



DHARANA AT SHILLIM, Maharashtra

A Journey To Conscious Being

The dawn Shillim peak trek was worth every last puff. Our small group of five, led by expert in-house wildlife guide Pralhad, navigated the rugged terrain, observing areas of untouched 'sacred god forest' as well as the oriental honey buzzard, Asian emerald doves, Indian coral trees and the Karvi plant, which only flowers once every seven years. It's not every day that you smell the scents of a forest waking up. Nor is it every day that you summit the top of a mountain, reach the plateau, and are greeted by a pulsating, rising sun and sacred grounds that stretch out to a horizon so vast it speaks of the divine.

Another Indian retreat undergoing its own inner transformation, Dharana at Shillim, has recently unyoked itself from the Hilton brand. This move will allow its uniquely profound wellbeing philosophy to pulse into every delicious cell of this bubble of beauty. The setting itself is truly a celebration. A three-hour drive from Mumbai, you slip into an exquisite landscape comprising 2,500 acres of verdant wilderness, waterfalls and woodlands. This precious spot, where Mother Nature unfurls, was 'rediscovered' by two De Souza brothers, William and Denzil, in the 1990s. Struck by its raw tranquillity, they decided to conserve it as an ecological hotspot for future generations. Gradually, gently, they acquired more land,

planted more than a million trees, reintroduced indigenous flora and fauna and encouraged local farmers to adopt sustainable land-loving techniques. The knock-on effect on the wildlife has been astounding. Herein lies the difference at Dharana. Come here to connect with an ancient land and experience wellbeing programmes that lay equal emphasis on both personal and planetary wellbeing.

We need holistic ways of living interwoven with science to promote a regenerative future. The younger generation of the De Souza family continue to uphold this viewpoint. Sleep in sleek villas built at one with nature (private swimming pools and sunken bathtubs are special). Feast on natural foods, herbs, elixirs and teas proven to have medicinal properties, and delight in healing spaces designed to raise your vibration. The yoga pavilion is a central nexus for steady lessons in Iyengar and the stunning meditation cave feels sealed and safe for beautiful Tibetan bowl meditations and guided Pranayama. Your 'dinacharya', or daily routine, as prescribed by the invincible Dr Arun Pillai and the in-house team of experts, sets the pace for your stay. A range of non-invasive

diagnostics are some of the best I have come across. Days are peppered with everything from acupuncture and posture-correcting physiotherapy to traditional Ayurvedic rituals. For an interconnected approach to health which weaves an ecological sensitivity with programmes tackling every pertinent issue, from stress to sustainable weight management, Dharana has it – and you – covered.
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