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Travel Wellness

TASTE OF EUPHORIA

Nutrition is the key at a chic new Greek spa. It's the metabolics, says *Susan d'Arcy*

Forget DNA testing – that's so last year. The wellness world's new obsession is metabolic medicine: the study of how what we eat determines our health.

Pioneering the approach is this year's most eagerly anticipated new destination spa, Euphoria Retreat. It's a pink-hued, razor-angled wellbeing complex deep in a pine forest in the Peloponnese. It opens on Tuesday. I sneaked in last month.

The innovative approach to nutrition sees every guest's food customised to ensure a diet that guards against a range of metabolic disorders, from 21 types of cancer to heart attacks, strokes and type 2 diabetes.

Euphoria Retreat is the 11-year, no-expense-spared dream of Marina Efraimoglou, who was the chairwoman of a Greek bank before a cancer diagnosis made her rethink life and retrain in traditional Chinese medicine.

You know that bit in spa consultations when you play up your kale addiction and pretend you're borderline teetotal?

It doesn't wash in these parts. Instead, they go straight to the source: your blood. In the 3GL test, a pinprick of your blood is analysed for levels of glucose (sugar in the bloodstream), glycogen (sugars stored in the liver) and glutathione (the gladiator of antioxidants), the three key biomarkers of metabolic health.

Mine showed I was low in antioxidants, which play an important role in burning fat. So my plan concentrated on antioxidant-rich foods, including pineapples and oranges. Probably not unrelated, I also needed to lose two kilos.

Although each guest's food is unique, everyone has three meals and two snacks a day. I tried to avoid the snacks, which turned out to be a schoolgirl error.

Day one was low protein, to balance my insulin production. I then had four high-protein days when my revved-up metabolism, looking for something to do, began burning pure fat. In theory. My dishes included scrambled egg with cured pork for breakfast, rib-eye steak with wilted greens for lunch and zingy



fennel, orange and sea trout salad and grilled chicken for dinner. On my final day, I returned to low protein and carbs (tuna pasta) to kick-start the process again.

Exercise also features, with daily heart-pumping guided hikes into the mountains. The resort is in the 13th-century town of Mystras, and the morning we spent exploring its steep lanes was possibly the most culturally rewarding workout on any spa schedule.

ENERGY FLOW Euphoria, in the Peloponnese



As for Euphoria itself, I could happily spend the rest of my days padding from decadent massage to excellent yoga session. The outdoor pool overlooks endless folds of misty mountains. The indoor hydrotherapy pool is a showstopper – a vast domed space with a “spaceship” anchored centre stage. Inside, the water plunges to 13ft. The idea is that you dive deep down for a sense of release.

The 45 bedrooms are luxurious, minimalist cocoons, while the four-storey spa blends Hellenic heritage and Taoist leanings: burnished gold and gunmetal interiors inspired by Byzantine domes and arches; and water, the “birth” element in ancient Chinese philosophy, for soothing ambience.

How did I get on? It was odd coming to Greece and not seeing a beach (the nearest one is a 40-minute drive away), but the results were difficult to argue with: I lost a kilo and 3cm from my waist.

I left, if not quite euphoric, then certainly relaxed, rather chuffed with myself and armed with some invaluable metabolic intel.

Susan d'Arcy was a guest of Healing Holidays, which has a week at Euphoria Retreat from £2,449pp, full-board, including flights, transfers and 11 treatments (healingholidays.co.uk)