



# BEAT THE

# BURN

TRANQUIL SPAS, NESTLED AMIDST PICTURESQUE SURROUNDINGS, ARE CHAMPIONING STRESS-BUSTING TREATMENTS.

BY // RACHAEL OAKES-ASH

**Stress.** It's become a common word in our modern vernacular. Think back over the last day or week, how often have you referred to being "stressed" or listened to a friend or colleague discussing their heightened "stress levels"? Just as stress has become a part of every day conversations, so it has come to the point where most of us simply accept stress as a natural part of living a modern life with high pressure careers, relationship demands, family requirements and constant time zone travel. Worryingly, however, stress can cause a plethora of serious health problems from heart disease to anxiety, insomnia, depression and compromised immune systems.

Adrenal fatigue or 'burnout' impacts almost eighty per cent of adults at some stage of their lives. Disconcertingly not everyone recognises burnout when it hits, instead turning to caffeine, sugar, nicotine and other stimulants to help get through the 'slump' without realising they are only contributing to it further.

On the surface stress may make itself known through dark circles below the eyes, an ever increasing number of frown lines or short-temperedness, behind the scenes however is where the real action is taking place. The adrenal glands sit on top of the kidneys and are responsible for the flight and fight hormones, adrenaline and cortisol. Adrenaline is produced when we are under threat and places our body into emergency status and in order to deal with the threat at hand our digestive and immune systems are put on hold. This is the hormone released when we are stressed at work, when we have deadlines, when we have fights with our loved ones.

Long term stress triggers the release of cortisol into the system and prolonged cortisol release can increase blood pressure, raise cholesterol and make it very difficult to lose the fat around the middle of our girth. Once your cortisol levels are too high or too low from adrenal fatigue then testosterone and oestrogen is impacted and the poor health cycle continues.

Before you send your stress levels into a further downward spiral, consider a vacation. A spa vacation. The destination spas of Asia are addressing the problem of stress with programmes specifically designed to help those who overwork to de-stress and gain back years on their life. Destination spas offer a reclusive environment for guests to focus purely on themselves. If they're smart guests will leave their mobile phones and laptops at home as constant communication contributes to chronic stress.

Destination spas offer organic spa cuisine that gives the body an opportunity to detox from excess caffeine and sugar and gives the liver a break from processed foods filled with preservatives and additives. Add daily gym, yoga and meditation activities, sun loungers by the pool, ocean breezes or mountain air and it won't take long for the body to relax and the mind to finally switch off.

IMAGES: GALLO / GETTY CREATIVE, ANANDA SPA, CHIVA SOM, KAMALAYA, SIX SENSES



## ANANDA SPA, HIMALAYAS

The Maharajan palace of Ananda Spa in the foothills of the Himalayas has hosted many a burnt out executive and has welcomed the likes of Heidi Klum and Seal, Uma Thurman and Arpad Busson and Ricky Martin.

Ayurvedic medicine and spa treatments combine with the Vedanta philosophy of a higher consciousness. The twenty two thousand square foot spa is a shrine to pampering with attendants to help with every whim.

Ananda Spa is not far from the town of Rishikesh which is considered the birthplace of yoga and is home to spiritual ceremonies on the banks of the Ganges

river. The region, and the Ananda grounds, are steeped in meditative history which is served up with traditional Indian care and humility.

The stress management retreat is designed to create positive change through a balanced approach to life. An Ayurvedic doctor diagnoses guests with one of three Ayurvedic body types — Pita, Kapha or Vatta — and all meals and activities are based around your type. Private guided trekking around the Himalaya foothills is also offered as a physical form of meditation.

[WWW.ANANDASPA.COM](http://WWW.ANANDASPA.COM)

## CHIVA SOM WELLNESS RETREAT, HUA HIN

Chiva Som Wellness Retreat in Hua Hin, Thailand has set the bar for destination spas around the world since opening fifteen years ago. Stressed out Fortune 500s, European Royalty and Hollywood elite regularly descend upon the retreat to rejuvenate tired souls in the seventy treatment room underground spa.

