



SHA Wellness Clinic



Outdoor Lounge at SHA Wellness Clinic, Spain

At a Glance

This wellness spa on Spain's southeastern coast, which touts a detoxing—and delicious—macrobiotic menu, provides a wide array of treatments, from the scientific (sleep disorder treatments, genetic and preventative medicine) to the healthful (Reiki, massage).

Indagare Loves

- The restaurant's rotating menu, which despite being low in calories, is delicious and filling
- The exercise facilities, including a yoga studio, tennis court, Pilates studio, extensive gym and options for personal training.
- The more than 250 trained specialists on staff

Review

You've heard it before; illness strikes, and where modern medicine fails, a revamped diet and shift towards whole-body wellness succeed. And yet, each testimonial is as miraculous as the next, and the story behind Sha Wellness Clinic follows this pattern. Real estate developer Alfredo Bataller Parietti struggled with digestive issues for decades, and when he was diagnosed with colon cancer in 2000, he turned to natural remedies in lieu of the drug treatments that had failed him all his life. Astonished by the rapid improvement in his health after switching to a macrobiotic diet and healthier lifestyle, Parietti began to dream of sharing the program with others through a spa hotel-medical facility. Today Sha is a mainstay of the natural health movement, while still offering a stylish, luxe and, believe it or not, gourmet guest experience.

Located on a hillside overlooking the Costa Blanca coastline, Sha rises in tiered glory to welcome guests with a white, Miami-esque design and the promise of hands-on pampering. The accommodations at Sha are all suites (93 in total), and those with sea views are recommended, especially during the summer, when guests are afforded a picturesque panorama of the shimmering Mediterranean in the distance. Although the large resort can feel busy at times, guests are so involved in their own schedules that this is not a drawback. In fact, the majority of Sha's clients are individual travelers who come to the spa for seclusion and introspection, lending the entire property a communal sense of calm.

Perhaps Sha's most distinctive attribute is its macrobiotic diet plan, which can seem daunting at first. Macrobiotics is based on the belief that you can fight illness and sustain the mind and soul by keeping the body balanced through a diet that avoids "high-impact" foods—like potatoes, red meat and dairy—which strain your system, and instead emphasizes "low-impact" foods like beans, whole grains, nuts and vegetables.

To aid the transition to this regime, guests have a nutrition evaluation upon arrival after which they are assigned one of three meal plans. But to call the cuisine "diet food" is to do the chef, Pablo Montoro, an injustice. Montoro, who trained as sous chef to the hotel's former toque (an **El Bulli** alum), turns out gourmet fare presented with the flair of a *Michelin*-starred restaurant. During my stay, I indulged in twice-daily desserts, and multi-course meals with such dishes as whole-wheat pasta with fennel sauce and tarragon and grilled sea bass with celery puree and sautéed vegetables.

Sha's programs vary in length and intensity, ranging from ones suitable for first-timers to sessions for seasoned vets. The two- and four-day programs offer a tasting menu of the spa's treatments (including a nutrition consultation, massage and aqua therapy of your choosing), and focus on rejuvenation. These stays are ideal for a relaxing break,

however, SHA offers such a specialized spa roster that guests with a specific goal and more time can experience a truly transformative stay. The seven- to fourteen-day program is individually tailored, with multiple medical and nutrition consultations and training sessions scheduled throughout the guest's stay and a personalized health plan to keep him or her on track at home. Those with a particular goal in mind can enroll in one of the specific programs (recommended 7-14 days), which target such areas as weight loss and fitness, quitting smoking, managing stress and optimizing health and life expectancy.

Continuing with the theme of creating a healthy, balanced lifestyle, Sha offers a diversity of activities. In addition to the state-of-the-art spa, the grounds include a tennis court, putting green, and an extensive, 28-station hydrotherapy circuit that includes Roman and Turkish baths, bithermal showers, therapeutic water jets, a sauna and more. These physical experiences are complimented by daily information sessions and classes offered by Sha Academy. Courses on such topics as emotional intelligence and how to detox and cooking classes help guests maintain their program once they've left the cossetting spa.

Who Should Stay

Sha is great for several types of spa experiences, whether one simply wants to detox and relax for a few days after visiting other parts of Spain or is looking to completely overhaul their health regimen and treat any number of illnesses.

Getting There

Traveling from the U.S. to Sha takes a long time, so it is best to tack a stay onto the end of a European trip. Most major European cities have flights to Alicante or Valencia, which are, respectively, 45 or 90 minutes by car from Sha.

Need to Know

- Not all of the technicians are proficient in English, so request someone who speaks the language well if you want your treatments explained or if you wish to converse
- Alcohol is prohibited if you are on a strict diet plan. Only guests who are doing an à la carte program can elect to have wine with meals.
- Bathrobes may be worn all day, except for at dinner, when the dress code is elegant casual.
- Ask for female specialists if you do not wish to have a male technician for more intimate treatments like water baths. Undergarments are provided, but they

are sheer.

- *Emma Pierce on May 6, 2015*

