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November 2025

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ON HIS ISLAND
FORTRESS

**A REVERSAL
OF FORTUNE**
THE JET SET
COUNTESS WHO
SOLD UP & WHY

**FREE
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**NEXT
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THING**

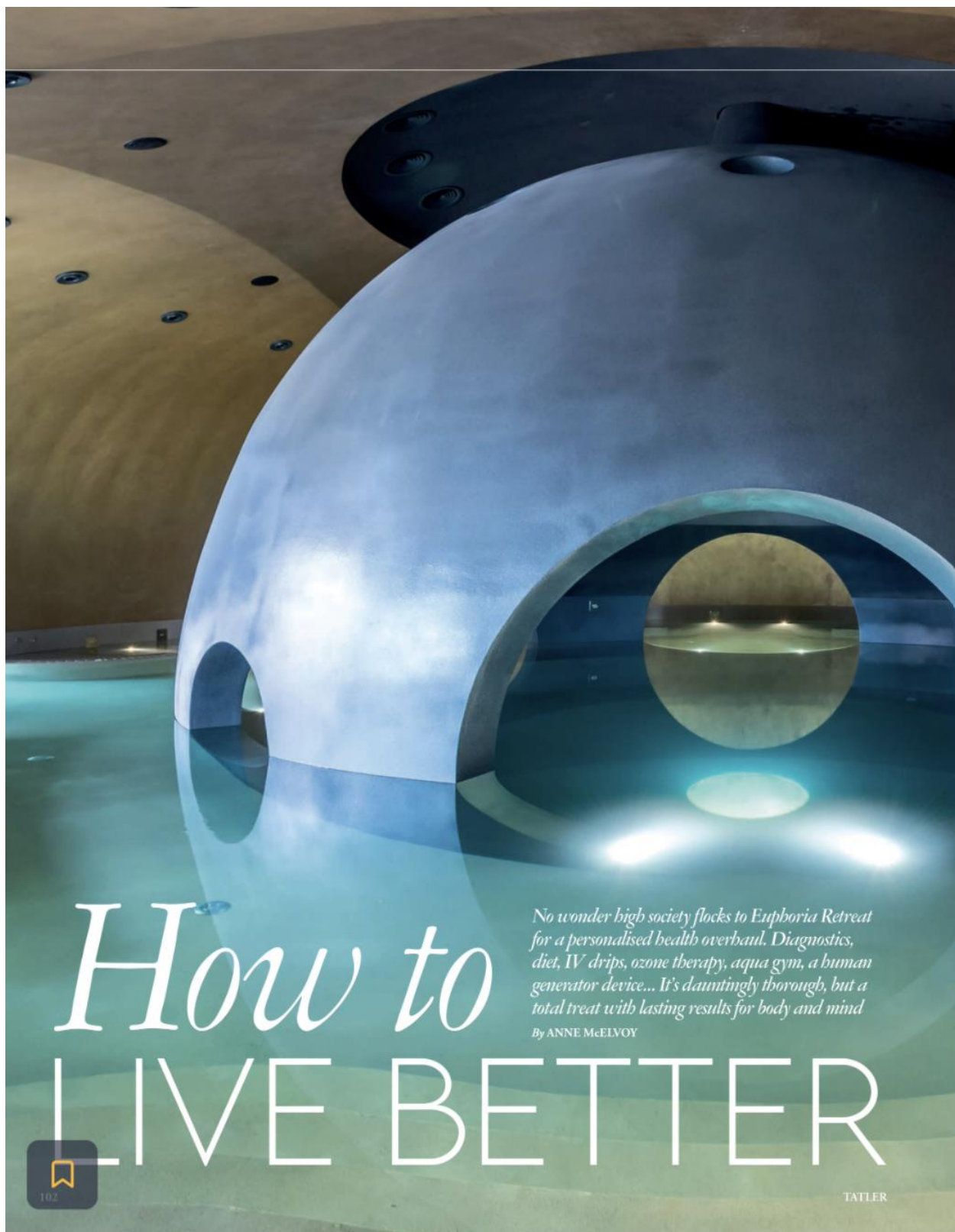
IMOGEN FOOTS
IS READY FOR
HER CLOSE-UP

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Spa Guide 2025





How to LIVE BETTER

No wonder high society flocks to Euphoria Retreat for a personalised health overhaul. Diagnostics, diet, IV drips, ozone therapy, aqua gym, a human generator device... It's dauntingly thorough, but a total treat with lasting results for body and mind

By ANNE McELVOY

The 25-metre Waterwell introduces guests to Kneipp hydrotherapy, a series of hot and cold footbaths that boost the circulation

A HEALTH 'MEH' FEELING

can creep up on you: when you're not exactly ill or unfit, but a bit sub-optimal. Sometimes, there's an obvious cause. But just as often, it comes from an agglomeration of small issues or risks that over time have been ignored.