A comprehensive series of individual retreats are offered that suit personal needs with traditional Chinese medicine blending with western and holistic medicine. The retreat adopts an integrative approach from sound therapy meditation through to a medi spa offering laser treatment, and complements its in-house team with a number of visiting consultants.

Chiva Som has recently introduced integrative and anti-ageing medicine expert, Dr Somboon Roongphornchai who specialises in natural hormone supplementation to address adrenal gland imbalance.

He uses a blend of laboratory testing and bio-identical hormones to address whole health issues and reduce excess release of the stress hormone, cortisol. Natural hormones such as melatonin and DHEA are used to balance the body clock and boost the adrenal system. Combine Dr Roongphornchai's approach with daily massage that comes complimentary with every retreat and it won't be long before the stress levels drop. >

[WWW.CHIVASOM.COM](http://WWW.CHIVASOM.COM)



## KAMALAYA RETREAT, KOH SAMUI

Further south in Thailand on the island of Koh Samui sits Kamalaya Retreat, founded by Princeton graduate, Karina Stewart and her husband, John. The premise of Kamalaya is to help guests shift internally. There is no doubt after a week of healthy living that externally they will look fresher, more relaxed and lighter, but the core belief of Kamalaya is that you must make changes inside for long lasting changes outside.

Many of Kamalaya's guests are seriously stressed. The retreat's position on a sheltered bay of azure water is designed to soothe by nature. Standalone villas dot the hill overlooking the private beach and the landscapes natural boulders are incorporated into the architecture. The open plan spa has vistas of the ocean that move the soul and sits on top of the core of the retreat, while an ancient Buddhist monk's meditation cave is open for 'quiet time' twenty four seven.

Stress and burnout plays such a part in their guest's approach to detox that four programmes have been built

around them. Relax and Renew and Asian Bliss focus on treating burnout while Balance and Revitalise focuses on burnout prevention. Alternative medicine treatments work on replenishing depleted energy levels and supporting the immune system.

Whilst the length of the programmes vary, they typically include a blend of East and West treatments with private yoga and meditation, anti-stress management techniques, naturopathic immune support, acupuncture, Ayurvedic treatments including Kati Vasti which concentrates on the lower back area with a warmed oil. Bio impedance analysis determines body composition so each programme can be tailored specifically to each guest.

The idea at Kamalaya is that stressed out individuals not only leave less stressed but have the tools and management skills to reduce future stress in their lives when they return to the real world.

[WWW.KAMALAYA.COM](http://WWW.KAMALAYA.COM)



## SIX SENSES DESTINATION SPA, PHUKET

It is impossible not to de-stress at Six Senses Destination Spa on the island of Naka Yai off the coast of Phuket, Thailand. With sixty plus standalone villas, each with infinity pool, personal steam room, outside meditation sala, tropical garden bathroom and personal spa butler to do all your thinking for you.

There are no petrol driven vehicles at Six Senses, instead guests use bicycles to negotiate the resort that sits on a white sandy beach. The two restaurants offer vegetarian spa cuisine (seafood is the only meat offered) and shoes are discouraged as floors are made of sand to sink bare toes into.

The resort offers 'Life Passages' that focus on detox, energise, de-stress, weight loss, couples' choice and more. Treatments in the spa are inspired by four

different concepts — Indonesian, Indian, Chinese and Thai with four distinct design elements within the spa.

The beauty of Six Senses is the privacy factor. Whether you choose to retreat alone or with your partner it is possible to retreat from the world and then retreat again from the resort if you choose to have complete 'me' time. The villa spa butler books all treatments and activities and acts as a personal concierge.

Add life transformation coaching, personal training, energy and biofield analysis and a series of resort based group activities with wellness consultants that guide guests through the entire detox process, and the result is a more relaxed individual.

[WWW.SIXSENSES.COM](http://WWW.SIXSENSES.COM)