

# Destination: DETOX

If your New Year resolutions involve giving your health regime a kick-start, then a detox break is de rigueur. Why not head to newly opened luxury wellness resort Chenot Palace in nearby Azerbaijan? Sudeshna Ghosh was one of the first to discover it, and here she gives you the lowdown.



Azerbaijan may seem an unlikely destination for a wellness resort, but the rolling hills and pristine lakes of Gabala prove to be the perfect setting for the luxurious Chenot Palace Health Wellness hotel. The Gabala region, about four hours from capital Baku by road, is popular among tourists for its scenic landscapes. And this new destination spa resort—only the second such resort in the world from revered wellness guru Henri Chenot, of Palace Merano in Italy fame— is set to put the region on the global wellness map.

## East meets west

The Chenot Method is a holistic therapy system that integrates traditional Eastern and Western healing philosophies with modern science. Based on the principle that our bodies end up with a build-up of toxins thanks to modern lifestyles (and don't we know it!), the method aims to detoxify the intra-cellular environment and regenerate cellular energy, while restoring balance, by implementing a tailored treatment plan that can include everything from Traditional Chinese Medicine therapies, to modern fitness

techniques, combined with a carefully conceived diet. There is an interesting intersection of cultures here, whether it's in the medical doctor offering Ayurvedic advice, or herbs like Indian tulsī (basil) making an appearance in certain European-style dishes. Food plays an integral part of any treatment here, with light, toxin-free, calorie-counted food on offer, that is nonetheless presented in fine-dining style, in the elegant white linen dining room.

In fact, the entire property oozes luxury, from the striking marble-clad lobby, to the spacious, well-appointed rooms—complete with uninterrupted views of the lake and the pine-forested hillsides beyond—and the stunning indoor-outdoor pool, among the many other facilities. Apart from the luxurious rooms, there's also a handful of private villas, which are kitted out with private spas and pools.

Designed in a contemporary Alpine-inspired style, the hotel looms over the marshy Nohur lakeshore, with plenty of walking trails and landscaped gardens offering outdoor diversion for punctuating the various treatment sessions that fill your day.

But there won't be too many opportunities to explore the

Opposite page: elegant indoor pool. This page, top to bottom: spacious villa; suite with a view; relaxing at the spa; healthy tea



outdoors! Each person's stay commences with an initial consultation with a medical doctor as well as several diagnostic procedures to gauge current health condition, to personalise the treatment plan based on individual concerns. The plethora of diagnostic treatments alone is mindboggling – from full blood work to tests to assess the body's real age; element balancing (to determine which minerals you are deficient in); skin collagen levels; posture; and at a more alternative medicine level, a 'bio-energetic' check-up which tells you where your body's meridian energy blockages are with the help of an electromagnetic device (it can also go on to clear some of these blockages).

**A day in the life of...**

A typical day starts with a light breakfast of fruits and porridge, after which you head downstairs to the state-of-the-art spa, which, spread across over 6,000 sq.m, occupies the entire basement level, where you flit from one therapy room to another in a continuous series of appointments.

A marriage of medical sterility and indulgent luxury that somehow works, the soothing all-white space is home to dozens of differently-equipped therapy rooms. Treatments can range from Hydro phyto mud therapy – where you soak in a warm bath with coloured lights, then are wrapped in a mud pack and enveloped in a mechanical water bath, and finally hosed off hammam-style, all in the name of detoxification – to Neurac, a new-age physical therapy method which uses suspended cords for gentle yet effective muscle training (used for rehabilitation as well as fitness purposes).

They also have other hi-tech facilities such as a cryo-therapy chamber; altitude room (for training in reduced oxygen conditions); and for those who plan to go hard-core, a cornucopia of other treatments - some of them quite intense.

The signature Chenot massage is an integral part of any programme, which employs a unique suckle cupping technique - it isn't painful but can be mildly uncomfortable – to stimulate the movement of toxins, and also increase blood circulation and tissue regeneration. And while they're busy healing from the inside, they have a range of cosmetic treatments too, including some deeply relaxing facials that also use a milder form of the cupping technology, and other anti-ageing procedures.

In between appointments, you can relax with a cup of herbal tea – the hotel is a completely caffeine-free zone, although they do have their own version of coffee made from barley! - in the inviting lounge area, where sofas with plump cushions beckon you to either drink in the views of the lush lakeside landscape, or entertain yourself with a book or a board game.

Mealtimes are gourmet three-course affairs, with menu choices including dishes such as pineapple carpaccio with orange and coconut; spelt fettucine with baby broccolini and cherry tomatoes; kohlrabi cannelloni with eggplant; grilled seabass with tomato sauce and capers; and lamb stew, to name just a few examples.

But, this is all 'bio-light' cuisine. This means, each dish is planned with balanced nutrition in mind, and cooked lightly on very low temperatures, with little to no oil and salt, using the food combination approach – i.e: proteins and —————>>

## DETOX

Top to bottom:  
restaurant interior;  
Nohur lake view;  
the lobby

carbohydrates aren't mixed. So lunch is usually a vegetarian affair with a main carb source, while at dinnertime, you can enjoy an animal protein. And instead of grape beverages in the long-stemmed glasses, you get to wash it down with lemon-water, and dessert is a herbal tea.

The beautifully set tables also feature a trio of spice powders (cumin, curry, and paprika, all of which have healing properties), that you can use to taste, if the flavours seem a bit bland for some – after a day or two, once you get into the groove of things, it's quite easy to get used to. (Although it may be slightly harder for those on an extreme programmes who don't even get to enjoy bio-light food, but are instead, put on detox diets of varying intensities).

All the therapies are complemented by an array of fitness facilities, including gym, tennis and squash courts, and the aforementioned pool. While it is quite easy to spend a week or so (their programmes go up to 14 days and more, see 'Need to know'), without ever stepping out of the resort grounds, for those inclined, there are activity options on offer, such as exploring the old town of Gabala, skiing in the winter, and even, dare we say it, an amusement park and a shooting club nearby!

But to get the most out of a stay here, it's a good idea to follow the suggested routine diligently, and learn from the knowledge and expertise of the multi-disciplinary staff. There's enough opportunity to do so, including culinary classes with the head chef, who shares recipes, tips and tricks for cooking healthier at home. Armed with this knowhow, and with the head-start that a few days of targeted detoxification and nutritive support that your body would have benefited from, it will undoubtedly be easier to go on as you meant to, at the start of the New Year.



### Need to know

**Chenot Palace** offers a range of wellness detox programmes, starting from three-night stay packages, prices from \$1,695 per person. Packages can be tailored with additional therapies. Visit [www.chenotpalace.com](http://www.chenotpalace.com).

For special GCC Residents' prices, visit [www.MichiDe.com](http://www.MichiDe.com).

