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Quiet corner in a junior Suite (inset), Euphoria Retreat



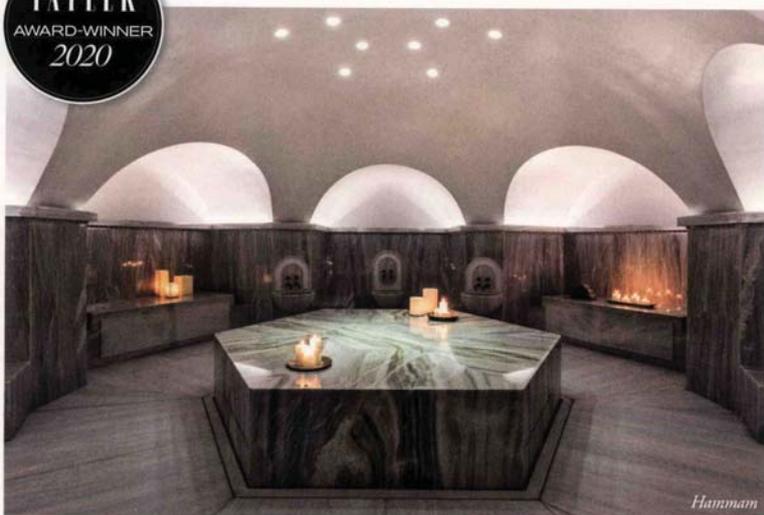
EUPHORIA RETREAT
Mystras, Greece

There's an energetic current running through this Byzantine retreat; through the surrounding land that was blessed by healers, through the aromatic pines and citrus trees that scent the Mediterranean air. It's a feast for the senses: a powerful reminder to stop and appreciate each moment, every breath – and two years since opening, that message is more potent than ever. Euphoria means 'intense happiness' and derives from the Greek word *euphoros* meaning 'healthy' – which perfectly encapsulates the vision of its founder Marina Efraimoglou, whose brush with cancer led her to immerse herself in the world of alternative medicine. Euphoria is her way of offering a path to others that she has travelled herself. Muted golds and deep reds weave their way into the cosy guestrooms that adjoin the cocoon-like spa; a stairwell spirals upwards from a black-pebbled Kneipp pool to sapphire-blue skies. It's a light-filled world; one where guests can float weightlessly in the Watsu pool, wallow in the steam of the hammam, and dive deep into a pool where the calls of dolphins can be heard below water. Therapies are designed to promote vitality: from ground-breaking Nutrigenomic programmes (Greek guru, George Leon, reboots metabolisms and triggers joy through the right fuel) to blockage-shifting craniosacral osteopathy and the quiet magic of traditional Chinese medicine, which lightens the body and quiets the mind. Some say that a trip can mend a broken spirit, others that it redefines what happiness means to them. Some call it life-changing.

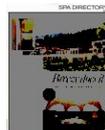
 *Healing Holidays (healingholidays.com) offers a five-night wellbeing detox programme from £2,499, including British Airways flights and transfers.*

Breezy does it

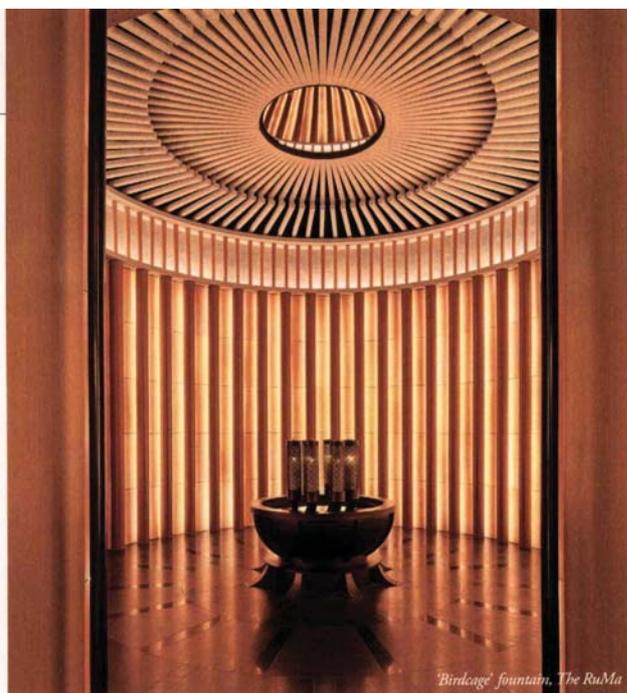
*Uptight, stressed, exhausted, lacking sleep and low in spirits?
 Relax at healing sanctuaries which leave you fret-free*



