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DAILY EXPRESS

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MAGNIFICENT: Mount Orguell Castle towers over the picturesque harbour at Gorey, a great day's outing from the pampering of the Ayush Wellness Spa

Channel your energies into a Jersey spa visit

THE delicious scent of cumin, cinnamon and fragranced oil greets me as I step inside my spa treatment room. I stand on bamboo matting on a canopy of Indian silk drapes and am greeted by my barefooted therapist, Shelinn. I feel like I'm in Asia but in fact I'm on the Channel Island of Jersey. Synonymous with TV detective Bergerac, the island is also home to the UK's first spa to embrace the holistic Indian tradition of ayurveda, the Ayush Wellness Spa.

Opened two years ago, Ayush Spa is an extension of the Hotel de France, on a hill overlooking the town of St Helier. It has 16 luxurious bedrooms, five treatment rooms plus a pool and sauna. Ayurveda is a 5,000-year-old health system that encompasses diet, herbs and detoxification. Every guest has a consultation with Dr. Prasanna Kerur, a practitioner who trained for six years in ayurvedic medicine. My 55-minute consultation allows enough time to air any serious medical concerns, in addition to cosmetic problems such as dry or oily skin.

The main function of the consultation is to establish which of three ayurvedic types you are: kapha, pitta or vata. My diagnosis, part kapha, part pitta, means Dr Kerur advises three treatments: Abhyanga massage; Basha Sweda, a steam treatment; and an oil-based head and scalp treatment called Shirodhara. My massage is performed by two therapists, which might have felt intimidating but Kelly and Shelinn are so perfectly synchronised it feels as though only one person is doing the pummeling. Afterwards I'm guided to a plastic steam

LAURA JACKSON visits an Asian-themed spa that gives you ayurvedic therapies amid the delightful sights of the island

cabinet. I sit with my head poking out of the top for 15 minutes while steam helps the oils to moisturise my skin deeply.

It is the final treatment, Shirodhara, which is the most unusual and impressive. Lying on my back on the therapy table, it begins with a gentle foot massage. Warm oils are rubbed into my scalp before a gold-plated oil dispenser is hung above my head; a stream of oil is let out and runs across my forehead, down my scalp and through my hair. This treatment cleanses the "third eye" chakra, situated in the middle of the forehead. The oil dispenser swings from side to side and the warm oil and rhythmic movement induce a meditative state. Usually during spa treatments my mind begins to wander to mundane thoughts such as whether I've left the iron on, but during Shirodhara I achieve a state of complete calm

AS YOUR diagnosis as pitta, vata or kapha can determine the food you wish to eat, the spa's Café Aroma offers an ayurvedic menu. The hotel's fine dining restaurant, Saffrons, offers Indian and European fusion food. It's a chance to sample Jersey scallops with curry leaf, Jersey steak and Kerala-spiced lobster. For dessert the chocolate samosas and filo pastry parcels packed with nutty chocolate mousse are unbeatable. Day two of my

weekend break is spent lounging in my spa robe by the pool area. It has stone floors, wooden ceilings and huge windows. My friend Kate books in for a private yoga session lasting an hour and a half. That afternoon we venture to the picturesque town of Gorey, a 15-minute drive away. Its harbour looks like it has been lifted from the Normandy coastline with French stone cottages, white fences and the magnificent 13th-century Mount Orguell Castle.

After a hard day's pampering, the nearby Castle Green gastropub is the perfect place to enjoy the views of the castle and across Grouville Bay from the balcony. Inside it is eccentrically decorated, mixing wood and stone floors with Moroccan lamps, but has a fine menu utilising as much local produce as possible. Main courses start from £8, ranging from homemade hamburgers to scallop risotto.

Having arrived in Jersey with aching muscles, a stiff neck and frazzled nerves I leave feeling refreshed and ready to face city life. In fact, I feel so relaxed that when Kate and I get stuck behind a farm tractor en route to the airport, and nearly miss our flight, I remain perfectly calm. Ayush's balancing a yurvedic treatments have quite literally rubbed off on me.

GETTING THERE: Flybe (0871 700 2000/www.flybe.com) offers return flights from



Gatwick to Jersey from £63.98. Ayush Wellness Spa (01534 614171/www.ayushspa.com) offers a two night B&B Pure Cleanse programme from £350pp at the Hotel de France, including consultation, Abhyanga massage with Basha Sweda, Udvartana herbal massage and use of spa facilities. A one hour yoga and 30-minute meditation class is £10. Jersey Tourism: 01534 44 88 00/ www.jersey.com

TOTAL CALM: The traditional Shirodhara

CELEBRITY CHARITY

SELINA'S

WHAT MEMOIR £250,000 VICTORY

I love ski was little kids for it Courchevel (actor Ewan and his family) and within a few days they were bombing around the mountain. We couldn't believe it.

Judge bills O.J. for 15 years

AND YOUR WORST?

Funnily enough it was another trip to Courchevel. The whole family went and we were promised an amazing chalet for Christmas but it turned out to be two flats above each other, so the only way to get to the kitchen was to go outside. Plus, nothing was finished – the beds were still being put together when we arrived.



WHICH GADGET IS ESSENTIAL?

I always take a GPS with me. It doesn't have detailed mapping but it gives you the basics to help find out where you are.

BEST BOOK?

I don't take books because they're heavy; instead I put audio books on my iPod. I've listened to loads of Ian Fleming's Bond novels and The Afghan by Frederick Forsyth was good, too.

HOW DO YOU SPEND YOUR TIME ON HOLIDAY?

Relaxing on a beach for more than 40 minutes is my idea of hell. I usually spend a while exploring the place, seeing the sights and visiting museums before chilling out at the end of the trip. I always try to include a dive if possible.

WHERE WOULD YOU REVISIT?

I'd love to take my family to Mongolia. It's mostly barren but somehow there's a beauty to it and the people are so warm and generous. The kids love camping so they'd love staying in a traditional "ger".

WHERE NEXT?

We have a long weekend booked in Barcelona, somewhere I've never been. I'm looking forward to the food, one of my biggest passions. Beyond that trip, I'd like to do another By Any Means – maybe along the Pacific Rim this time.

● Adventurer Charley Boorman starred in BBC series Long Way Down with Ewan McGregor. His new DVD By Any Means is out now on Universal Pictures, £19.99.

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