

Singapore's warm steamy air fogs my sunglasses as I edge precariously into Vrksasana (tree pose). "Open up your toes like roots and spread your fingers like a branch," says Dianne Lim, who is leading this early morning yoga class in a gazebo overlooking The Lawn at Raffles Hotel Singapore. "Let the wind steady you and (take) one more breath."

With a roll-call of illustrious guests over its 137-year history, including writers Joseph Conrad and Rudyard Kipling, actors John Wayne and Elizabeth Taylor, and designers Christian Louboutin and Karl Lagerfeld, Raffles has long been synonymous with indulgence. Decadence, even.

Yet a more recent drawcard for guests staying in one of this grand old dame's restored suites is wellness – specifically, a package blending yoga, spa treatments, jogging or walking, healthy eating and a range of other therapies.

The Raffles Enlightenment Retreat is designed to capture a slice of the burgeoning wellness tourism market, which is predicted to surpass \$US1672bn (\$2507bn) by 2030, according to Precedence Research. It comprises a four-day, three-night package encompassing spa and wellness activities with the aim of "stimulating one's sense of self-love, freedom, joy, and inner peace to gain clarity and harmony".

Despite the flexibility gains that come with practising yoga in 32C temperatures, I'm still a long way from Lim's effortless command of more advanced poses. Nevertheless, following much enthusiastic praise for my form during the relaxation postures of Makarasana (crocodile pose) and Savasana (corpse pose), Lim pours students a glass of freshly squeezed green apple and celery juice to toast the session's end.

Drinking it, I feel virtuous, but my newfound resolve doesn't keep me away from the pain au chocolat in the Tiffin Room afterwards. The gemstone massage I have scheduled in the Raffles Spa that afternoon might offer an alternative road to redemption.

While Raffles has operated a spa for more than 20 years, this cocoon-like facility was overhauled recently.

With seven luxurious treatment suites, it took its first bookings in August 2019, just as the rest of the refurbished hotel was throwing open its doors.

One of the spa's big drawcards is its hydrothermal facilities – including a "vitality pool" filled with mineral-rich Peruvian pink salt, a herbal sauna scented with calming aromas, an ice fountain, and an aromatherapy steam room that releases pure salt vapour.

In the dim light of the treatment room, my



The Lawn at Raffles Singapore; Gem Suite at Raffles Spa, below

New age of enlightenment

Famous for its cocktails, wellness is now on the menu at Raffles Singapore

DENISE CULLEN



therapist shows me the different gemstones that will be used during the treatment – amethyst, garnet, rose quartz and carnelian. The stones, she says, are heated in purified

IN THE KNOW

The three-night Raffles Singapore Enlightenment Retreat is available year-round; from \$SGD 7800 (\$8807).

rafflessingapore.com

water, then used during the massage to ease and relax sore muscles and, through their healing properties, to positively influence my energy field.

Is this an approach that's grounded in science? I doubt it, but my sceptic's hat has joined the rest of my clothes in the change room next door, as I am soothed and pummelled into a state of blissful surrender.

Other key elements of Raffles Enlightenment Retreat include guided meditation prac-

tice, a 24-hour Raffles Butler service and sound bathing sessions – where participants are immersed in surround sound from instruments such as gongs, singing bowls, percussion and chimes.

The culinary team is also developing a health-conscious menu to complement what's already on offer – such as fat-free yoghurt with organic red berries.

Ample stress relief also comes simply from the pampering associated with any stay at Raffles. One night, I summon my butler after dinner and, purely in the interests of research, request that she draws me a bubble bath.

Twenty minutes later, as I'm sinking into a deep, warm, foam-filled tub, it's hard to feel anything other than a deep sense of relaxation, contentment and glowing good health.

Denise Cullen was a guest of Raffles Singapore.



Now one subscription delivers more than you expected.

Eligible subscriptions only.*

PLUS

Subscribe to The Australian for complimentary access to **THE WALL STREET JOURNAL**.

The Australian

THE AUSTRALIAN
For the informed Australian

*Eligible subscriptions are full digital subscriptions excluding student and campus offers, Today's Paper digital replica and some corporate subscriptions. T&Cs apply.