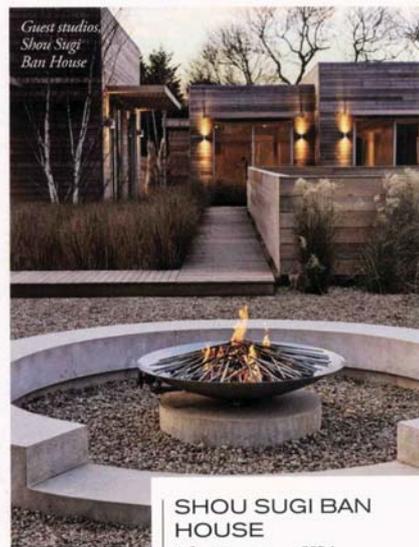
Hammam



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'Birdcage' fountain, The RuMa



SHOU SUGI BAN HOUSE

The Hamptons, USA

This Hamptons hideaway is truly one-of-a-kind: spartan in design yet wildly luxurious, with a serious wellness backbone. And itineraries follow suit, blending restorative yoga with soulful tea ceremonies, barefoot beach walks and curative treatments. Shamanic healing sessions are insightful yet powerful; Watsu (dancing through warm water, supported by the hands of a therapist) sparks a sense of returning to the womb. Hydrotherapy is central: cue traditional soaking tubs in guest studios (a combination of Japanese milk, magnesium flakes and seasonal flowers makes for a sedative soak), while in the kitchen, delicious plant-based fare is thoughtfully presented, with menus by Mads Refslund – co-founder of Noma – and laced with medicinal herbs, grown on-site. But it's the profound sense of peace that keeps Upper East-siders and travellers from afar returning time and time again, enabling sleep to come effortlessly and bodies to re-awaken. Visitors leave feeling rejuvenated, with skin aglow – and thinking that most other wellness retreats just don't deserve the title. *Double, from £1,950 (shousugibanhouse.com).*

THE RUMA
Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

Emerge from between the silver skyscrapers of downtown Kuala Lumpur and seek respite on the sixth floor of The RuMa hotel, a city dweller's salvation. Pad across sleek, hazelnut floorboards, past the tantalising infinity pool – in which architectural reflections merge with actual buildings – to a haven of woven kelerai screens and ancient Malay urns. Here at UR Spa, there's no cryotherapy or vitamin drips; nor is there a menu that reads like a dictionary of foreign language terms – instead, their mantra is 'modern science, ancient healing'. Treatments are an intuitive blend of medical know-how and traditional healing: like the 'UR A Warrior', which starts with a top-to-toe scrub with Himalayan salt and evolves into a deep-tissue, knot-abolishing back massage. A final invigorating round of reflexology (nourishing creams, acupressure, stretching) leaves even the most wound-tight of urbanites feeling foot-loose and fret-free; a very welcome antidote to modern life. *Double, from £140, including breakfast (theruma.com).*



BORGO EGNAZIA
Puglia, Italy

The joys of Borgo Egnazia are well established. Justin Timberlake chose the resort as his wedding destination, and barely a month passes without the likes of Madonna being spotted cycling through its olive groves or dining at the Michelin-starred Due Camini. But this year new joys are unfolding at Puglia's premier spa resort. Inside the castellated villas, a spiritual luxury awaits, rooted in the philosophy of the world's Blue Zones (where, through good eating, community, gentle activity and a glass of wine a day, life expectancy is far above

average). Wellness winds itself into every activity, be it a lesson in pizzica dance, or a session picking vegetables in the gardens. In the stone-walled Vair Spa, each treatment is individually tailored. The effect is mood-boosting, but still keeps an eye on the future – a future that no doubt spells many returns to Borgo Egnazia.

Healing Holidays (healing-holidays.com) offers a three-night Happiness Break from £1,599, including flights and transfers.

