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TATLER SPA GUIDE**

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Spa Guide 2021

From immune-boosting super-clinics to isolated retreats that draw on the healing powers of nature, today's most transformative spas are designed to restore physical and mental health

BY FRANCESCA OGIERMANN-WHITE
Health & beauty editor-at-large

Mindset reset

As well as providing a physical refresh, these retreats can help banish stress to leave you feeling lighter



TATLER
AWARD-WINNER
2021

MAISON ILA

Languedoc-Roussillon, France

Holistic healer Denise Leicester, founder of the Ila organic skincare brand, threw open the doors of her 18th-century maison last year, breathing new energy into this former B&B in the pretty Pyrenees village of Sonnac-sur-l'Hers. It's cosy yet elegant (five bedrooms with huge, squashy beds made up in Egyptian linens; deep roll-top baths with rooftop-grazing views; a snug library), with an intuitive front-of-house team and a home-from-home vibe that attracts couples, mothers and their daughters, and old friends reconnecting on retreats. Seasonally inspired and inventive, meals are a feast for the senses: yoghurt and mountain honey, and scrambled local eggs with truffle oil at breakfast; perhaps asparagus and nettle soup enjoyed alfresco for lunch; and for supper, aubergine gratin and homemade goats' milk ice cream in the

candlelit dining room, served with wine from the neighbouring vineyards. But the real magic of Maison Ila lies in its ashram-inspired treatment rooms, where standout therapists Sophie and Pedro soothe the mind and body with CBD-laced facials and massages, chakra-balancing sessions and blockage-shifting craniosacral therapy – expect to emerge feeling grounded, with anxiety noticeably lessened and skin aglow. Gentle movement is encouraged – maybe wild swimming in the invigoratingly icy river Hers nearby, or dynamic yoga in the studio overlooking rosy apple orchards – but so too is reconnecting with nature. The garden, with its sparkling pool, wood-fired hot tub and beds of lavender and thyme, is a sublime sun-dappled spot in which to switch off.

From £990 for a three-night retreat, including meals and daily activities (maisonila.com).

Food at Maison Ila is organic and locally sourced – and best enjoyed alfresco at pretty bistro tables

Lefay Resort, surrounded by hills and olive groves above Lake Garda



LEFAY RESORT & SPA

Lake Garda, Italy

Rebalancing treatments meld traditional Chinese medicine with Western techniques at Lefay, a longtime favourite of those looking to recalibrate body and mind. For 2021, the resort has introduced thoughtful post-pandemic treatments, such as psychotherapeutic and psychosomatic consultations, to set you on the path to fulfilment. Lefay's new nature wellness trails – which take place in the hotel grounds, teeming with wildflowers, olive trees and herbs – offer pathways of a different variety: each of the five 'journeys' is linked to the Chinese elements, and combines meditation, exercise and treatments in the elegant indoor spa. Allow yourself to be guided around the gardens by therapist Marco; pause for mindfulness-based pursuits such as qigong or stress-relieving breathwork; then head into the softly lit spa for complementary therapies, from moxibustion-aided acupuncture (applying heat to acupoints) to medicinal salt baths.

Healing Holidays (healingholidays.com) offers a three-night Nourishing Life programme from £1,149, full board, including flights and transfers.