In my case, it was a busy year. (Political journalism is not a career favoured by a chill kind of person.) I'd started presenting a podcast with regular 5am starts and hadn't adjusted the rest of my lifestyle to suit the demands of the alarm clock. So the Euphoria Retreat – with its promise of a '360-degree Methodos Advanced Medical Programme', featuring 'scientifically proven cellular therapy' – came at just the right time. I could end up with a better shot at increased longevity and a generally healthier outcome, via specifically targeted interventions and strategies.

At first sight, the regimen looked a bit daunting in its thoroughness. However, it turned out to be the perfect overhaul for my frazzled body and mind. For a start, it took place in a gorgeous and uncrowded part of the Peloponnese, close to the Byzantine ruins at Mystras (which are better preserved than I felt, arriving after a late night and an early flight to Kalamata). And happily, it is just over an hour's drive from the airport through the mountain roads. Lazily, I counted passing olive groves, a quick route to shedding everyday cares.

I have learned that a brilliant spa week can evaporate quickly, with no lasting or discernible trace on either my gorgeousness or fitness levels. However, Euphoria's model of blending wellness with expert-led health programmes and stellar spa facilities aims to earn its keep. Its ethos is rooted in the practice of Hippocrates, the ancient physician who diagnosed four personality types, blended with traditional Chinese medicine's five elements of water, fire, earth, metal and wood, 'through which we can better interpret ourselves and the world', as the blurb puts it. Each of us, we were informed at the induction talk, has a set of characteristics or associations from these natural elements – with a couple of dominant tendencies. And this can leave us in a state of 'imbalance' – a word occurring multiple times over the week – that renders us emotionally or mentally vulnerable.

I couldn't shake the feeling that my battery wasn't easily recharging, or the nagging sense of things being out of whack, coupled with a dwindling sense of resilience. Figuring that now might not be the time to be argumentative, I went all-in for the full monty: Euphoria's 'holistic longevity and medical combined package'. It is billed as a preventative health programme, developed by Greek medics and drawing on cellular research, designed to work at a deep cellular level, to improve how the body

TEST THE WATERS

At Euphoria Retreat, water symbolises new beginnings. Guests are prompted to dive into the Sphere Pool to connect to their primary instincts, then experience a 'sensory rebirth' by floating into the outdoor infinity pool

Longevity focus

◁ functions. But onto that, you can also bolt extra classes and treatments to suit your lifestyle issues.

A couple of weeks prior, a testing kit had arrived which left no doubt as to the thoroughness of the programme. There's no getting around collecting body fluids – blood, urine and number twos – the receptacles for which came in a handy kit with a video. Put aside an hour for pricking your finger and monitoring your bathroom activity so that a courier can make a timely collection; then off your samples whizz to the I-M-O-N lab in Thessaloniki, which focuses on precision medicine tailored to individual physiology. (In other words, the retreat tailors a bespoke health and wellness programme, based on data from your genetic profile.)

Euphoria Retreat is the brainchild of Marina Efraimoglou and it feels very much her own personal undertaking: from the country-house vibe of the facilities to the wow-factor spa, where a blue dome looms over spectacular indoor-to-outdoor pools, surrounded by mountains and wildflower gardens.

Efraimoglou is a former venture capitalist from Athens, who studied at LSE in London; and at 62, she has the skin and verve of a

health-conscious 35-year-old. When we meet on the terrace overlooking the red roofs of Mystras, she's come back from the funeral of a close relative who died at 106, and her niece is a world champion gymnast – so the longevity focus seems well-founded. She tells me she has always wanted to create a retreat that served the luxury market but was 'very different from The White Lotus kind. I wanted it to feel open, democratic, and easy for people to fit into.' Thus there's an engaging homeliness to the space she has created: it's pleasantly compact, so you don't have to walk down endless corridors in your bathrobe, with the spa and treatment rooms across three floors and a fabulous yoga studio at the top. The pool areas are spectacular and, for the cooler parts of the year, there are steam areas, a salt room and a roomy sauna. You could easily join the regular crowd who spend Twixmas here, or recuperate from Christmas excesses.

At the outset, I see one of the resident doctors, Maria Tsironi, who is also a professor of internal medicine. She's the kind of GP you'd like to have on speed-dial if you could afford your own personal clinician: calm, thorough –

and straight to the point. 'What is going on here?' she says, looking at my level of cortisol, the stress hormone; and even I can tell it's high because, when I get the results out, it is printed in fierce bold type. 'That is coming down,' she pledges. My insulin count is also higher than it should be; and since these two hormones work in parallel, the cortisol – which prompts glucose production in the liver and blocks insulin from moving glucose into cells – is increasing my blood sugar. My cholesterol (the good type, anyway) is fine; but the 'bad' type is raised, which surprises me, as I thought I avoided the worst offending fast foods. Can I think what might have caused that, asks Dr Tsironi? A diet of party canapés and rosé springs to mind.

