



A boating holiday took me to unexplored parts of France
Carolyn Boyd

Lefay Resort Spa, Lake Garda, Italy



Mark Barber
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Chinese treatments and Italian food make for a healthy weekend at this pristine lakeside resort

USP With a philosophy built on the fusion of classic Chinese medicine and western scientific research this impressive spa offers individually tailored programmes for improving physical and spiritual health in an environment where luxury and aesthetics are balanced within an eco-sustainable framework.

AMBIENCE Set in 11 hectares of natural woodland and built into the hillside high above the village of Gargnano on Lake Garda, the views across the lake and hills of the Riviera dei Limoni are spectacular.

Small blocks of suites are sympathetically blended into the natural contours of the landscape around the central hub of the spa. The rooms are bright, spacious and well equipped, including broadband, flat screen TV, mood lighting, a wet room, oval bath and private balcony or patio.

The spa is a split-level design, with indoor and outdoor heated saltwater pools, two dozen treatment rooms, relaxation suite, five saunas, tea bar and lounge leading down to a well-equipped gym, fitness room, outdoor saltwater spa and infinity pool.

Within the grounds is a 2.5km running circuit and fitness path that winds through the surrounding hills and woodland and incorporates a series of meditation points representing the seasonal rhythms of life.

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Hotel and pool at the Lefay Resort and Spa, Gargnano Lake Garda, Italy

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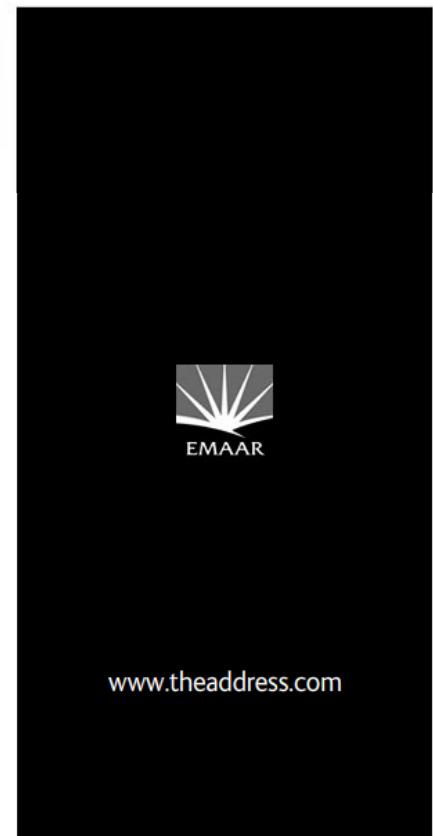
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QUALITY OF EXPERIENCE Following an initial energy consultation with a Chinese medicine practitioner, where through a series of questions, physical examination and application of pressure to key acupuncture points, a programme for improving physical and spiritual health is prescribed.

Guests can choose from three to seven day programmes to address stress, aging and vitality, slimming or postural issues, with individually tailored courses that include a bespoke herbal tea, exercise, spa treatments, hydrotherapy, saunas and massages is devised.

As my vital energy (qi) indicated I was anxious, pensive and harbouring unresolved anger, my abridged two-day programme included an infusion of birch, citronella and garden angelica three times a day, a series of saunas and a couple of massages. A classical Chinese Tuina massage, an all over muscle manipulation to physically realign my body and restore its energy, was followed a day later by a Shiatsu massage, which is a light touch massage with scented oil to relieve stress and rebalance the body's energy centres.

The treatment rooms were spotless and the staff friendly, although English is not universally spoken, and my resulting sense of calm was noticeable. This despite the fact the consultant would have preferred I completed a five-day programme, such was my state of energy imbalance.

FOOD AND DRINK Lunch is available on the reception level terrace, while both breakfast and dinner is served in "La Grande Limonaia," the roof-top restaurant festooned with lemon trees growing under a photo-voltaic glass roof and sporting breathtaking views across the lake.

Breakfast is continental with everything from fresh fruits, muesli, yoghurt and juices to meats, cheeses, omelettes, breads and pastries on offer.

However, the resort prides itself on its self-styled Lefay Vital Gourmet fine dining concept, that food is integral to the wellness experience. The menu is ostensibly Mediterranean in flavour, with seasonal, high-quality, locally produced ingredients used to ensure the freshness and authenticity of the revisited traditional dishes.



For those following a stricter diet the "La Leggerezza nell'Essere" menu provides equally fine food as a lighter / healthier option.

Wines, beer and spirits are available in the restaurants and main bar, where live music provides the nightly entertainment.

IN-CROWD Successful Italian, Swiss and German couples recharging their batteries and individuals following personalised wellbeing programmes.

WALLET WATCH Personal fitness training is €50 for a 50min session (daily Pilates, gym, yoga and aerobics classes are free). Massages range from €40 for 20min back relax to €130 for 75min stone therapy, with facials, hydrotherapy and mud treatments from €70. Check out the message tree for last minute spa treatment deals.

Lefay SPA Method packages start at €945pp for three-nights on a full-board basis, to €2,940pp for the seven-day option.

NEED TO KNOW Kuoni ( 01306 747008  or www.kuoni.co.uk) offers 5 nights on half board basis at Lefay Resort & Spa, Lake Garda in a prestige suite, including flights with British Airways from Gatwick with private transfers in resort and an airport lounge in the UK on departure. Prices for October 2010 from £1183 per person based on two sharing. Energy treatments start from £75.