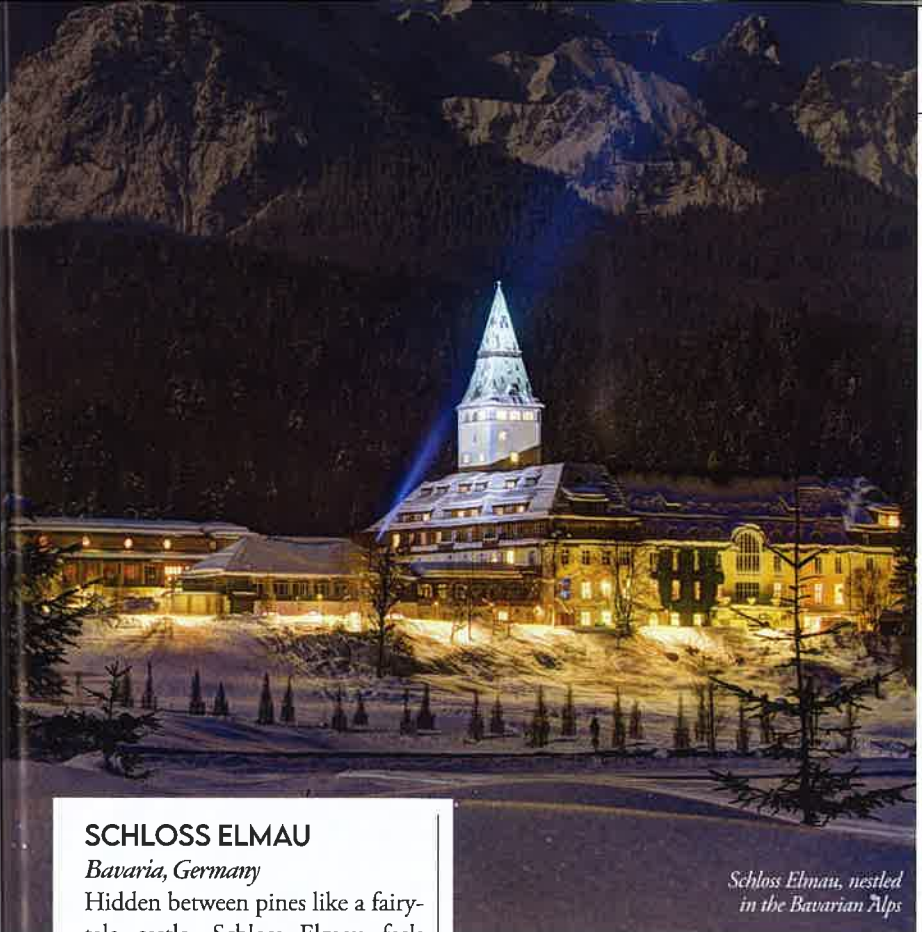
SCHLOSS ELMAU

Bavaria, Germany

Hidden between pines like a fairytale castle, Schloss Elmau feels pulled straight from a storybook, with nothing but the snow-dusted Wetterstein Mountains as far as the eye can see. Since its opening in 1916 by Dr Johannes Müller, this inspiring hideaway has hosted illustrious writers and great thinkers, but it's also attracted famous classical and jazz musicians, who come to play in the spectacular concert hall. Music is a leitmotif at the resort (now overseen by Müller's grandson, Dietmar Müller-Elmau), with year-round concerts providing a powerful sensory experience for spa-going guests. Just as profound is a traditional Chinese medicine consultation with Dr Imke König. A force of nature in a silk kimono jacket, the medical director prescribes a well-balanced symphony of acupuncture, moxibustion and Taijiquan – a blend of moving meditation and martial arts – to restore emotional wellbeing and revive the spirits. The aptly named Retreat, with its sleek glass-fronted suites and fabulous art, is a pitch-perfect place to recuperate.

Healing Holidays (healingholidays.com) offers a five-night Spa & Beauty break from £1,579, half board, including flights and transfers.

