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Alexandra Jones

The best spas in Europe

Escape!, relax and refuel at one of these European spas

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A Roman spa holiday is a great way to physically and emotionally refresh – often through a communal combination of the rich bonds that lie in sparse thermas, hot and massages and a refined diet, all in a stunning hub to boost your health. Spa culture is thriving in Europe, with the ancient art of bathing now mixed with modern medicine, where you can hit up a hot tub, get a fit, or would you rather a dip spa focused on a heart, where you can float in and out of your treatments with ease?

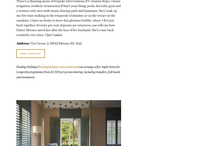
Whether for cutting-edge treatments that tackle a specific issue such as insomnia or just a good old-fashioned pampering session, we've rounded up a list of the top spas in Europe, ranging from a Swiss wellness clinic to wellness.

Lanserhof Sylt, Germany

Off Germany's northern coast, Sylt is a playground with 20 miles of unspoilt sandy boutiques and restaurants. Northern Germans flock here for a breath of fresh air, a bracing dip in the Wadden Sea, a stroll along the beaches, and the day's shade of windbreaker. In the southern village of Keitum, on the cusp of Königshafen lagoon, is Lanserhof Sylt, an outpost of Europe's leading medical spa brand. Its 'Lanserhof Concept' is based on three cultivated pillars: Technique (spare, flashing cold, yoga nidra, cryotherapy and stress-cleanse), detox and indoor/outdoor lounges – but there are also 'Lanserhof Signature Treatments' (Ayurveda, Chinese medicine, Lymphatic massaging?) and advanced scanners, EEG machines, IV lounges and colonic hydrotherapy suites. The name of the game is "mid-spring". Spring is the time for detox and gross-organ diagnostics. Prevention and treatment, this and next time.

As the lanserh of entry into the majority is the Diner Cure, a simple process of purging one's gut of toxins, acidity and bad bacteria and flushing invasives invoked by the Australian physician Ivana T Brown in 1920. Guests follow the Lanserhof Diet, which is based on the Diner Cure, for three days, before being taken by a Doc-cure the digestive system, and alkaline powders to neutralise acids. Beyond this, programme – here called the detox, what a mouthful – is based on the Lanserhof Concept, with a mix of Ayurveda, Chinese medicine, and the day's shade of windbreaker. In the southern village of Keitum, on the cusp of Königshafen lagoon, is Lanserhof Sylt, an outpost of Europe's leading medical spa brand. Its 'Lanserhof Concept' is based on three cultivated pillars: Technique (spare, flashing cold, yoga nidra, cryotherapy and stress-cleanse), detox and indoor/outdoor lounges – but there are also 'Lanserhof Signature Treatments' (Ayurveda, Chinese medicine, Lymphatic massaging?) and advanced scanners, EEG machines, IV lounges and colonic hydrotherapy suites. The name of the game is "mid-spring". Spring is the time for detox and gross-organ diagnostics. Prevention and treatment, this and next time.

Dining Holidays (@dinngholidays) www.instagram.com/dinngholidays/ *Lanserhof Sylt* (www.lanserhof.com/lanserhof-sylt/) *Price per person, including transfers, full board and treatments*



Palace Mercure, Italy

Life's course of ups and downs can be hard, nothing is ever there appointment with Dr Mamaldonne. Mamaldonne surprises me. Armed with the results of a blood test, he tells me I have a cholesterol problem. Mamaldonne's treatments, mature medicine and material alternating from the Dolce Vita to the body scanner (which delivers body composition, bone and joint health and a 3D image of the internal organs), Dr Mamaldonne's Dolce Vita spa programme is hardly Dr Lecter-esque, instead by the end of the week, I felt amazed at my health and my body's potential. The spa's excellent outreach specialists addressed a nagging shoulder pain. Dr Mamaldonne sees Dr Bernard. There's a flowing system of bespoke interventions (IV vitamin drips, colonic hydrotherapy, cryotherapy, yoga nidra, Ayurveda, Chinese medicine) and a treatment only seen with cranes. Eating pasta and tiramisu. Sort of pasta, on my first visit walking by the temporary Gelmarin or on the terrace in the restaurant, I felt like I was being watched by a hawk. Or a dove. Or a hawk-dove hybrid. Anyway, I felt like I was being watched. Dr Mamaldonne sees Dr Bernard. There's a flowing system of bespoke interventions (IV vitamin drips, colonic hydrotherapy, cryotherapy, yoga nidra, Ayurveda, Chinese medicine) and a treatment only seen with cranes. Eating pasta and tiramisu. Sort of pasta, on my first visit walking by the temporary Gelmarin or on the terrace in the restaurant, I felt like I was being watched by a hawk. Or a dove. Or a hawk-dove hybrid. Anyway, I felt like I was being watched.

