Travel

Euphoria Retreat: can peak happiness be located in the Greek mainland?

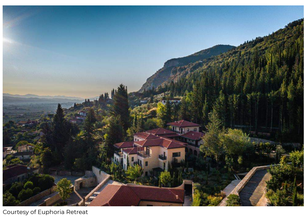
Wellness, warrior training and exultation await at this super spa in the Peloponnese

BY CAROLINE LEWIS PUBLISHED: 08 MARCH 2024

Stavros Habakis

Before I arrived at Euphoria Retreat on the Greek mainland, I'd been over-indulging in the Cyclades, so I was a little concerned by what a detox programme would entail. I'd given the partying a miss in Mykonos – technically there was more eating going on than ouzo-shotting, courtesy of decadent dinners at both the new Zuma and Beefbar outposts on the island.

As I disembarked a ferry from Syros at Piraeus (along with hundreds of other people), I eventually managed to locate my Euphoria driver and before I knew it, the crowds were a faint memory and I was ensconced in the back of a slick Tesla and driving through the outer suburbs of Athens. The driver handed me a pillow and instructed me to get comfortable for our two-hour drive west to the Peloponnese. Darkness fell as we passed the Corinth Canal.

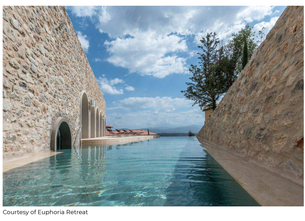


Courtesy of Euphoria Retreat

After I checked into my room just below the forest, I headed to the dining room, which was so tranquil, with lots of solo diners, though there is a communal table should you fancy some conversation. You can sit indoors or out on the terrace, with the lights of Sparta sparkling away in the distance. People come here to this wellness retreat at the edge of the fortified town of Mystras for all sorts of reasons. My fellow guests were burnt-out tech bros, TV presenters, people trying to lose weight, people stressed from working too hard.

BOOK A STAY

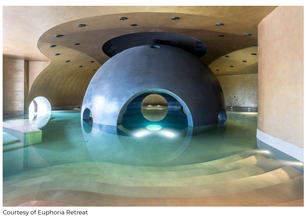
On my first morning, I had a series of consultations to start my detox journey, including a one to one with the resident nutritionist and a finger-prick blood test to check my metabolic function. My days were filled with treatments and activities, such as cupping, spells in the salt room or infrared sauna, lymphatic-drainage massage (light pressure but absurdly relaxing), and group lectures and meditations. One especially nurturing treatment was a detox body scrub, with a chromotherapy bath in the middle, and the therapist applying moisturiser at the end.



Courtesy of Euphoria Retreat

The programme is tailored to you – for some, that will mean circuit training, trampoline workouts and bolting it up and down the steps of a nearby amphitheatre, should you be trying to do wellness like a Spartan warrior. For others, the focus is a far more relaxed-sounding combination of meditation, yoga and sound baths. Other, more fringe activities on offer include drama therapy and free-your-voice sessions.

The wellness centre at Euphoria Retreat is one of the most well-equipped I've ever visited, up there with Joali Being (an entire Maldivian island dedicated to making you feel better) and SHA Wellness Clinic in Spain. Along with all the resident experts on hand, from personal trainers to nutritionists, the multi-floor spa features an outdoor gym, aerial yoga, a spectacular spherical pool and a full thermal suite.

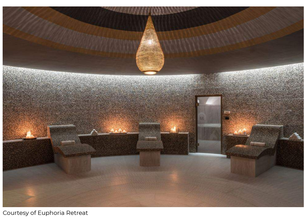


Courtesy of Euphoria Retreat

I usually avoid getting my hair wet at all costs when swimming (mostly to avoid a lengthy but pointless-in-humidity styling time), but I submerged myself daily at Euphoria Retreat's sphere pool. Underwater, you can hear dolphin calls, faint music, tinkling fountains and what sounds like the general goings-on of Poseidon's kingdom.

Nearby, there's a church carved into the rocks that I walked to one morning. Guests can also wander down to the square in Mystras, head up to the Byzantine monastery that looms above the town or visit the Trypi springs.

I soon fell into the relaxed, Euphoria rhythm. For those on a diet programme, smoothies and snacks are left out for you in the spa's relaxation area at midday and at 5.30pm. The food was uniformly delicious and did not feel low-calorie at all – I ate three-course meals of carob sticks with guacamole, dressed garden or Greek salads, and grilled fish with vegetables or chicken balls with orzo. It was nutritious, tasty and never boring.



Courtesy of Euphoria Retreat

I was there for four nights and left for my flight home from Athens feeling refreshed and re-energised, ready to take on the autumn back home. Something one of the members of staff said during a meditation really struck me. She said for us to turn our gaze inwards on ourselves but to look with kindness rather than criticism. I can only imagine how I would feel after a week or even a fortnight here. It's not easy to reach a state of euphoria, but this is a brilliant place to try.

BOOK NOW