PHOTOGRAPHS: © GIORGIO BARONI; © RICKY WISHART



Schloss Elmau, nestled in the Bavarian Alps

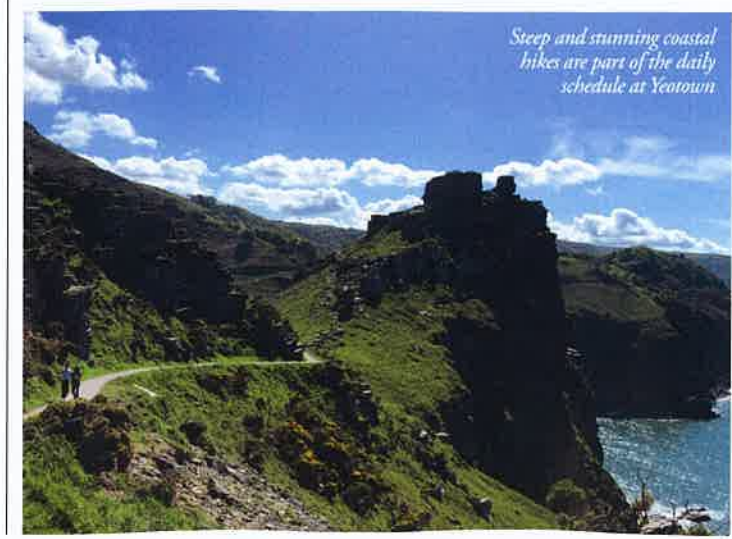
YEOTOWN

Devon, UK

Rural and wildly romantic, Yeotown's North Devon setting is an idyllic canvas for a physical and emotional reset. Burnt-out, high-flying guests come from all over to stay in country-style rooms in the 300-year-old farmhouse, or in chic eco-lodges with wood-clad walls and underfloor heating. Although the wellness schedule is kept secret, expect to be comfortably pushed to the limit, with yoga, breathtaking cliff hikes (look out for seals) and bike rides weaving through woodland. Exertion is balanced with

calming breathwork, hypnotic gong bath meditations and pre-bed shiatsu or deep-tissue massages, which are powerfully healing. Meanwhile, meals are a soulful feast, served in the Aga-warmed kitchen, where everyone gathers for pistachio-crusting salmon and delicious avocado and chocolate cake. Alcohol, caffeine, refined sugar, meat, dairy and wheat are all off-limits, but the food is so satisfying you won't notice. In five days, you'll lose unwanted pounds and leave with a tangible sense of wellbeing.

The five-day Yeotox programme costs from £1,950 (yeotown.com).

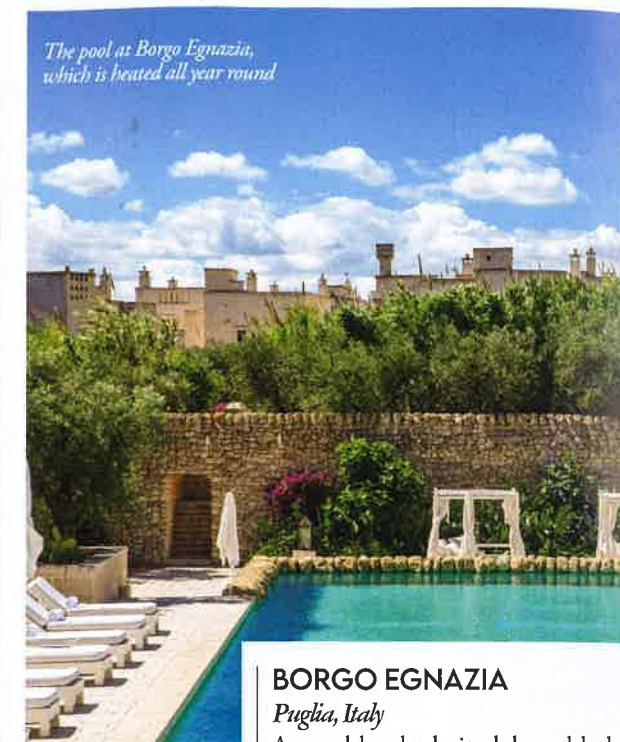


Steep and stunning coastal hikes are part of the daily schedule at Yeotown

BORGO EGNAZIA

Puglia, Italy

A sun-bleached citadel studded with centuries-old olive groves, Borgo Egnazia is a place of simple Puglian pleasures (the sublime crab spaghetti at the hotel's Michelin-starred Due Camini restaurant is a worthy example, as are the suites, dressed with diaphanous linen). Joy can also be discovered through the wellbeing programmes at the newly renovated Vair Spa, which is a calm cream refuge with smooth stone underfoot. Its Happiness Break has been in demand of late, with a journey that starts before guests even arrive (the Happiness at Home concept introduces virtual meditation and yoga, functional training and cookery classes). Enconced at the Borgo, rapture unfolds through Mediterranean cuisine, laughter therapy (an endorphin-filled release with the Maestro della Risata) and fitness classes led by the spa's extraordinary community of therapists, which encompasses artists, musicians and dancers. Treatments incorporate local almonds, olive oil, sea salt and garden herbs, and draw on ancient rituals to affect deep healing. Healing Holidays (healingholidays.com) offers a three-night Fitness programme from £1,229, including flights and transfers.



The pool at Borgo Egnazia, which is heated all year round