

aspire

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PEDIGREE CHUMS

Is it time to think about the high-end hound pound?



THE FINALISTS
Aspire Awards
shortlist revealed

HANDSOME MAN
Aspire meets rugby player and
Strictly dancer Ben Cohen

EDITOR'S PICK

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Rupert Murray spent three days at Lefay Resort & Spa Lago di Garda, famed for its wellness offering, incredible view – and unusual power source

Compost. No matter from what angle you look at the stuff, it doesn't appear suited to powering a five-star hotel. Or any hotel, in fact. Or even a lightbulb.

Granted, there are some clever people and machines between the foraged rubbish and the hydro-aromatherapy tub I sat in for 20 minutes being blasted with bubbles. But it's still magic.

There are some hefty sacrifices to be made by having a system like this, of course. I said to Alcide Leali, the general manager, knowingly.

Nope, there aren't, he said,

actually knowing. Hence this place has won awards for being eco and won awards for generally being a nice hotel.

WELLNESS

My conversation with Alcide about his Lake Garda hillside hotel was a surprisingly frank one. He brought up two complaints they had had from guests recently: dressing gowns being worn at breakfast and the spa being in the middle of the property.

General managers rarely admit to complaints. His point was Lefay is not for everyone. And his supplementary point



was that he enjoys working with agents because they put clients in the right places and don't send black-tie wearers to a place where chilling is priority number one, two and three.

Even the doctors I met were chilled: wildly qualified and knowledgeable, but relaxed with it. After a frank admittance of my less-than-admirable lifestyle I was expecting tuts and a rigid regime of mung beans, lentils and self-flagellation.

Not even a frown. The attitude seems to be that wellness has to be achievable in day-to-day life, not just in the

confines of an expensive hotel. Eat vegetables, of course, and do some exercise. But don't remove all pleasure from your life in an attempt to improve your mind and body. A bored and miserable mind won't be any less bored or miserable inside a body with steel abs and a tiny BMI.

I was relieved that coffee, wine and delicious food were on the menu at the hotel's two restaurants (there are healthy menus too). This very human attitude to the realities of everyday life made the personalised regime the doctors created a pleasure.



BELLISSIMO: Lefay Resort & Spa Lago di Garda is set in 11 hectares and boasts a spa and infinity pool

Over three days I had treatments and classes designed to suit my body and mind, and still had plenty of time to read by the pool and head into the local town, Gargnano. I floated in an indoor salt lake, bathed in a hydro-aromatherapy tub, stretched my meridians (look them up: you are going to want to stretch them too), had a 'massage of the centre', sweated in the hammam and various saunas, and drank the tea the doctor recommended. After three days I did feel a whole lot better. And I still regularly stretch my meridians and do more exercise than before.

THE VIEW

I took a lot of photos on this trip and all but two were of the view. I've regarded some vistas in my time, but this takes the garibaldi. The other two photos were of underwater sliding doors and a tap that was a bit too powerful and made me look like I'd wet myself every time I used it. Despite my best efforts, this tap is the sole flaw I could muster from my three-day stay.

If spa and wellness doesn't interest your client, it's still worth sending them here. And if they are interested, it should go to the top of your list of recommendations.



INTERESTING FACT

The most popular programme with British guests is the sleep programme

DON'T BE A LEMON: TASTE, TREK AND SAIL

Lefay Resort & Spa Lago di Garda has created a programme of excursions including a private visit to one of the last surviving lemon houses in the region, La Malora. The region used to be famous for its distinctively designed wooden lemon houses. Guests meet owner Giuseppe Candossi, who will explain how the lemons are grown, and guests can try his homemade drinks, pickles and jams.

Other activities include private sailing lessons on the lake, a trekking excursion through the heart of the Upper Garda nature reserve, guided mountain biking, horse riding, a guided motorised boat trip with swimming in hidden bays, a visit to Le Sincette, the only certified organic winery on Lake Garda, and a trip to the André Heller Botanical Garden Foundation.

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