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PETIT ST VINCENT

St Vincent, Caribbean

An island hideaway worthy of Robinson Crusoe, Petit St Vincent is a place of peace: where the hum of the outside world is muffled by rustling palms; and worries washed away by the lapping of startlingly blue waters. The bone-white beaches are what once lured sailors to the tiny, uninhabited island back in 1966 – and ever since, this glimmering gem in the Grenadines has cast a similar spell. Solitude-seeking spa-goers can find solace at the hillside spa, where spice-laced scrubs and warm stone massages are performed in open-air treatment rooms to the chirruping of cicadas; while guided meditation takes place on the sweeping relaxation deck or on the hammock-strung verandah of your private, stone-cobbled cottage. Meanwhile, the sea-facing yoga pavilions are a rustic spot to soak up the watery views and perfect your warrior pose (a plunge from the Atlantic pier is welcome respite post-workout) – otherwise why not take to the great blue? Scuba diving opens up a silent new world: an underwater seascape where secretive sea turtles lurk, eagle rays glide between the reef and coral mesmerises in its luminescent glory. And breathe. *Double, from £870 (petitstvincent.com).*



Taj Rishikesh

Itineraries blend restorative yoga with soulful tea ceremonies, barefoot beach walks and curative treatments

TAJ RISHIKESH
Uttarakhand, India

There's nowhere better to take it higher – physically, mentally, emotionally, spiritually. This historic site of pilgrimage, pleated into the foothills of the Himalayas, is the birthplace of yoga, and home to the newly opened Taj Rishikesh. Spliced between the rippling Shivalik mountains, guests can walk straight from alpine-like lodgings across a pastel-hued pebble beach and into the milky-green Ganges. The next path is a hike up 4,800

feet to the Chamara Devi Temple, where views of snow-capped peaks can be inhaled in every direction. Move onwards to Jiva Spa, sunken into the landscape to maximise those peaceful Himalayan vibes, and offering exquisite Ayurvedic purification treatments such as the Shuddhi ritual, using holy Bhasma wood ash, bay-infused oils and water from the sacred Ganges. *Greaves India (greavesindia.co.uk) offers seven nights from £2,750, including breakfast, daily wellness sessions, flights and transfers.*

ROSA ALPINA

The Dolomites, Italy

In the sleepy village of San Cassiano, the family-run Rosa Alpina has a mysterious ability to instill calm. It's not just the hotel (gorgeous though it is, with a fire-lit lounge and charming terraces). Nor the seductive food: from simple spaghetti cacio e pepe to the three Michelin-starred restaurant St Hubertus, where diners swathed in mink tuck into white fish tartare. The sedative power derives from your surroundings, and the new Mindful Skiing programme is the greatest way to experience them. Guests zone out with morning sun salutations and breathwork in the yoga studio with views of mountainous peaks; and glide through an evergreen forest in guided sessions of cross-country skiing (the silence, interrupted only by the swooshing of your skis and the wind whistling through branches, is mesmerising). Evenings are best spent watching drifting snowflakes outside the glassy walls of the bio sauna (an icy plunge in the pool is natural cryotherapy for aching muscles), or in the candlelit spa, where massages are reassuringly firm. Suddenly, switching off does not seem so difficult. *Original Travel (originaltravel.co.uk) offers three nights 'Mindful Skiing' at Rosa Alpina, from £1,930, including breakfast, ski rental and lessons, flights and transfers.*

