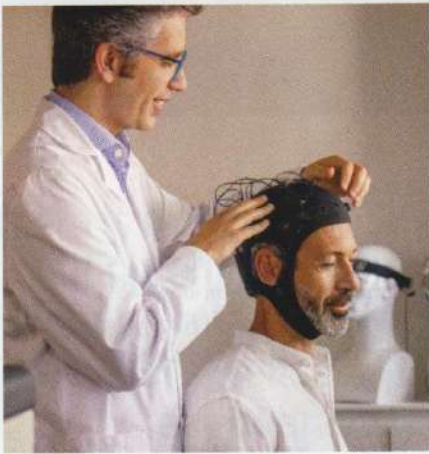
The resort has been thoughtfully designed

with a great focus on highlighting minute details that are vital for the overall wellbeing of the guests — space includes tiny waterfalls, miniature square-size ponds, small gardens and soothing music. What's more interesting is that every corner of the resort has a beverage dispenser mainly serving detox water that guests can consume at any hour of the day.

The accommodation is quite spacious and elegant. I stayed in the superior room featuring a separate living room, dining space, a bedroom and a balcony that opens to sweeping views of the mountains and the cityscape. The bathroom was equipped with in-house toiletries. Before arrival, the team at SHA Wellness Clinic enquired about my preference on the type of pillows, bed sheets, and size of the slippers and the fitting of my bathrobe, which made my stay nothing but comfortable.

TREATMENTS

The resort houses more than 80 treatment rooms. Upon my arrival, my agenda planner and I sat for a short briefing regarding my programme. I had around 18 treatments in the course of four days, including a general health examination, consultations, massages, acupuncture, fitness/functional training among others.



A NEUROCOGNITIVE AND BRAIN STIMULATION PROGRAMME

This has been my most-loved session. Ask why? I give full credit to Dr Bruno Ribeiro, the Portuguese clinical neuropsychologist. The programme aims to study how your brain functions; and tests the brain power — memory level, cognitive speed, attention and reaction time that gives some kind of indication to improve in future. The first round involves computerised tests and a Q&A session. Next, I was taken to the clinic's plush cinema to play 'a brain game' wherein a headband was wrapped around my head and a monitor clipped to my ear — this was used to measure my Alpha (the relaxation level) and Beta (the concentration) waves. It turned out that I did not fare exceedingly well. He tells me that I need to improve my Alpha waves and that can happen only on the back of a relaxed and peaceful mind.

PS: My stress levels were hitting the roof too.

Looking at the clinic's unique approach and advanced treatments, the number of Indian visitors to this uber-luxe Spanish wellness clinic is on the rise

HYDROENERGETIC DETOX CURE

The Hydroenergetic Detox Cure, a powerful detoxifying healing treatment consists of three steps: Hydroaromatherapy, Fitomudtherapy Wrap and Hidrojet. Here, I am taken to a dark room, which has a tub that is filled with water and essential oils. Once you're comfortable in the tub, the therapist will start the machine. Next, you will feel the pressure of the water and temperature. This is when I realise that the oils are penetrating the skin, opening pores and creating a relaxing and purifying effect. (Read here: *the disco lights in-built in the tub excited me much*). Later, I am taken to a separate room where I am wrapped in seaweed mud for 15 minutes that leaves me with a draining, detoxifying and revitalising effect. Water jets with varying pressures are applied using a Hidrojet that restored my energy levels.



OSTEOPATHY SESSION

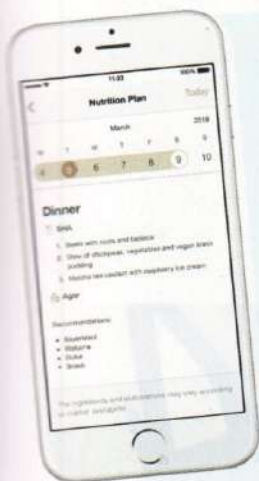
Elbow and shoulder pains are some of the most common complaints. After examining my body, Dr Antonio conducted a few techniques that focussed on joints, muscles and spine, including my shoulder and back bone adjustments. On a specialised table, Antonio carried out a few stretching, massaging techniques and also induced gentle pressure on my muscles and joints. At the end of the session, the feeling of joy after pain relief is immediate.



