

THE FUTURE OF SPAS

CLINIQUE LA PRAIRIE HAS BEEN THE FORERUNNER OF MEDI-HEALTH FOR ALMOST A CENTURY, TAKING PIONEERING TREATMENTS TO NEW EXTREMES. ITS LATEST OFFERING, THE DETOX, IS LIKE NO OTHER

BY ADRIAANE PIELOU

DAY TWO OF THE WORLD'S MOST EXPENSIVE and thus probably most directional detox. It's 7am at Clinique La Prairie in Switzerland – where the typical guest is worth about \$30 million, the staff-to-guest ratio is six to one, and privacy is so paramount one head of state spent a month here last summer without word getting out at all – and I'm lying in bed waiting for a nurse to deliver an oral syringe-full of artichoke, turmeric and black radish that kick-starts the clean-out. Despite the starched sheets, birdsong, views of the lake and mountains and pleasing thoughts of who one might have met here in this celebrated clinic's early days (Marlene Dietrich, the Duke of Windsor, Wallis Simpson, even Churchill), I'm feeling shaken. Not so much by the price, although €13,000 for the week is seriously steep. More by yesterday's test results. It's what is going on inside the body, possibly sinister yet usually undetected, that this new programme specialises in revealing. And although I'm tall and slim, and have always bought organic food, the news so far has not been good.

Detoxing is a new thing for Clinique La Prairie. In 1931, founder Professor Paul Niehans, an early pioneer of live-cell therapy, made the clinic famous overnight by reviving the dying Pope Pius XII with an injection of cellular extracts from a lamb foetus. It's now derived from lamb's liver and given orally in powder form in the €25,000 Revitalisation therapy (a cost that makes the detox look cheap), which remains the backbone and cash-cow of the clinic. The Chinese, in particular, seem hypnotised by it. However, the forward-thinking, vegan-leaning and natural-therapy-wellness-oriented new owner Gregor Mattli, son of Swiss magnate Armin Mattli who bought the place in 1980, inherited CLP on his father's death five years ago, and is keen to branch out while maintaining the medical approach that has made the clinic's name. Hence the arrival of this programme.

And day one of it, after you've checked in and checked out the gold bathroom fittings and hung up your spa wear, is devoted to tests. So many tests. DNA genetic tests, a heavy-metals test, in-depth blood tests, body-composition tests – certainly more than I've experienced anywhere else in 30 years of visiting spas. After finding out what's going on inside you, the aim is to create a personalised detox. And although they explain quite frankly

that they can't do much in a week in terms of correcting all your issues, the idea is that you return each year, staying in contact with the doctors supervising the programme.

Clinique La Prairie has more doctors on-site than any other medi-spa on the planet. While the Lanserhofs, Mayrs, Henri-Chenots, Buchingers, Canyon Ranches, Vana and SHA mostly have a handful, CLP has 55 men and women in white coats. That easily exceeds the count at even its nearest rivals, Bad Ragaz and Chiva-Som, which similarly comprise a hospital-grade medical centre as well as spa. These 55 doctors don't treat just the 2,000-odd guests who book into the 35 rooms each year, of course, but also a patient-list at the medical centre of around 50,000 wealthy private clients. The clinic also has its own laboratories, so can process some of the detox tests.

Phials of blood are sent off to labs in nearby Lausanne to be tested (vitamin, mineral and cholesterol levels, endocrinology, inflammatory balance and white-blood-cell counts). The

READING ABOUT YOUR ACTUAL FLESH-AND-BLOOD-AND-BONE SELF IS IN EQUAL PARTS TRANSFIXING AND TERRIFYING. BUT WHAT A PRECIOUS BLUEPRINT THIS IS

mouth swabs, whose analysis will reveal DNA and genetic predispositions, oxidative-stress levels and cardiovascular risks, among other things, go to Gene Predictis, also in Lausanne. But some of the tests such as urine and stools are processed in the medical centre across the gardens from the spa. And although you have to wait until day five to get the results of the blood and genetic tests, the heavy-metals toxicity data from the Oligoscan skin test, which Dr Magali Flot performs during your initial session on day one, is revealed on her computer screen within seconds. It's this result I've been lying in bed worrying about.

The scan revealed the amount of aluminium in my system – often found in the brains of people who have died from Alzheimer's – is double what it should be. My levels of carcinogenic mercury, lead, cadmium and silver are also very high. 'No, not so good,' Dr Flot said as she printed out the page. 'But we can begin to tackle the problem. We can't do much in a week, but the artichoke supplement will start a longer detoxification process. And if you stay on it for six months and make some changes to your lifestyle, your toxicity should be considerably reduced.' Really? 'Really!' Thirty-two people have undergone the clinic's