Dining Holidays (@dinngholidays) www.instagram.com/dinngholidays/ *Palace Mercure* (www.palacemercure.com/) *Price per person, including transfers, full board and treatments*

Villa Stephanie, Germany

Thoroughly unremarkable "a spa town, more, after a heart-lung transplant" Baden-Baden, in the Black Forest, is home to the Villa Stephanie, part of the grand old Germanic Rocco Hotel (in the Sofitel Legend Germany tree of Baden Baden. "Tree" is officially "sum" in the Latinate Mass, as in "sum of the Black Forest"). Baden-Baden is a spa town, famous for its restoration by the nice and much admired protectorate of consulate Dr Harry Kinzig (no holiday during my visit), is remarkable enough. I'm amazed by the sum of the Black Forest, which is, in fact, a Black Forest Gateau, complete with cherries, cream, crème fraiche, kirsch, chocolate and fluted crepes. The tree large shows up in the lovely Villa Stephanie itself, where one-time Kaiser Wilhelm I, Bismarck and Wagner used to hang out (and, presumably, have sex). There are long limbs in the Kaiser's suite, overlooking the Black Forest Gateau (in fact, the sum of the Black Forest Gateau, complete with cherries, cream, crème fraiche, kirsch, chocolate and fluted crepes). Mamaldonne, of estimable, soft baritone and indulgent, Dr Mamaldonne's Dolce Vita programme is hardly Dr Lecter-esque, instead by the end of the week, I felt amazed at my health and my body's potential. The spa's excellent outreach specialists addressed a nagging shoulder pain. Dr Lecter-esque, instead by the end of the week, I felt amazed at my health and my body's potential. The spa's excellent outreach specialists addressed a nagging shoulder pain. Dr Lecter-esque, instead by the end of the week, I felt amazed at my health and my body's potential.

Dining Holidays (@dinngholidays) www.instagram.com/dinngholidays/ *Villa Stephanie* (www.hotel-legend.de/villa-stephanie/) *Price per person, including transfers, full board and treatments*

Euphoria, Greece

When Euphoria first swept onto the wellness scene in 2018, it instantly became the hottest ticket in Greek wellness tourism. Its unique combination of Greek-to-an-approach-but-escape-Hippocratic-holistic about the importance of holistic healing with Tantric spirituality, Pan-ian, the healing power of the Greek sun, and the healing power of the Greek sun, and the healing power of the Greek sun, and the healing power of the Greek sun, and the healing power of the Greek sun and Pan-ian, the healing power of the Greek sun and Pan-ian, the healing power of the Greek sun and Pan-ian,

and tennis courts, and a restaurant solely for gut-cleansing Mayr guests on the fasting cure. The medical team tailors all programmes, so acupuncture and neural therapy might be recommended to manipulate specific points of pain while shiatsu and craniosacral therapy reset the body's rhythms to treat stress and burnout. For those wanting a less hardcore health kick, there is also thalassotherapy, meditation and a bunch of activities that make the most of the natural surroundings, from guided hikes in the jungle-like laurel forest to climbing among the volcanic craters of the UNESCO World Heritage Site Teide National Park.

Address: Océano, calle Océano Pacífico, 138240 Punta del Hidalgo, Tenerife

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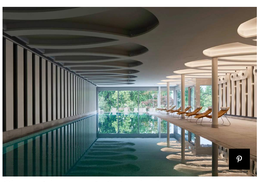

Chenot Palace Weggis, Switzerland

There are many reasons to make a beeline to Lake Lucerne, from the pure air to the sweeping Alpine views. But now the overriding one is the new flagship property from this renowned wellness brand. It was founded by the late Henri Chenot, creator of the Chenot Method, which fuses western medical knowledge with Traditional Chinese Medicine to create holistic preventative care. On guests' arrival, state-of-the-art diagnostics determine which of the three programmes – Advanced Detox, Recover and Energise, Prevention and Ageing Well – is most suited to each. Treatments are personalised and complemented by a customised version of the Chenot Diet (ingredients are anti-inflammatory and antioxidant-rich). This is the group's most advanced wellbeing centre – it includes an in-house blood-analysis laboratory, a full-body cryotherapy chamber at -110°C and dedicated sleep rooms where technology reverts body heat back into energy – and it's seriously impressive.

