



BE PREPARED

You will get far more out of your spa or retreat experience if you are properly prepared and have the right gear with you.

Words / Judy Chapman

With more than 20 years' experience travelling to the far corners of the earth for countless spas and retreats, I guess I have learned a thing or two about the essentials to pack for your spa or retreat experience.

ESSENTIAL PREPARATION

Usually your spa retreat will not have caffeine, alcohol and high-sugar and meat meals on the menu so definitely refrain from these for one week leading up to your retreat — this will greatly reduce the potentials of detox such as caffeine withdrawal headaches.

Pack some healthy snacks for the plane or car trip as well, as you don't want to munch on nasties before your cleanse.

It's worth finding out if there are any cultural taboos in the destination you are visiting. For example, in most instances, it's not advisable to wear short skirts and sleeves in most Asian countries — you'll feel more comfortable if you dress accordingly. If hiking is part of your retreat, then break in your walking boots.

Definitely up your exercise dose, attend a few yoga classes so that you feel fairly fit and energised by the time you arrive — otherwise you may just collapse and feel exhausted for the first few days.

WHAT TO BRING

Here are a few things to have on your "must-bring" list:

- An open heart and mind — you never know who you will meet and what you will experience.
- A journal to note down your thoughts throughout your retreat.
- Yoga mat if you prefer to use your own, although most retreats will provide one (a yoga mat spray or wipes is always good as well).
- Inspiring books to read (there are some suggestions earlier in this publication).
- Camera/phone and charger.
- A cashmere shawl or some sort of shawl for meditation.
- Comfortable and casual clothes — enough outfits for a week without the need to do laundry is advisable.
- Pack comfy yoga and exercise wear including trainers and hiking shoes. You need just the right mix that you can easily add on or strip off in between yoga, spa and dinner without the need to return to your room.
- Hair ties and headband.
- Hand-towel for yoga.
- Sandals for the day. Flip flops to use in the shower are also recommended for hygiene.
- Depending on your destination and

the weather then, pack items such as a raincoat, down jacket, thermals and layers, lots of layers.

- A water bottle is recommended so you don't need to buy plastic water bottles.
- Bathers, hat, sunscreen, insect repellent and sunglasses
- Personal care items that do not contain strong scents or perfumes as other guests may be allergic to these.
- Laundry soap in case you need to hand-wash something.
- If it's a rustic type of retreat, bring shampoo, conditioner and body wash.
- Sacred crystals or a meaningful something to pretty up and personalise your room.
- If tipping is acceptable, then small currency to leave tips for spa therapists and cleaning staff.

WHAT NOT TO BRING

- If you can make digital detox part of your retreat experience, then ditch all your devices — sometimes we need to disconnect so we can reconnect again. No doubt you'll sleep better too.
- You probably don't need heels, perfume, make-up or fancy jewellery. Remember, preparation is 90 per cent of success so prepare well and your spa and retreat experience will be so much richer.