

# PASSPORT

## HOTEL THERAPY

### EUPHORIA RETREAT, MYSTRAS, SPARTA, GREECE

by Christopher McNamara



During the two-hour journey from [Athens](#) through the beautiful, mythical Peloponnese to **Euphoria Retreat** (Mystras, Sparta, Greece. Tel: +69-5661-2049. [euphoriaretreat.com](http://euphoriaretreat.com)), we passed many historical sites along the way, including Acrocorinth, a castle nestled on the steep rock of Acrocorinth southwest of Ancient Corinth. We also crossed over the Corinth Canal, which connects the Gulf of Corinth in the Ionian Sea with the Saronic Gulf in the Aegean Sea. The surrounding mountains featured a plethora of olive and grape trees, juxtaposed with modern wind turbines and solar panels. It was amazing and reassuring to see the use of green energy in [Greece](#).



One of the Beautiful Views Surrounding Euphoria Retreat

After my long trip from New York, I was looking forward to relaxing and rejuvenating at one of Europe's leading wellness destination spa hotels. The enchanting lobby features vast windows looking out at the lemon and orange trees, comfy cozy places to sit, plus a majestic fireplace. The Greek word 'Euphoria' is about feeling and living 'well.'

When I first entered my Euphoria Executive Junior Suite, I was captivated by the Zen-inspired colors of rustic reds and golden hues on a tapestry in the center of the room. The ceiling had exposed wooden beams, which I thought added a unique touch. The arch-type windows were a nice way to let the fresh air in during the day. I was entranced by the private balcony view that I had overlooking Mystras and the beautiful landscape beyond. It was also beautiful at night with the city lights glimmering in the near distance.

I soon discovered that after [a day of hiking or wellness activities](#), the spacious walk-in shower is a welcome amenity. They even have a pillow menu where you can select your own pillows from a variety of six different kinds. I chose the JOY pillows, which gave me a comfortable sleeping experience. Each of the rooms has a minibar filled with healthy Greek products featuring little snacks and beverages to enjoy throughout your stay.



Inside Sphere Pool at Euphoria Retreat

After unpacking, we were given a tour of the five-level spa, centered around the first of the five elements, which is water. The spa is subterranean and very distinctive, featuring a spiral staircase, glass skylight ceiling, and a plethora of heat and water experiences. On the ground level, there's Waterwell Kneipp Therapy with circulation-boosting footbaths, where one can walk around through warm water and then step into cold water to help circulation throughout the body. Black and white pebbles mark the footbaths.



*Avocado and Green Asparagus with Tomato and Truffle Oil  
(Photo by Chris McNamara)*

For your dining pleasure, breakfast, lunch, and dinner are served at Euphoria's signature Gaia Restaurant. Gaia is named after the Greek goddess of Earth. The restaurant offers both main and vegan menus to choose from, with a delicious array of dishes. I also recommend trying some of the wonderful Greek wine that is available to accompany your meal.

If you prefer [non-alcoholic beverages](#) during your wellness holiday, infused water with herbs is available with every meal. The oregano-infused water is served in the morning to make you hungry and get the appetite going. The thyme-infused water is served in the afternoon for digestion, and the rosemary-infused water is served in the evening to help calm you down. I had the infused water with all my meals. The herbs they use come from the garden and they make their own fresh

bread on premises. Spread some of the local thyme honey on your bread for a special treat. If you want a more private and intimate dinner setting with friends and family, book the private dining room in the Leoncini Mansion.

The first lunch I had was the vegan falafel served with cabbage, hummus, grilled tomato, cucumber pickle cumin yogurt, coriander, and tomato chili sauce. It was quite delicious. After lunch, I headed to the sphere pool for a swim. Under the water you can hear the soothing sounds of dolphins and whales if you dive deep enough. Around the sphere, you'll find different little pools with different types of hydrotherapy jets to help sore muscles. The sphere pool leads to an outdoor infinity edge lap pool, which you can access by the sliding glass door connecting the pools. Outside, you'll find lounge chairs where you can order a refreshing smoothie or light snack and they bring it right to you. While lounging, you'll find magnificent views of the forest or the charming Mystras Village below.



*Laconian Orange Pie*



*Infinity Edge Lap Pool*

Afterwards, relax in the salt room with lighted blocks of salt in various shades of amber. Just sit there for 20-minutes, breathe in the salt particles, and feel a sense of calmness. It helps your lungs if you have any ailments. The Salt Room also helps with a slower heart rate and clears your mind.

The next day, there were a variety of group sessions I was eager to experience. The first one was the 5-Element Dance featuring water, wood, fire, earth, and metal. There were different music and moods for each of the elements, and it is fascinating how your body moves throughout each of the different elements.