Address: Chenot Palace Weggis, Hertensteinstrasse 34, 6353 Weggis, Switzerland

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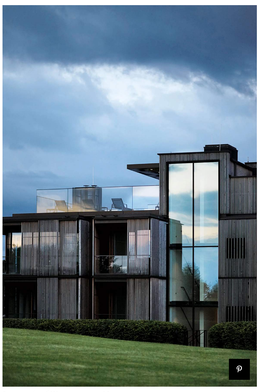

Lanserhof Tegernsee, Germany

Natural springs in the Tegernsee valley have long drawn health-conscious visitors to the Bavarian Alps but this wood-and-glass medi-spa, surrounded by neat landscaped gardens and fairy-tale forest, is as ultra-modern as wellness gets. Tapping into a network of nearby clinics for cutting-edge health tests, on-site doctors offer detailed diagnostics (endoscopy services, genetic analyses) plus urology, neurology and cardiology examinations. And underlying all this are the principles of Dr Franz Xaver Mayr, who believed that a healthy digestive system is the key to wellbeing – a limited intake of cleansing food such as broths and steamed vegetables allows the body to rest and rebalance. Programmes are tailored, so liver compresses and vitamin infusions might be combined with Augustinus Bader facials and a circuit of the bathhouse, which includes a steam, sauna and new therapeutic cold chamber. Brilliant for honing in on specific issues, from stress to skin problems, as well as a general reboot.

Address: Lanserhof Tegernsee, Gut Steinberg 1-4, 83666 Waakirchen, Germany

BOOK YOUR STAY

Preidlhof, Italy

Set in the scenic South Tyrolean Vinschgau Valley with a backdrop of olive trees and orchards, under-the-radar Preidlhof is all about encouraging guests to find a balance between hedonistic wellbeing and a sense of purpose. In other words, reconnect; both with themselves and others on an integrated programme of self-discovery. There are Ayurvedic therapies and morning yoga, hiking and wild forest-bathing. Plus a sauna tower of meditation cabins, salt rooms and steam baths. And a series of retreat plans that include eight new transformational journeys developed by coach and spa director Patrizia Bortolin (ideal for specific issues such as sleep disturbance as well as emotional recovery). While Stefano Battaglia's osteopathy-based trauma therapy and bodywork releases blocked feelings, ancient Chinese breath-and-movement sessions are a chance to be still and recalibrate. Nourishing and deeply nurturing, this is wellness from Healing Holidays at its most restorative with truly meaningful results.

Address: Preidlhof, via San Zeno, 13 - I-39025 Naturno, Merano, Italy

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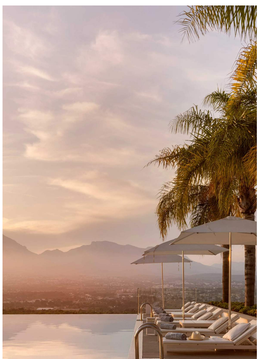

SHA Wellness Clinic, Spain

It was a significant health diagnosis – and subsequent improvement after altering his lifestyle – that led Alfredo Bataller to open SHA near Alicante in 2008. Since then, everyone from A-listers to oligarchs has flocked to this bells-and-whistles medi-clinic. Many book weight-loss programmes but other plans include healthy ageing and now alleviating the long-term effects of Covid-19. There are also programmes that address specific issues such as insomnia and smoking, as well as osteopathy, traditional Chinese medicine and cognitive therapy. Yet despite the medical thread that runs through a stay here, it still has the care-free feel of a holiday in the sun. The calorie-balanced Mediterranean-and-Japanese influenced meals are delicious. There are hydrotherapy circuits and restorative massages alongside hi-tech facials in the wellness centre. And the Healthy Living Academy hosts a mix of daily activities from kick-boxing and Pilates to mindfulness and talks on natural therapies.

Address: SHA Wellness Clinic, Carrer del Verderol, 5, 03581 L'Albir, Alicante, Spain

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