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REDONDA BAY'S AQUA WELLNESS RESORT

By Caroline Phillips

Aqua Wellness Resort in Redonda Bay, Nicaragua, is for the zen seeker who wants marshmallows on the campfire after her yoga session. Or a pizza night after her papaya body scrub.



It comprises 28 tree houses set in a tropical forest chokka with cacti, iguanas and howler monkeys – and overlooking an ooh-ah bay with sweeping beach, the Pacific and diving-for-fish pelicans. Not to mention the beautiful Giant's Foot rock formation.

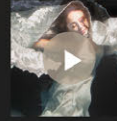
The tree houses are jungle chic with mahogany, Brazilian cherry and teak – think open-plan bedroom with wooden shower in the corner and a top-notch kitchen in the adjoining villa. Plus, there's a private deck plunge pool too – though whether anyone ever uses one for anything aside from washing her feet is a question of metaphysical importance. (Eco warriors please note: the tree houses get eco-brownie points for being above the canopy of the rainforest – which means they don't interfere with the delicate environmental system).



The beachside restaurant serves top nosh – all delivered by super-friendly waiting staff. They offer organic greens and catch-of-the-day steamed in coconut milk. Or zero-size-me green papaya salad with a glass of fresh-squeezed tamarind or passion fruit juice. (If you want to forget all that wellness blah, you can feast on steak and egg burrito). You'll find the thirty-something crowd here – families, couples and the occasional yoga bunny – mostly Americans and Canadians.

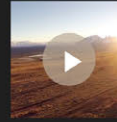
What else? It's a deliciously unplugged experience of no TVs and dodgy Wi-Fi (after all, it is a remote area). There's kayaking, paddle boarding and snorkelling, and if you want time away from

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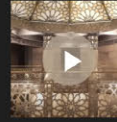
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the noonday sun, take the chocolate-making class and get creative with roasted cacao beans, which you peel then blend, sprinkling afterwards with chilli, sesame or cashew. Yum.



You can do your downward dogs on an ocean-view wooden yoga platform. But there are so many steps everywhere that you'll have done a workout even before you get there (luckily, they give you a mobile phone if you want to call reception). The yoga platform is so windy your mat flies away – but it's worth it for the bird's eye view of the demerara-sugar beach and emerald coast with jade water.

As for the yogis, they're peripatetic teachers – from Acro to Ashtanga ones. Learning the Acro (as in 'acrobatic') yoga poses must surely allow you to run away to join the Cirque du Soleil.



There's also a small spa (two rooms) which deals in splendiferous views, cacao exfoliation and Mombacho massage (which apparently mimics the rhythms of the volcano). Try the rejuvenating facial – it involves some plastic cupping and does what it says on the tin. If you're lucky, you'll get a therapist charmingly called 'Darling.'

Peak experience? A full moon with a turtle burying her eggs on the beach, scattering sand with her flappers in the process. Who could beat that? Certainly go there to get away from the hurly burly of life in the fastest lane.





Journey Latin America specialise in tailor-made holidays to Central & South America, including Nicaragua. A 7 night stay in Aqua Wellness Spa Resort costs £1930pp based on two people sharing, including return transfers from the airport and international flights with United Airlines (who offer three daily non-stop services from London Heathrow to its hub at Houston/George Bush Intercontinental Airport, with onward connections to Managua, Nicaragua, and over 300 other destinations across the Americas).

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Caroline Phillips is an award-winning freelance journalist who contributes to publications from Sunday and daily newspapers to glossy magazines and various luxury websites. To see more of her work, go to www.carolinephillips.net.

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