*Yoga Class*

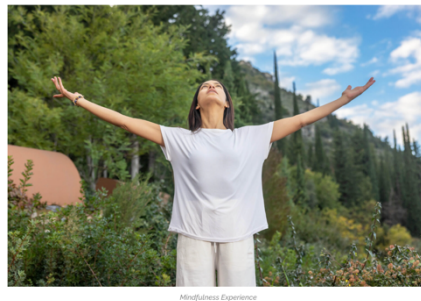
In the Free Your Voice group, we learned how to breathe in and breathe out using our stomach muscles. We also learned how to inhale without making a noise.



Euphoria also offers the 3GL Analysis, where you get your finger pricked for blood and then it is examined to check the levels of nutrition in your body. The 3GL measures your glucose, glutathione, and glycogen levels. If you stay for an extended period of time, they will set up a meal plan to regulate your diet with specific menus catered to you based on the 3GL Analysis results.

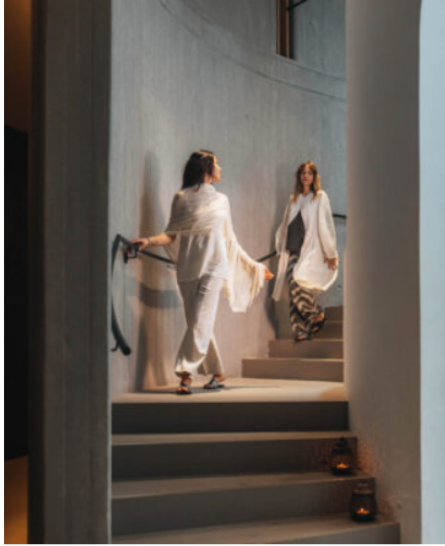
We also met with nutritionist Kristina to go over our diet and learn what we should eat for optimum health. She spoke about the Mediterranean Diet and how it's a good balance for daily life. The Mediterranean Diet focuses on healthy fats and plant-based foods. They even teach it to kids in schools in Greece.

For wine drinkers, she also said 1-2 glasses of wine a day is okay. I saw her on my last day there and she said I looked so much better than the first day that I was there. Following all of the nutrition talk, I went to relax by the pool with a refreshing peach and berries smoothie, which is made with peach, raspberries, blackberries, almond milk, sheep or goat yogurt, and vanilla extract. It was the perfect drink to have while looking around at all the amazing scenery.



While you are here, make sure to experience The Euphoria Byzantine Hammam Ritual in the inner marble sanctum of the spa. It's an ancient Eastern ritual that combines skin cleansing methods and massage. They start with you lying down on a marble slab, put a face towel that smells like mint on your face, then pour hot water over your head and body. After the hot water, they massage your body with soap and then you are rinsed off with cold water. After the experience, take a dip in the freezing cold pool to keep the circulation going. Dry off and relax with the soothing lotion that's put all over your body in the Tepidarium on a marvelous mosaic bench. Euphoria offers a couples hammam as well, which you can do with your partner for a more romantic experience.

If you want to explore the village of Mystras, it's just a simple walk out of Euphoria's gates. There's a mystical feeling while walking through the village of Mystras which is known as 'the wonder of the Morea,' and you can see and experience the Byzantine history from the amazing architecture and artwork. There are also a few cafés, local shops, and tavernas to explore. The picturesque village features cats roaming along the streets with stone houses and winding paths. Visitors usually visit the village of Mystras after hiking the nearby archeological site of Mystras Castle, a UNESCO site that has a profound history of the Byzantine Empire. The Bishop's Palace, the Palace of Byzantine Emperors is a marvelous site to see while you are there.



*Spa Staircase*

The following afternoon, we met with the Marina Efraimoglou, founder of Euphoria Retreat. Marina became very sick with non-Hodgkin lymphoma cancer in her late 20's, went through chemotherapy, and overcame cancer twice. Following the chemotherapy treatments, she visited many healing centers and spas around the world to help her immune system and detox. Her visit to Golden Door, a spa and healing retreat in California inspired her to create Euphoria Retreat. She also experienced exhaustion from being the CEO of her own investment banking company and needed some balance. Marina then went on an exploration and studied traditional Chinese medicine and the healing power of the five elements, along with other alternative health methods including Greek philosophy. She used this knowledge to help her establish the programs offered at Euphoria Retreat.

I was entranced by my Euphoria Retreat experience. In the time that I spent there I felt that I needed to reflect on myself and the path that I'm taking. A few of the guests I met had already experienced Euphoria and keep coming back for more. Many people who come here want to create a better, healthier lifestyle, while others just want to relax and enjoy themselves. What we all had in common was our love for Marina, her philosophy, and all the health and wellness experiences that Euphoria has to offer.