

Condé Nast Traveller

in association with
Healing  Holidays

THE SPA GUIDE 2016

LOSING WEIGHT, DETOXING, FIXING ISSUES, GETTING FIT, CLEARING YOUR HEAD

*50 in-depth
spa reviews from
22 countries*

A GLOBAL GUIDE
TO THE GREATEST
SURF SPOTS

THE MOST EXTRAORDINARY RETREAT IN THE WORLD

NEW GRACE SANTORINI CYCLADES, GREECE

IN BRIEF A smart digital detox in the Aegean

THE LOWDOWN This is a made-to-order retreat in a private villa where you can de-clutter the mind as well as gently cleanse the body with revitalising food and gentle exercise. Part of the draw is the location itself. The Grace Hotels group specialises in sleek places to stay in settings as diverse as New England and Panama. But its Santorini outpost is something else. Just to gaze at the caldera is balm for the soul, even if it were from the back of a dusty donkey. Expurgating technology is the main idea here, so those who have signed up for the three-day cleanse must surrender digital devices for the duration, including iPads, smartphones, Kindles and laptops. It's up to you whether you decide to hold onto the Sonos and your music library. Otherwise you're left with an iPhone with a single number saved in it: that of Georgia Pantazi, the assistant manager, who is astonishing at anticipating needs (food and drink and logistical details are standard, but psychological and emotional requirements are given a great deal of thought as well). The programme unfolds solely within the confines of the villa, so you don't need to endure others tapping on their phones or swigging cocktails. There's a dedicated team to help: concierge, private chef and a personal attendant, who is on hand for running baths, unpacking clothes and general cossetting. Those who panic and fret at the prospect of being parted from their mobile devices should be reassured that moments spent surfing social media will be replaced by a three-hour massage and body wrap soon after you arrive, daily morning yoga followed by meditation, getting lost in books on mindfulness and relaxation, feasting on food from the unbelievably delicious detox menus and the opportunity to be creative (there's an easel and a sketch pad with watercolours, which guests can take with them on departure). Uninterrupted sleep becomes important too – though Georgia and the crew will rouse you when it's time to eat again. When devising the dishes, chef Spyros Agious sought inspiration from his health-conscious mother. Breakfast might include homemade breads with local honey and tahini spreads, green smoothies, turmeric-and-ginger teas, chia-seed yogurts and buckwheat pancakes with asparagus and avocado. Lunch could be a spread of beetroot, caper and pine-nut salad, olives and aubergine caviar or quinoa-stuffed peppers finished with an almond-milk panna cotta. You don't need to go for total abstinence: the staff won't bat an eyelid if you order a cheeky Assyrtiko (the classic Santorini dry white wine). Outside there is a series of interconnected terraces with sun decks, a sheltered dining area, an outdoor fireplace and a private swimming pool edged with lavender and wild flowers. Inside you'll find two bedrooms, a spa with a hammam and mood-lit hydrotherapy bath, and a dedicated treatment room. No one needs to know you are here, and that is the whole point.

INSIDER TIP If you want to experience the buzz of the restaurant, just ask ahead; you'll be presented with your own healthy menu of fava-bean purée and salt-crusted fish. Clever.

BOOK IT A three-night stay costs from about £1,990 per person based on four-guest occupancy of The Villa, half board on a detox menu, including daily yoga classes, meditation sessions and a 90-minute spa treatment per person (+30 22860 21300; gracehotels.com).



LEFAY RESORT & SPA LAKE GARDA, ITALY

IN BRIEF A pioneering programme for insomniacs

THE LOWDOWN High in the hills above Lake Garda, surrounded by vineyards and olive groves and the cypress-covered Alto Garda National Park, Lefay is something of a contradiction. Designed to look like one of the region's pillared *limonaia*, it has indoor and outdoor saltwater infinity pools, a hot tub overlooking the lake and an otherworldly sauna complex with an underground, Dead Sea-like lagoon and a relaxation grotto, but there's also a cocktail bar and a cigar lounge. The point, of course, is that you get what you want and need. The Lefay method merges Traditional Chinese Medicine with Western healing techniques for its five-night sleep programme. According to ancient Chinese wisdom, insomnia stems from an imbalance of energy in the brain and the culprit could be anything from hormones to a hyperactive mind. After the first of several energy check-ups with one of the resident doctors, you'll be given a customised plan, including a specially prescribed herbal tea to drink between treatments. Just about everything that follows will focus on re-balancing energy flow by stimulating pressure points and meridians via heat (moxibustion), needles (acupuncture), exercise (from qigong to the more obscure Five Tibetan Rites) and plenty of tension-relieving face, foot and body massages. The latter culminates in Lefay's sleep-promoting Embrace of Morpheus. Named after the Greek god of dreams, it's designed to relax the body while clearing the mind, drawing energy from the head down to the feet and redistributing it to organs that need it. Throughout the week you'll hear all about yin versus yang along with philosophical mantras such as 'energy is everything and nothing' as your reflexologist squeezes your little toes and 'there is no beginning and no end' while being guided clockwise through the therapeutic energy gardens (five colour-coded meditation areas ranging from floral patches to a cavernous woodland that symbolise different seasons and stages of life). There is no fixed bedtime here and no one will deny you a decaf double espresso. It can get tricky during dinner as you consider the low-calorie, low-salt spa menu, while the adjacent table orders a bottle of red with the tomahawk steak for two. The food, which includes cereal focaccia, homemade pasta filled with fresh seafood and the hotel's own extra-virgin olive oil, is all delicious. After supper, you'll find live music in the lobby bar (think jazzy renditions of 'Moon River' and 'Hotel California'), but the deep-soaking tub with scented candles and bath oils and the king-size bed will lure you back to your room.

INSIDER TIP If possible, go with a significant other or a friend; Lefay is not really a solo retreat. Borrow a mountain bike at reception and hit the hills – a sure way to tire yourself out between treatments.

BOOK IT Wellbeing Escapes (+44 20 3735 7555; wellbeingescapes.com) offers a five-night Sleep Booster programme from £1,585 per person full board, including consultations, treatments and activities.