


TRAVEL SECTION OF THE YEAR

Travel

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50 GREAT CULTURAL BREAKS

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I'm a sun-seeker,
get me out of here!

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10-PAGE CRUISE SPECIAL From weddings at sea and cycle-cruises along the Mekong to a bear hunt in Alaska... we are sailing!

TRAVEL ON TRIAL

We road test the latest experiences – so you can just get out there...

LET'S GET METAPHYSICAL

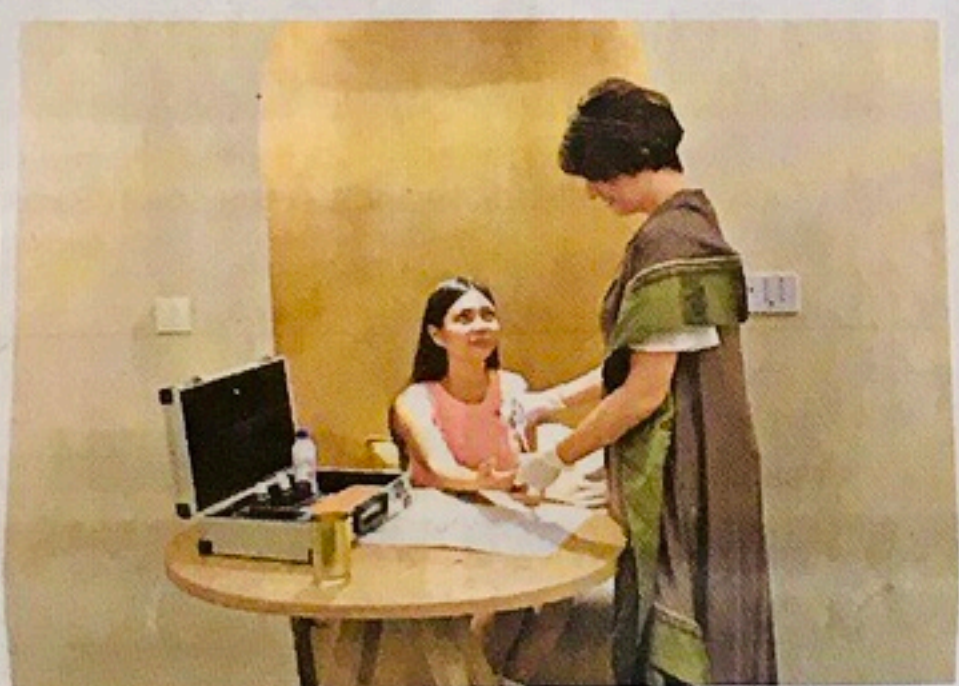
'In the mask, my voice sounded like Darth Vader'

Breath analysis? Psychic channelling? Theta healing? Trisha Andres undertakes a detox with a difference in Greece

We were in a forest in Mystras in the Peloponnese. Ahead of us, cypress trees loomed large. "So, what do you need me to do now?" a menacing voice, resembling Darth Vader's, asked. It was my own – and it surprised and scared me. "You'll need to run for another 10 minutes," replied Vasilis, my fitness instructor. I suddenly felt the weight of the mask I was wearing. I imagined it might have been the handiwork of the designer who conceived Hannibal Lecter's. It resembled a muzzle that covered my face and sat right up against my nose. But, unlike Dr Lecter, I hadn't been made to wear this to prevent me from biting people. Instead, it was a breath analysis device designed to bring an Olympic athlete's training to the health-conscious punter. What did I had a wonderful time. It was all so perfectly organised. The treatments, particularly theta healing, proved powerful. It has transformed my life'