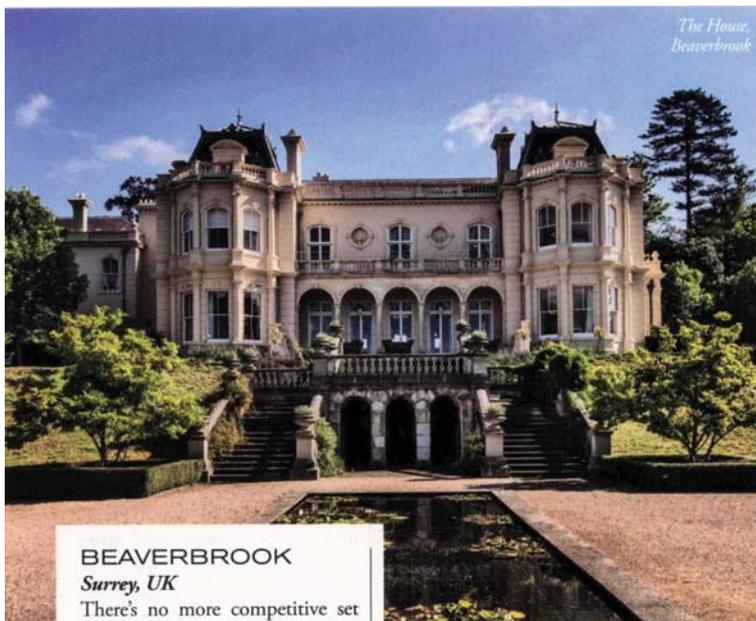


Beach villa, Petit St Vincent



Bio sauna, Rosa Alpina

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The House, Beaverbrook

BEAVERBROOK
Surrey, UK

There's no more competitive set to be in than that of a country house hotel and spa within easy reach of London. Yet Beaverbrook knocks most of the opposition into a cocked hat. The taste level throughout is not just superlative, but also distinctive, especially in the spa. What was once the coach house to the Victorian mansion is now animated by stained glass, colourful tiling and Scandi florals (the end result feels like a breath of fresh air compared to the somewhat dour minimalism that has become the default aesthetic of the 21st-century spa). Also refreshing: the world-class abilities of the therapists (these specialists really know what they are doing) and treatments; from naturopathic consultations to osteopathy and tension-dissolving reflexology. Particularly impressive is the Biodynamic Bodywork session, which splices deep massage with structural alignment, acupressure and subtle energetic work (it feels like nothing less than body-whispering, and leaves one feeling uplifted yet grounded). The airy Coach House Deli serves delicious and healthy seasonal fare – but far more remedial is a wood-fired flatbread pizza, hot from the oven. *Double, from £385 (beaverbrook.co.uk).*

SCHLOSS ELMAU
Bavaria, Germany

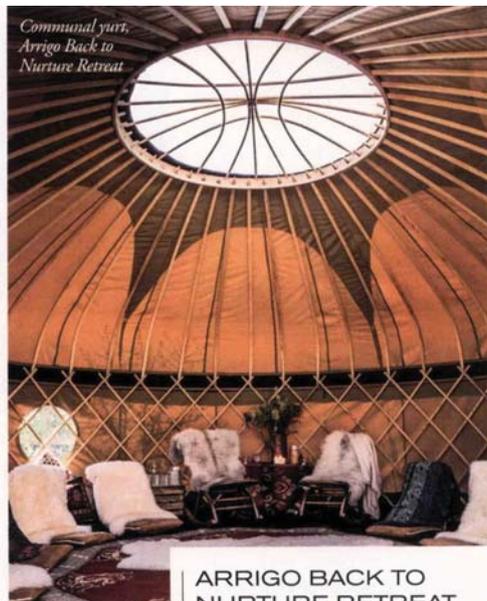
Hidden in the Wetterstein Mountains, a three-hour hike from one of King Ludwig's famous fairytale palaces, sits Schloss Elmau. Built between 1914 and 1916 by a philosopher-writer (today owned and run by his grandson), the Baroque castle comprises over 100 rooms, replete with yoga retreat, impressive medical wing and the 'Badehaus': a fabulously old school spa with endless saunas, steam baths and an oriental hammam (the most glamorous west of Istanbul). But while therapists excel at detoxifying, draining and pummeling you back to peak health, what

makes Schloss Elmau truly special is the concert hall. World-famous classical musicians fall over themselves to be invited to perform here – and for good reason. Listening to the bellows of brass, sweet string quartets and the flurrying fingers of pianists in this legendary space, with its wooden beams and pitch-perfect acoustics, awakens forgotten memories and stirs emotion. All in all, it's a magnificent – and strangely healing – experience.

Healing Holidays (healing-holidays.com) offers three nights, half board, from £1,099, including classes, use of spa, flights and transfers.



Badehaus spa, Schloss Elmau



Communal yurt, Arrigo Back to Nurture Retreat

ARRIGO BACK TO NURTURE RETREAT
Somerset, UK

Few can argue that these are not interesting times; fewer still would admit to never needing to step back from the clamour and chaos of our 24-hour, hyper-connected lives. The Back to Nurture retreat delivers an epic emotional reboot by profoundly reconnecting guests with nature: four days outdoors, sleeping under canvas in deeply cossetting safari tents (wood-burning stoves, candles, plumped pillows) – fuelled by delicious vegetarian meals, with long walks, foraging, health treatments, craft and storytelling – evoke changes that are magically far more than the sum of their parts. Developed by the biodynamic psychotherapist, healer and mentor extraordinaire Fiona Arrigo, profound transformations with deep and lasting effects follow from her instinctive 'intelligent, modern, and heartfelt' approach to wellbeing; an outstanding track record of treating burnout, exhaustion, grief, depression and addiction is evidenced by the Road to Damascus-type testimonials garnered over her experience of 30 years. This could just be the perfect retreat for our times. *Double, from £1,890 (thearrigoprogramme.com).*