

# Tap into Ancient Wisdom

A GREEK RETREAT THAT HONORS AGE-OLD TRADITIONS

AS SEEN IN  
CTC&G  
Connecticut Cottages and Gardens



**Scenes From Euphoria** (CLOCKWISE ACROSS SPREAD FROM LEFT) Water is a key element that repeats in the spa starting with the water well from above and below. The dome in the indoor pool; fireplace with an arch detail; terrace dining; beautiful series of arches and domes in the Hammam; and an overview of the spa built into hill with ancient Mystras looming above.



COURTESY OF EUPHORIA RETREAT

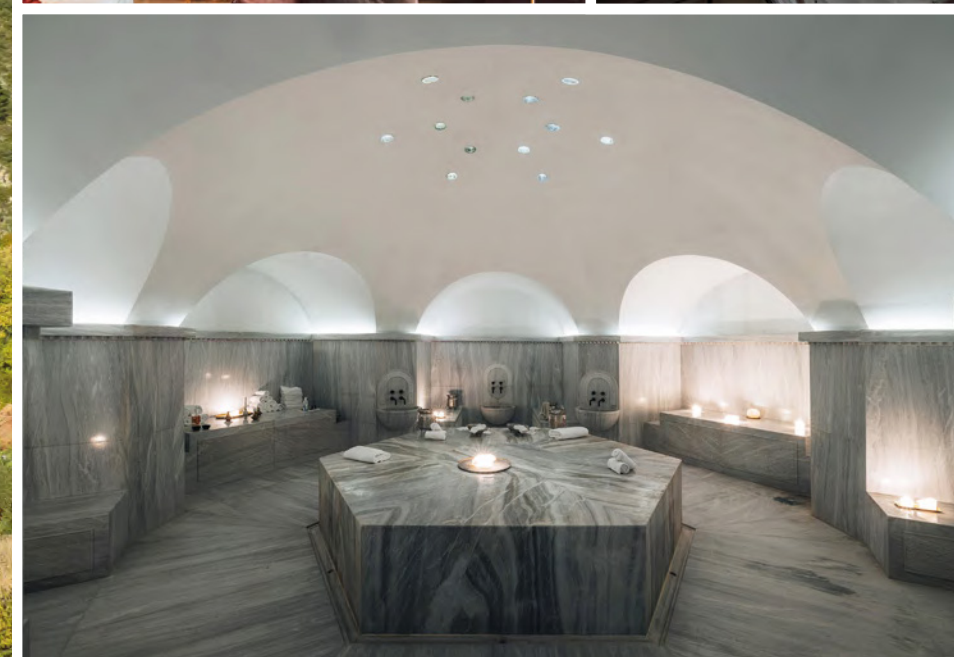


massage table. Highlights of the trip included hikes to the archaeological site of Mystras; lectures on nutrition; drama therapy (where we explored *Antigone* by Sophocles!); and a sound-healing meditation group. But the spa offers rigorous hikes and has an impressive gym complete with trainers. As a design editor, I loved how architecture, color and lighting manifested the owner's vision. Byzantine domes and monastic arches give the spa a church-like feel. The guest rooms are decorated with accessories by local artisans and palettes that evoke the five elements. Perhaps the highlight for me was the 25-meter water well, linking all four floors with a spiral staircase. Look up and you see the sun or stars (fire element) as your feet enjoy the hot and cold footbaths. The graded colors of the water well represent the layers we must shed if we are to transform. Climb the stairs (wood element) then return to the ground floor and the feel of earth. In the sphere pool, you hear the sounds of whales and dolphins as you dive under the sphere that envelops the center of the indoor pool. Swim through a door to the outdoor pool and experience the blue sky

and Mediterranean sunshine! Then choose a sauna and steam room, a cold plunge pool and ice fountain, or the salt room. One of my last treatments that stayed with me for weeks was the five-element balancing treatment.

The food was superb and varied. Many of the vegetables and herbs are grown right on the property. Not once did I feel I was restricted in my meal choices: grilled octopus with Romesco sauce or a Greek salad (of course) with Laconian olives or cold beet soup with yogurt, spearmint and pistachios; sauteed seabass with a citrus sauce or lamb chops or vegan moussaka. All so good! And did I say wine was served?

As I left for home, I knew I'd changed. I had needed an emotional cleansing and Euphoria provided it. Old therapies still work in the 21st century.—DJ Carey



In an age when we are bombarded with the latest and greatest—whether it's fashion or fitness or technology—a trip to Euphoria Retreat ([euphoria retreat.com](http://euphoria retreat.com)) in Greece showed me that age-old traditions are often the most effective. Located on the Peloponnesian peninsula two hours from Athens, the retreat honors the myths and mysticism of Olympian gods and mythical heroes. Add stunning Byzantine churches, a sunny Mediterranean climate and verdant hills dotted with citrus and olive orchards, and you will lose yourself and your cares. And that was the point of this journey.

While some spas are often centered on sacrifice and denial, Euphoria is different. Euphoria evolved from Marina Efraimoglou—the retreat's founder whose cancer diagnosis when she was in her twenties, and a career in investment banking, led her to reevaluate her life. She sought balance through exploration and study of traditional Chinese medicine and the five elements (wood, fire, earth, water and metal). Inspired by her own recovery, she decided to create a place of healing where people could be gently guided and motivated to live a more holistic, balanced and spiritually satisfying way of life. I was all in.

I loved not feeling the pressure (as you do at some spas) to race from Pilates to yoga to the

