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# BELLA ITALIA

Any hotel that lets you feast on fresh seafood, home-made pasta, and every type of vegetable is a win in our books. But Lefay Resort and Spa's gastronomy is not the only selling point of this mountain-side haven as **Jessica Harris** found out

Nestled into the mountains overlooking the breathtaking Lake Garda, the Lefay Resort and Spa doesn't promise to overhaul your figure, shave off half your fat percentage or even provide you with a strict juice-only diet – it's just not their style. What it does do, however, is nurture your overall wellbeing with fresh, wholesome food sourced from nearby farms and cooked in their own blend of olive oil, an exercise programme to suit every fitness level and a juicer on hand to create your own detoxing concoctions. No rules and no restrictions. And if you fancy some tiramisu after your quinoa crusted cod, there's plenty of that too! But with those panoramic views, outdoor tai chi classes and winding running trails at your disposal, you won't need much persuasion to part with your sun lounger and explore the stunning surroundings.

Overlooking the shimmering lake and the picturesque village of Gargnano, the resort is set in 27 acres of the Alto Garda National Park with its lemon groves and woodland. Founded by the Leali family, their philosophy of creating a sustainable environment is reflected in the conscientious design – think wooden pillars, vegetation-covered roofs, stone accents and lush landscaped gardens (watered with collected rainwater, of course).

Carved into the hillside with views as far as the eye can see, the resort's respect for nature continues through each of their 90 suites. If you're expecting the usual mod cons of a contemporary hotel, think again; chilly air conditioning is replaced with a balmy 22 degrees to regulate your body temperature and an apothecary of Lefay's own organic beauty products fill bathroom shelves instead of branded amenities. But before I could update Twitter with my new-found beauty regime, I discovered that Lefay limits all Wi-Fi connections in bedrooms to shield guests from exposure to electromagnetic fields and give them an excuse to completely switch off (or in my case, hang off the balcony with my phone in the air).

For those who do want to embrace total relaxation of the body and mind, the Lefay Spa offers a range of extensive health programmes focusing on stress, sleep, weight loss, fitness and posture with their methods designed to counter the frenetic pace of daily life. Who doesn't need that? Referred to as the "heart" of the hotel, the spa is at the centre of the resort's ideology – employing a team of doctors and Chinese medicine professionals to ease any ailments with pressure point massage and medical diagnosis. The hotel advises that guests see one of their resident doctors before





any treatments are booked to "restore balance and fully rejuvenate the body, soul and spirit". Wow! They have their work cut out with me. I was prescribed a bespoke programme of hydrotherapy treatments, a detoxifying massage and a cleansing tea to be drunk three times a day. Although my first treatment felt like a glorified jacuzzi bath, I was pleasantly surprised at how heavy my muscles felt once I (briefly) rejoined the outside world.

Luckily I wasn't on my feet for long before being whisked through to my full-body massage. Created to remove toxins from the body, the La Luce oltre la Nebbia treatment focused on specific pressure points to re-balance the meridians and flood the body with energy. Pressing down hard onto my fingertips, toes and forearms, the light pain travelled through me from top to toe, provoking unpredicted muscle movement and slowly persuaded any tightness to ease. An alien feeling at first, yes, but I eventually succumbed to it and drifted off into a deep state of relaxation and woke feeling refreshed with a much calmer state of mind.

After an uninterrupted night's sleep, I got up feeling energised - ready to resist the temptation of the infinity pool behind and reawaken my lazy muscles. Hopping on one of the hotel's bikes, we explored the surrounding tracks and country lanes, naive to the strenuous workout ahead. Having forgotten the hilly climb to the hotel from the airport, we were swiftly reminded once out of the hotel. With temperatures soaring to 31



#### What I ate

Tagliolini pasta with zucchini and shrimps followed by mango sorbet

#### What I wore

Hero Warrior Bra, £24, Yoga Paradise Capri, £30, Yoga Bra, £21 One Series Elite Short, £40 all [reabok.co.uk](http://reabok.co.uk)  
Vaasa Sports Bra, £22, Dill Short, £35 all [fabletics.co.uk](http://fabletics.co.uk)

#### What I drank

Ginger tea and spring water mojitos



degrees, downhill sprints were a welcome break from the mountainous terrain of Gargnano. There may have been a few colourful words said under my panting breath, but I would do it again in an (elevated) heartbeat after taking in the spectacular scenery of distant church towers, ripe vineyards, cobbled streets and miles of forestry.

With aching muscles and a lethargic state of mind it was time to repair and rejuvenate in the spa's salt-water lake. Sitting metres below ground level we were shown into a darkened cave complete with spiralled staircase and steaming plunge pool. Passing the reclining sun loungers, trickling water and salt mountains (from Morocco) we were instructed to spend 20 minutes floating in the 38 degree water and allow it to cleanse and nourish our body and skin. The highly salted H<sub>2</sub>O allowed our bodies to be carried weightlessly over the surface as we stared up into darkness. Bliss.

For three dreamy days I float between my Junior Suite, the spa and the surrounding gardens feeling relaxed and strong at the same time. With further property openings on the horizon, I can't imagine how the Leali family will top Lefay. But I can't wait to find out.

The Spa Discovery programme, including two nights with meals and access to the spa included, costs £465 per person. [lefoyresorts.com](http://lefoyresorts.com)

