

▪ SPAS ▪

## Far from the Madding Crowd

*In a remote corner of Kerala, Maya Spa at Zuri offers a world of healing.*



ONLY A TEN-MINUTE yacht ride across Kerala's Vembanad Lake lies the tranquil Zuri Kumarakom, Kerala Resort & Spa. Away from the bustle of urban metros, Zuri aims to provide its guests with a peaceful environment to relax and rejuvenate in. A man-made lagoon surrounds this verdant 18-acre resort, whose 72 cottages and rooms, including 10 presidential pool villas, are built in such a way that each provides calming views of either the lagoon or the lake. Eager to reposition itself as one of India's premium destination spas, the hotel was rebranded from a Radisson Plaza to The Zuri Kumarakom, Kerala Resort & Spa in 2009.



Maya Spa, the Zuri group's in-house spa, assumes its name from the mystical reference to illusion. One of the largest spas in South India, Maya offers comprehensive

Oriental, Western and Ayurvedic treatments. "The Ayurvedic body massage will help in harmonising the body elements. The benefit comes from the Ayurvedic oil that is used for body massage, since Ayurvedic oils are water soluble and our skin has the capacity to absorb them," explains Dr Sunil Kumar, spa manager, Maya Spa. Prior to joining

Zuri, Dr Kumar spent five years at Ananda in the Himalayas—one of the country's most popular and accomplished destination spas.

*The recently refurbished Maya spa at Zuri has been redesigned with the aim of helping visitors disconnect.*

Starting with an Ayurvedic rejuvenation massage, I was treated to a head, face and full body massage. The body massage, which employed long or full-body strokes, lasted an hour. Different Ayurvedic oils, or *thailams*, were used for specific parts of the body. "We use Kshreebal *thailam* for the head massage since it has the property to nourish the scalp and reduce headaches and stress, whereas Balasahwagandhadi *thailam* along with Karpooradi *thailam* have the property to lubricate joints, tone up muscles and rejuvenate the skin. Kumkumadi *thailam*, or papaya gel, is used for face massages," says Dr Kumar. Next, I am made to sit inside a steam closet with only my head popping out of the top of the machine. Within minutes my body begins to sweat profusely. "This opens up pores, cleanses your skin and relaxes muscles," my masseuse says, smiling.

Another sought-after treatment at The Zuri Kumarakom Resort & Spa is the Myoxy Caviar and Pearl facial. This treatment moisturises the skin, helping to increase skin tone and lift facial muscles. The Pevonia products used in the treatment are imported from Florida, US, and contain pearl and caviar extracts, which are extremely nutritious for human skin, leaving it soft and supple. After cleansing the face and massaging my neck for about an hour and a half, the headache I had when I had walked in was gone. A quick look in the mirror now reflected a doppelganger with smoother and shinier skin.

For men, a variety of facials and treatments have also been included on the Maya menu. The skin fit mask treatment is similar to the Myoxy Caviar and Pearl facial except that it employs different cleansers and a mask that suits the toughness of male skin. Marma (a traditional Kerala Ayurvedic full-body massage), Choornaswedana (for orthopaedic ailments and pain), Nirvana, and Cloud 9 massages are the other popular treatments for men here. "A man's body is a little more muscular when compared with a woman's and is physically prone to stress and strain. Hence, the Choornaswedana helps relieve all kinds of muscular spasms and joint pains. Nirvana helps de-stress and rejuvenate the body while the Cloud 9 massage relaxes body muscles due to the Nuvola water bed, hot water and constant pressure," says Dr Kumar.

Maya Spa is designed to maintain an environment of tranquillity. It is replete with 14 rooms—seven each for Ayurvedic and Western treatments, including one couple's room in either section. There are three special hydro rooms with a hydro aromatic bath tub, a Vichy shower, and a Nuvola bed, respectively. There is also a well-equipped gym as well as separate wet areas for men and women, which include rooms for steam, sauna and Jacuzzi as well as a chill pool. Among new additions that Dr Kumar introduced to

the spa's menu are a few comprehensive packages to aid with complete body cleansing. The 14- to 21-day Panchakarma package is one such important addition. "It helps to have purity at the cellular level and this helps to prevent disease in the body," he says. "For instance, the Panchakarma, Rejuvenation and Detox packages have cleansing and purification effects on the body, whereas the Spine Care package concentrates on the whole back." According to him, 20 to 30 per cent of guests come to seek medical help for degenerative, metabolic and auto-immune diseases. "We create customised programmes for these



guests that include relevant massages, food and lifestyle guidance and oral medicines," explains Dr Kumar.

Apart from Zuri's wondrous spa, what attracts so many to this resort is the remote corner of the country it is located in. Zuri in Swahili means 'beyond expectations' and for me, that is a promise Maya kept. —TRESHA DATTA

*The Zuri Kumarakom, Kerala Resort & Spa, Kerala, 0481.2527.272, www.thezurihotels.com*

Guests can soak in the serene environment of the relaxation room at Maya Spa post a treatment (top) or unwind in the spa's infinity-edge pool (above).