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SERENITY AND STYLE

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FESTIVE RETAILING

Our pick of the best products and advice to boost revenue

SHINING IN SCOTLAND

We spotlight ten leading spas that are championing wellness

EMOTIONAL RETREATS

How spa programming can address trauma in guests

The power of trauma retreats

As emotional retreats continue to grow globally, we look at how spas can address trauma in their programming and empower staff to deliver life-changing experiences

REPORT BY MARK SMITH

As the concept of wellness programming continues to expand, spas and wellness destinations are responding with retreats that address guests' deeper emotional issues. Trauma is a niche but growing area that requires careful planning, skilled therapists and an emotionally engaged team to offer truly transformational results.

Processing and releasing past trauma can enhance resilience and offer a deeper sense of inner peace. Techniques to achieve this can include holistic counselling, mindfulness, somatic therapies, bodywork, movement, dance and drama.

"One basic misunderstanding is that trauma is about an event that's happened 'back then'," says psychiatrist, neuroscientist and author of *The Body Keeps The Score*, Bessel van der Kolk. "That's not really the case – that event is over. The problem where you develop traumatic stress is because your body and your system doesn't know that it's over."

Having studied trauma for around 50 years, van der Kolk has a deep understanding of the topic. His book was a game-changer in our understanding of how trauma impacts the body, and it has informed much of today's wellness programming. "Trauma is not an unusual experience. It is extremely common," he says. "The big challenge of treating trauma is how do we help people to live in bodies that feel fundamentally safe."

A safe and trusted space

Kamalaya Wellness Sanctuary in Thailand has several programmes that address trauma and emotional challenges. "Designing retreats that address trauma requires curating a safe and nurturing environment where people feel truly supported," says Gopal Kumar, general manager and director of wellness development at Kamalaya. "It's an approach that requires empathy and integrates holistic practices that engage mind, body, heart and spirit, facilitating a comprehensive healing process."

All programming at Euphoria Retreat in Greece includes aspects designed to heal trauma, with a specific one called Emotional Harmony. This can also be

TRAUMA RETREAT CHECKLIST

- **Consultation:** conduct a thorough screening and evaluation to understand the specific issues and needs of each guest
- **Controlled size:** ensure that retreats are intimate, with around 6-8 guests
- **Engage your team:** it is crucial to have a committed, devoted, skilled and highly experienced team
- **Education:** provide continuous training, mentorship and a supportive environment to enhance your therapists' capabilities
- **Trust:** prioritise confidentiality, empathy and professional expertise to foster a sense of security and trust for your guests





From left: relaxation at Kamalaya Wellness Sanctuary; dramatic therapy at Euphoria Retreat

offered privately with follow-ups once the guest returns home.

“The most important aspect in all our retreats, is we ensure a safe and nurturing space, like we are giving them a mother’s hug,” says Marina Efraimoglou, owner of Euphoria Retreat. “It reinforces our notion – Your Life, Your Journey – without judgement and with acceptance.”

At Preidlhof Luxury DolceVita Resort in Italy, as well as providing a safe space, consultations and screening in advance of arrival are a cornerstone. “This is essential for tailoring a programme that effectively addresses

guests’ trauma,” explains Patrizia Bortolin, co-founder of Glowing Flow Wellness Specialists and spa concept manager and transformational wellness coach at Preidlhof. “The complexity of each guest’s story requires a sensitive approach to design a programme that will achieve the best results.”

Transformational techniques

Given that trauma is often imprinted in the body and can be retained there for many years, it is natural for therapies to encompass a wide variety of techniques from talking and counselling to deep body work, mindfulness and even drama.

Preidlhof integrates techniques at certain stages of its programme,

such as shiatsu, touch for health, ThetaHealing and psychotherapy.

Euphoria Retreat uses a variety of strategies including game cards, somatic body work such as movement and dance, meditations and drama workshops. For unblocking trauma, the throat chakra is a focus to help open up the voice. Chakra balancing and pranic healing are also utilised.

Members of the *European Spa* team have participated in various programmes addressing emotional health over the years, including shamanic healing at Ayurveda Resort Sonnhof in Austria, led by Gabrielle Scharnitzky. Particularly enlightening were the creations of Stefano Battaglia (who co-founded Glowing Flow Retreat ▶



MEET THE EXPERT

Stefano Battaglia, co-founder,
Glowing Flow Wellness Specialists



Stefano Battaglia is an award-winning master therapist, spa trainer and retreat leader. Currently based at Preidlhof Luxury DolceVita Resort, he is globally renowned for his pioneering approach to emotional wellness and trauma healing.