FACIAL INDIBA

As my skin is acne-prone, initially, I refused to do this treatment. But with the dermat consultation, I agreed to go for it. This Indiba treatment is a non-invasive radio frequency treatment that rebalances the cell interaction, as a result the oxygen's flow between cells is improved, the micro-circulation is reset and the skin is rejuvenated. This treatment lasts for an hour.





One step ahead in wellness

There is a dedicated SHA Wellness Clinic app where planners, dietitian, and experts customise the guest's wellness programme and overall stay — my nutrition plan, treatment schedule, and medical prescriptions are all available for my reference on the app.

The team also prepares you with a pre-arrival agenda: They ask you to mainly cut off sugar, meat, dairy, processed food and drinks, alcohol and caffeine for three days before arriving at SHA.

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SPECIAL ATTENTION TO NUTRITION

Based on a nutrition consultation, guests are placed on (the macrobiotic diet) - one of the three diets - Kushi is a hard-core intensive weight loss programme, which includes oil and flour free dishes that comprises of whole grains, beans lentils, sea vegetables, among others. Bio-light menu is a milder version of Kushi, and the SHA menu is designed for everyone to enjoy at the SHAmadi - The SHA restaurant located on the fourth floor of the resort. Cristian Garcia, Food and Beverage Director at SHA Wellness Clinic, says, "The menu here is extremely healthy. Mainly serving vegetables, whole grains, beans, fish but no dairy, sugar or processed food. We carefully construct meals for the programmes that range from a four-day to month. Additionally, guests are allocated the same table and the waiter at the restaurant throughout their stay so that they can develop a connection and understand your requirements during the stay."

Melanie Waxman writer of *'Eat Me Now! Healthy Macrobiotic Cooking'* was my nutrition specialist at SHA. The consultation stressed on how important it is to have a balanced meal during the day. After she inquired about my dietary regime and fitness routine, she puts me on a NO-DIET that means I will get to choose from two menus - SHA and Bio-light. Additionally, she offered me a comprehensive health plan during my stay. She gave me some healthy tips on what-to and what-not to consume.



MELANIE WAXMAN tells me "how to incorporate macrobiotic ingredients into my daily cooking and how to prioritise seasonal and locally sourced foods"

- ☛ Eat fruits, and reduce your juice intake as when you take a juice, the sugar level goes up
- ☛ Drinking lots of water
- ☛ Eating fresh food is recommended, it has more energy and more nutrition
- ☛ We don't need some foods to survive any more. These includes red meat, chicken, eggs, cheese and dairy. These foods are high in saturated fats, which is hard for the body to use. It overloads the organs as it takes a lot of work to digest this food
- ☛ It is important to have whole grains such as quinoa, brown rice, millets - these are helpful for your brain and heart and digestion. It keeps your energy level nice and even
- ☛ If you are on a weight-loss programme, you must-not consume bread and pasta
- ☛ Consume lots of vegetables, about 50 per cent vegetables
- ☛ Cooked vegetable gives you more energy and nutrients
- ☛ Avoid potatoes but replace it with sweet potatoes
- ☛ Fermented foods are probiotic and healthy. E.g. pickles
- ☛ Beans, help build up the strength
- ☛ Add seaweeds to your food as they do help a lot with minerals and strengthen the immune system
- ☛ Drinking liquids during meals hinders digestion

Verdict: Definitely recommended for business travellers looking for an express way to rejuvenate and detoxify themselves

Getting there: Mumbai to Valencia via Frankfurt

Price: SHA Discovery programme starts from €1,500
shawellnessclinic.com