Detail is what Euphoria does best and, by day two, I have further printouts of my results detailing my mineral levels – courtesy of some additional testing, overseen by the retreat's I-M-O-N partners – which highlight deficiencies in calcium and vitamin D. On a remote call in a private room, the institute's nutrition specialists work in tandem with Tsironi, assessing my results and concocting a plan; and a rapid re-introduction to

vitamins is prescribed to sort out some of the glaring deficiencies.

With the diagnostics and the diet sorted, I now have a chance to get excited by the choice of acupuncture, yoga classes, forest walks, aqua gym and facial massage. I usually avoid IV drips but, in a place that is scrupulously clean and staffed by pros, I figure it's a good chance to get some much-needed vitamins into the bloodstream. And after the second infusion, followed by regular ozone Nanovi therapy, it dawns on me that I have stopped feeling the constant tug of needing to be active every hour.

By day three, the no-nonsense fitness instructor Yanis starts saying, 'Excellent!' instead of just 'Keep going!'; and the charming nutritionist Androniki has tweaked my eating programme based on my own metabolic profile, for better hormonal regulation. I also figure I might as well try to lose some tummy fat, so she rewrites my menus for that, too. A 'resting test' on the treadmill establishes that I burn fat pretty well, so we plan for an hour of alternating exercise each day to keep me motivated.

I even go in for the 'human regenerator' treatment, which gives me the chance to lie down, while

Set in a private forest in the heart of the myth-infused Peloponnese, Euphoria exudes healing energies rooted in the landscape



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PHOTOGRAPHY: GORDON TERRY/ALAMY, STYLING: HILARY



Longevity focus

in the evening, had spiked my insulin and led me to store more fat as a result. I sort of knew this, but having a varied programme (crackers and home-made dips in place of bread; a sizeable garden salad of fresh vegetables; fish, herby chicken patties and mouth-watering soups) served to address those shortages in the fuel tank – and made changing my eating habits a lot easier.

A communal dining table is offered here if you fancy company, but you can be as sociable or as private as you like. The clientele when I visit is a nice mix: a well-travelled London photographic artist, an elegant Iranian lady, a Dubai businesswoman, and several mother and daughter duos from the UK celebrating the end of exams. On my last night, I have a glass of wine with some new friends out on the terrace. I have decided to take my alcohol count down – though Androniki is adamant that, if I do fancy a glass of wine with dinner, a coffee in Mystras' tiny square or an ice cream after a visit with the local guide to the ruins, I should have one. No one will scold you for doing so. Euphoria treats you like a grown-up, and this is key.

A couple of months after I return home, there is a follow-up call. My results so far are encouraging: I've kept to the eating and meditation plan; and when things do go off track, as they will in a less cloistered setting, I will be better able to get back to a more resilient frame of mind and fitness. I feel uplifted and more energetic, I'm a couple of kilos lighter and with markedly improved skin and muscle tone, and I'm better motivated to stay that way. But probably the most noticeable thing is how this newfound awareness of my wellbeing has left me better able to shrug off stresses, and enjoy the foibles and delights of the human condition. Euphoria feels like a treat with durable results. I'll be back. □

A seven-night Advanced Medical Holistic Longevity programme from £6,790, excluding accommodation (euphoriaretreat.com).



a cold plasma solution circulates around me, addressing inflammation deep inside the body and relieving muscle tiredness. I feel a stimulating tingle in my neck, and a wonderful sense of lightness at the end of it. After this, in combination with infrared treatments, the aches of an old knee injury and pains in a permanently tight trapezius ease off.

This new focus on living better in order to live longer has brought an underlying worry to the surface: a tendency towards leukaemia from which my mother suffered and eventually died, and check-ups for which I have tended to ignore. I am approaching the same age my mother was when she became seriously ill, and my 'too busy' professional and family life excuses have become a shielding exercise. I spill all this out to Efraimoglu – Euphoria is the kind of place you can talk about yourself without feeling self-obsessed – and she says she gives much thought to how to manage her guests' desire to get necessary information in a setting that lets them enjoy their escape.

As a result, the clinical staff sport neat tunics, rather than white coats, and the whole place is shot through with tiny touches that make guests feel at ease: from sessions on emotional release and meditation to quieten 'busy minds' to a tactful softness in the way health is discussed. Looking at my red and white blood cell levels as part of an overall health re-boot at Euphoria felt a lot nicer than grinding through appointments and insurance to wait for lab results in a chilly medical centre back in the UK. And though the results were not disastrous, it was time to book another providential check with a haematologist back home.

My husband had joked that a health retreat wouldn't be his idea of 'euphoria': but that was before I sent him photographs of my three meals per day, and told him the nutritionist also insisted on me having mid-morning fresh fruit smoothies and an afternoon snack of salty Greek cheese, tangy yoghurts and fruits. It turned out that under-eating in the day, and then having big dinners and drinks