MARIANNE KOK, ACCOUNT EXECUTIVE, NETHERLANDS

it do exactly? It evaluated physiological parameters, such as cardiorespiratory condition, fat-burning efficiency and metabolic health. This data can then be used to devise a personalised exercise plan. I decided that physical and mental fitness were my key priorities for 2019. So what better place, I thought, to get a head start than at the newly opened Euphoria, Greece's first destination wellness retreat that takes a holistic approach, combining scientific therapies with esoteric treatments such as meditation and, erm, psychic channelling. My first resolution? To get in shape, with an easy exercise plan that I could continue to follow. "Do you like pasta and chips?" Vasilis asked. "Your biometric results show that you are burning more carbohydrates than the normal levels when resting. This indicates metabolic disorder." "I'm not dying, am I?" "This simply means you have to eat fewer carbs and follow a two-month exercise plan." He handed me a three-page sheet, which detailed a programme that seemed easy enough to do on my own. It specified the aerobic activities (running, walking, swimming and cycling), how many times per week (three to five) and the duration (50 minutes per session). Next I consulted Antonia, the in-house nutritionist, who administered a pinprick glutathione test. "This will tell us how many antioxidants you need. Based on results, we customise the snacks you'll be given daily. "Your glutathione levels are at 3.1, which is very good. Four is the highest mark. The closer you get to that number, the better you'll age," she said. Good levels of glutathione are important for healthy ageing and can



EUPHORIC MOMENTS Running in the forest, top right; spa facilities at Euphoria, top; and glutathione testing, above

help prevent cancer, heart disease and dementia. "We follow a Mediterranean diet here," Antonia added. The menu at GAIA, the on-site restaurant, reflected this philosophy. My meals – which included red mullet fillet and spaghetti with carrots and courgette and grouper with a purée of beetroot, lemon and sweet potato – were all delicious, filling and best of all, nutritious. Despite eating three full meals and two snacks everyday, I lost five pounds by the end of the week. While they hadn't in any way



promised that I would acquire the thigh gap of a Victoria's Secret angel, at least I could safely tick off health and fitness. My next resolution was equally paramount: to look after my mental health. I like to think I'm reasonably sane. Still, I believe there's no harm in seeking professional help to let go of anything from the past that may prevent me moving forward in the new year. I opted for theta healing. A form of meditation developed in 1995 by Vianna Stibal, it claims that a relaxed state allows one to explore how conscious and unconscious beliefs affect one's emotional well-being. My beatific therapist, Ekaterina, started the session with a 10-minute meditation in which I had to imagine golden light was streaming through my body. Ekaterina moved closer. She took both my hands into hers and asked me what my limiting beliefs were. "Are you willing to let them go?" she asked. "Yes."

'Euphoria has a soul. You feel that from the first moment you arrive. Their Nutrigenomics programme helped me lose 16 kilos in 45 days'

KOUSATHANA MAROUSOLA, HOTEL OWNER, GREECE

Ekaterina then closed her eyes and chanted in what might have been Latin, but could well have been Elvish. She opened her eyes and smiled. In my week at the retreat, I was offered expert advice on a long-term diet plan and fitness regime. Whether walking through a forest lined with fir trees or practising Pilates up in the mountains, it would be a real challenge to picture a more scenic place to exercise. During that time, I lost some extra weight and gained a degree of mental clarity. And while I remain sceptical of some of the more "hocus-pocus" treatments, such as psychic channelling and psycho-aromatherapy, I'll admit that I haven't felt more optimistic and excited for the year ahead in a long time.

A five-night Inner and Outer Glow stay at Euphoria Retreat costs from £1,825 per person (sharing) or £2,020 (single occupancy), through Wellbeing Escapes (020 3735 7555; wellbeingescapes.com). The price includes full board, treatments, activities and workshops.

WORTH A TRY? THE VERDICT

SPA WARS ♦♦♦♦♦ The size may be modest but the spa, which includes pools and saunas, is superb. Treatments, especially bodywork by Stefano Battaglia, do wonders.

MIRACLE DIET ♦♦♦♦♦ No green juices in sight. Only a Mediterranean menu, from souvlaki to saganaki with shrimps. Somehow you manage to lose pounds despite feasting the entire time.

OUT AND ABOUT ♦♦♦♦♦ Nestled in Mystras, a 13th-century town that is Greece's answer to Pompeii, you can gaze at Mount Taygetus from your bedroom window. Close by are the Castle of Mystras and Byzantine chapels with frescoed interiors.