With over 20 years of holistic clinical practice, Battaglia has extensive experience in healing techniques, and as a meditation and mindfulness teacher. His treatments aim to address traumas stored in the body using trauma touch skills, which delve into emotional memories, uncovering concealed pain and working to dissolve physical and emotional tensions. He is also an integrative therapist and massage trainer.

www.glowing-flow.com

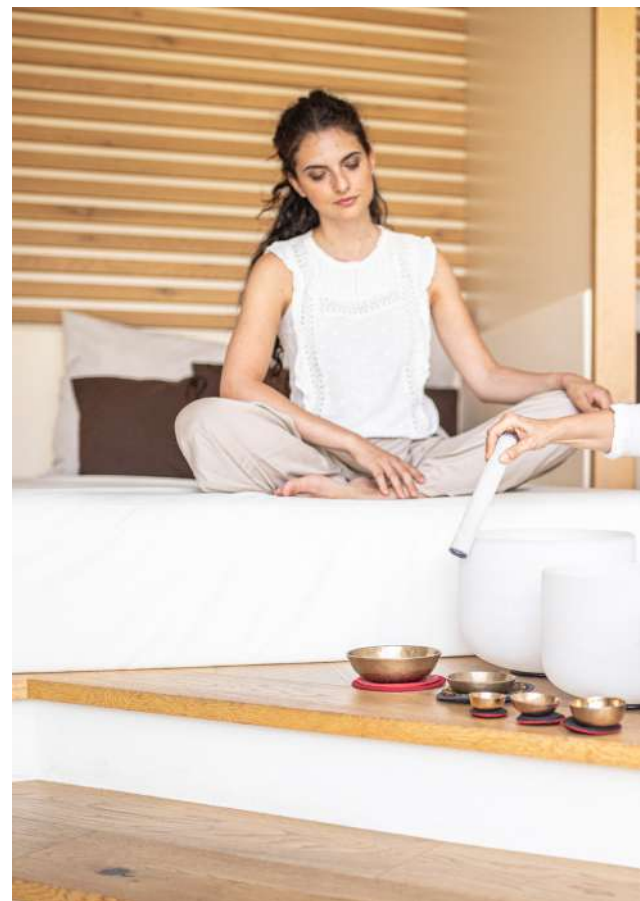
This page: Preidlhof offers guests time for reflection as well as singing bowl therapy

with Bortolin and works with trauma touch skills) and Beata Aleksandrowicz who is a gifted practitioner leading sessions with an intuitive touch.

Empowering teams to deliver emotional programming

The key to any successful trauma retreat comes down to the skill of individual therapists and practitioners coupled with team dynamics. There is a huge amount of trust involved for guests embarking on a trauma retreat, and teams need to be educated and supported to deliver the very best results while guiding with care, kindness and compassion.

Continuous education and mentorship are central to supporting the team at Kamalaya. "Our Life Enhancement Mentors are skilled in handling emotional challenges with compassion and expertise, ensuring they offer the highest level of care and support," says Kumar. "This





Above: meditation is part of the approach to healing at Kamalaya Wellness Sanctuary



empowerment translates into effective and empathetic guest interactions.”

Deep personal work and reflection are integral parts of the approach at Euphoria Retreat, with staff offered one-to-one sessions with spiritual mentor Mary Vandorou. “Staff are trained in reiki, and we regularly clear the treatment rooms using pranic healing techniques with sage and crystals,” says Efraimoglou.

Supervision and mentorship ensure staff wellbeing in this area at Preidlhof, says Bortolin: “We provide continuous training and development, particularly in trauma-informed care and therapeutic techniques. It’s important to foster empathy and compassion within the team, encouraging practices like mindfulness and reflection.”

Freedom to flourish

Working with trauma presents many challenges and opportunities. With a growing awareness of how trauma

MEET THE EXPERT

Beata Aleksandrowicz, founder, Beata Aleksandrowicz Spa Training Method



Beata Aleksandrowicz is an international expert on massage, healing and women’s wellbeing. An intuitive practitioner and global educator, she is an author and speaker who shares her expertise on the importance of touch, wellbeing and spiritual growth at conferences and through her Instagram channel.

With a global reputation, her unique method combines intuitive touch, deep muscular release, breathwork, meditation, ThetaHealing and a profound connection with clients to work on a deeper level to unlock trauma held in the body.

Her Spa Training Method provides therapists with effective injury free massage techniques, communication skills and life coaching.

www.beata.website

can be held in the body, more and more people are seeking to undertake work in wellness spaces to clear these blockages. Through emotional healing, guests can gain a sense of self-acceptance, self-love, and an increased presence in the moment, along with enthusiasm for life. They can also find new purpose and a sense of empowerment and freedom. ●●●●●

www.euphoriaretreat.com
www.preidlhof.com
www.kamalaya.com