



LIFESTYLE & TRAVEL 2 MONTHS AGO

Add This Spa Retreat in Greece to Your Post-Pandemic Travel List

by KATE O'BRIEN



5 MIN READ SAVE 

KATE O'BRIEN DISCOVERS EUPHORIA IN GREECE ...

Built into the foothills of Mount Taygetos in the Sparta of Homer's Odyssey, Euphoria is cocooned in a dense forest of pine and carpeted with citrus, pomegranate and olive groves. Sitting on the edge of Mystras, the last significant stronghold of the Byzantine Empire and a UNESCO World Heritage site, this destination retreat marries rich history with innovation and spirituality with cutting-edge science.

Euphoria is defined as “feelings of intense elation and happiness” and was aptly named by founder Marina Efraimoglou, an ex-banker whose brush with cancer led her to explore another world of ancient therapies, Chinese Medicine and traditional Greek healing in particular.

In essence, this is a place to restore and rebalance. Deeply inspired by the twin powers of ancient Hellenic and Chinese philosophies and practices, Euphoria specialises in tackling personal issues and restoring balance and emotional clarity in all who visit.

The elegant curves of the archways and domes lend a real softness to the stone, which along with the surrounding elements and a soothing palette of muted golds, deep reds and soft greys creates a gentle, almost monastic ambiance throughout the 45 guest rooms. Everywhere you look, there is a powerful reminder to just stop and breathe in the now.



The superbly designed circular spa rises from underground (owing to the belief that the body heals better when closer to the earth) and is spread across four floors connected via a stairwell spiralling upwards from the black-pebbled Kneipp pool to the blue skies above, reminiscent of yoga's Kundalini energy swirling from root to crown of the head, enabling our shakti energy to rise and empower us. Hours can be whiled away wallowing in the steam of the Byzantine hammam, floating in the domed ethereal hydrotherapy pool, clearing internal congestion in the salt cave or simply being in the cosy relaxation area.

The surrounding land was blessed by healers and the grounding energy is ever present so meditation comes easy at Euphoria, as does the comprehensive menu of massage, facials and bodywork treatments delivered by the resident team of warm and highly-skilled therapists. Morning hikes (of varying abilities) exploring the ancient land (with an added hint of Greek history for good measure) offer the best start to the day, while biking through the countryside or the pine-scented forest, peppered with hammocks strung over the branches for aerial yoga sessions, is also popular, as is daily yoga, sound healing or other mind-movement sessions.



While some guests visit Euphoria for a spa break, most opt for one of the all-inclusive programmes on offer, from Detox, Weight Loss and Fitness (Spartan Adventure style bounding up and down the steps of a classical amphitheatre nearby), to Immunity Reset, Emotional and Physical transformation and the signature science-powered Nutrigenomics Retreat, pioneered by renowned Greek doctor George Leon. Here the focus is heavily on metabolic medicine, 3GL in particular, a patented protocol that measures what is believed to be the three most important biomarkers for metabolic and cellular health in the body: glycogen, glucose and glutathione. Based on the results of a simple pinprick test, food, exercise and lifestyle recommendations are customised to rebalance wayward metabolism and energy levels and basically reboot the system at cellular level.

As with the best retreat destinations, food is a cornerstone of therapy and for guests partaking in specific programmes, the Mediterranean-inspired meals are prepared in accordance with 3GL recommendations to support the body. In essence, this means plates (and snacks) overflowing with colourful antioxidant-rich vegetables and meat, chicken, fish and grains to keep our cells vibrantly healthy. Think Traditional Greek moussaka, quinoa salads, mushroom risottos and delicious home-prepared soups (although Greek salads, which to me ooze the best of Mediterranean cuisine, could be more plentiful).

While my stay was brief, in addition to excellent hands-on massages and Five Elements energy healing sessions, I was fortunate to experience the 3GL nutrition and respiratory function tests. Thankfully, I am quite healthy overall and although a few small tweaks were in order, including reducing my overall carbohydrate intake to enhance my energy levels and making time for stillness and space in my day.



For me, it's the fusion of the traditional Greek and Chinese modalities of healing that sets Euphoria apart. To the ancient Greek philosophers, life was a joyful, sensual journey of growth and discovery, while the early Chinese wisdom holders were essentially cartographers, observing the seasonal nuances of nature and how they impact health and balance in the body. This marriage is so needed in our world now. Learning more about Chinese Medicine's Five Elements is always a pleasure and Marina along with her associate Mary Vandorou were always on point as they seamlessly entwine both in one delightfully neat package of treatments, science and ancient Peloponnese history, weaved into a 21st-century storyline.

I'm predominantly wood, I am told, which makes sense as I have long had an affinity for trees. I am eager for growth and creativity, but quick to frustration when my metal element has its way! Yet here lies my motivation, so it is needed, in balance of course.

"Wood is the child of water and it holds my dreams and talents," she tells me, advising more stillness during my day, so my dreams can flow more freely.

It's about letting go and lightness does come easily here, as the poet Mary Oliver captures so perfectly in *When among the Trees*: "Like trees we are here to go easy, to be light and to shine."

www.euphoriaretreat.com