

## AMAVEDA DETOX RETREAT HEALTH SPA IN SUSSEX

Detox Health Retreat

**Anyone for Abhyanga in East Sussex? Or perhaps a little Charshana? Or maybe some Panchakarma? In other words, anyone for “dry brushing of the body”, “self-oiling” or “the yogic system of detoxification”. I’m easing myself into a gentle detox. I’m not existing on gulps of air or sips of lemon water. Or even colonics. But rather on Ayurvedic practices, mindfully cooked food, yoga and oodles of downtime. I’m on an Amaveda Detox.**

I’ve pitched up on the Thursday night. Jet-lagged from Laos; sporting a wheat-sandwich-bloated tummy; and ready to sleep for a millennium. The Satnav has guided me to the retreat on a scenic route: a journey that should take two hours from London takes four.

I’ve arrived like a bat out of hell at [Pennybridge House](#), the venue for this retreat.

It’s hidden behind electric double gates (swank alert) and it’s a private rental property that’s Georgian meets Victorian with a touch of Tudor. The owner and fellow retreat guest, Gabriella Atkinson, shows me around. The house has got all the fancy nobs and bells: an Italian marble terrace, large pavilion, ornamental gardens and billiard room. And a spa, about which more later.

It’s super comfortable with piping under-floor heating and showers that compete with Niagara Falls. Not all the (seven) double bedrooms have en suites – mine doesn’t – so choose wisely. But I am soon comatose in my ginormous bed with mattress topper.

Next morning I wake up to an ooh-ah view of rolling countryside. The house is on the outskirts of Wadhurst, Sussex, set in an 8-acre garden and near the Downs. I soon find myself downstairs drinking charcoal powder with psyllium husk and zeolite (a clay), as one does. ‘It stops you getting hungry during yoga,’ says Amaveda founder, Emily Shaw. (It’s also clearly designed to make you poo as, it transpires, are most things on this retreat.)

The retreatants (is that a word?) convene at 7:30am (yes, that’s AM) in the drawing room for yoga with Clive Fogelman. He offers a combo of flow and restorative yoga in front of an open fire. ‘He’s really good,’ confides guest Beverly, herself a super-bendy yoga instructor. Afterwards I have my first (of possibly hundreds over the weekend) cup of herbal tea at the Hydration Station.

Next there’s a communal breakfast in the conservatory. There are ten guests, including three men – from a PA to TV producer – ranging in ages from twentysomething to retiredsomething. Menu options include a warm chai smoothie with kale and pollen, amaranth and quinoa porridge and omelette with chia and kale.

I talk to Emily, the brains (and yoga-svelte, detoxed body) behind Amaveda. She is a nutritionist, aromatherapist, detox specialist and self-dubbed ‘plant-ally.’ And a Canadian who was born in London.

She has passion and a deep knowledge, and talks enthusiastically about things like coffee enemas and spiritual tourism. Her approach fuses Indian (Ayurvedic Panchakarma), Chinese (macrobiotic) and Amazonian (she has studied alternative medicine in Peru).

I soon discover that I can do as little or as much as I please during the retreat: there’s nothing scheduled aside from morning and evening yoga and three meals. (I think I’d like a few more activities on offer, even if I don’t do them.) My days are spent in the spa doing gentle laps in the 15-metre indoor ozone pool, lolling in the (8-seater) sauna, steam room and al fresco hot tub. Or lounging around reading, walking in the countryside or sleeping. And using Emily’s Amaveda products.

Ah, the products. She makes them specifically for her retreats and they’re formulated to help the detoxification process. They’re 100% Ayurveda inspired. So I practice self-massage with cold-pressed oils from the Amazon and soak in baths with Rosewood with sea salt and magnesium flakes: apparently stimulating my nerves to lessening my wrinkles. ‘I make my products from Amazonian botanicals that grow in virgin soil that has been composting for thousands of years,’ Emily says.



### AMAVEDA DETOX RETREAT

Pennybridge House, Beech Hill,  
Wadhurst, East Sussex, TN5 6JR,  
United Kingdom

[Visit health spa's website](#)

### HOW TO GET THERE

Pennybridge House is located on the outskirts of Wadhurst in East Sussex and is about 50 miles from central London and an hour and a half to two hour drive depending on traffic via the M25, A21 and A26 via Tunbridge Wells. You should then take the A267 to Wadhurst where you will join the B2100 Wadhurst Road to Pennybridge House. There is plenty of free parking for guests.

### \*\* MY SPA TIP \*\*

Book a room with an en suite if you’re going with people you don’t know. Or book the entire house for a private retreat.

### OPENING TIMES

Please check the Amaveda website for retreat dates.

### OUR MAN ON THE GROUND:

**Caroline Phillips**

London, United  
Kingdom



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When I'm not polishing my face, drinking yet more herbal teas, dry brushing my skin or sleeping, we are eating at the communal table in the dining room. Sometimes the therapists join us. It's a set menu of two courses. Like miso soup. Then red and white quinoa with kale salad, pomegranate, sesame roasted sweet potato and kelp noodles. Think alkaline forming. Think whole foods with high nutrients that are big on fibre.

It's all gluten, sugar and meat-free food and even if it's not always on time, it's certainly cooked with love. And it's organic and mostly tastes good. Plus it's not offered in mice portions, although sometimes I feel hungry. But there's always the possibility to fill up with yet more You Know What.

My favourite activity is the (at extra cost: £50 per hour) massage that takes me to heaven and beyond. It's a mixture of Reiki, passive stretching, acupressure release, lymph drainage and deep tissue. The magician (well, she's actually also a theatre director) who performs this is Rachel Blackman. I float out of her room, drink yet more... herbal tea, then flop into bed - once again.





Amaveda offer other detox retreats in Peru and Brazil. This is the first one they've done in the UK. It needs a little tinkering. But I leave the retreat on Sunday with glowing skin and a flat tummy. Feeling more flexible. And with chilled nervous system. In other words, a complete reboot in three days. What's not to like?

**Caroline Phillips is an award-winning freelance journalist based in London**

*Photographs courtesy of Amaveda and Pennybridge House*

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 Facilities	Pool, Steam Room, Sauna, Jacuzzi, Treatment Rooms, Fitness Room
 Suitable For	Mixed
 Treatments Available	Massage, Body Wraps, Body Scrubs, Diet & Nutritional Advice, Yoga