

JUST WHAT THE DOCTOR ORDERED

► If Covid-19 has made you health-conscious, plan an overall wellness holiday to a medi-spa. **Adriaane Pielou** brings you some of the best

While Covid-19 has brought most travel plans to a halt this year, it has encouraged us to be more mindful of our health. The global pandemic has brought into stark relief the idea that good health is the most valuable thing you can have, and many people are now taking more time to invest in their overall wellness. So, as travel restrictions are lifted, the idea of a trip to a specialist medi-spa may appeal. Here are some of the best around the world.

Austria

Thanks to Austrian doctor Franz Xaver Mayr, who proved in the 19th century that all manner of illnesses can be greatly improved or wholly cured simply by getting the digestive system functioning properly, the country's FX Mayr medi-spas are some of the best known in the world.

Because the updated Modern Mayr Method puts all patients on an ultra-plain diet initially for a week – clear soups, sheep-milk yoghurt, spelt rolls, steamed vegetables – weight loss is guaranteed, whichever one you choose. The Original FX Mayr clinic (original-mayr.com) on the tree-lined shore of Lake Worthersee is the simplest and least expensive, with treatment packages costing from Dh6,210 a week, excluding accommodation costs.

The glamorous lakeside VivaMayr Maria Worth and VivaMayr Altausse (vivamayr.com), in the mountains, are more high-tech, with state-of-the-art diagnostic equipment and outstanding doctors. Both appeal for a long stay. Another Mayr outpost, the Park Igls hotel (park-igls.at) is run



Sha Wellness Clinic in Spain enforces a vegetarian diet

by a superb medic, Dr Peter Gartner, but the rather dull setting, near Innsbruck, makes it better for short stays: a quick intensive check-up, perhaps.

And the recently overhauled Lanserhof Lans (lanserhof.com), where you have a view of the mountains from your bed, still has some of the cosiness that 20 years ago made it a favourite of Russian oligarch Roman Abramovich, even though it is now the founding spa in a high-powered group that includes the world's first medical gym, in London. It practices the Lans Med Concept, which combines holistic medicine with regeneration and prevention.

Germany

Deep in the Bavarian countryside, the sleek Lanserhof Tegernsee (lanserhof.com) feels very much like alpha-male territory – all crisp spare lines, with an emphasis on results in the white-on-white spa.

In Baden-Baden, pretty Villa Stephanie (oetkercollection.com) is especially pleasing if you're on your own or want to take the place over in its entirety: there are only 15 rooms. It's attached to a holistically orientated medical and

dentistry clinic where the star of the show, Dr Harry König, attracts patients from all over the world. Many turn to him when they have exhausted mainstream medical offerings.

A similarly minded team of doctors – all keen to explore natural treatments – are in residence at Buchinger Wilhelmi (buchinger-wilhelmi.com), on the shore of Lake Constance. This is one of the few clinics in the world to specialise in fasting; it's run by the great grandson of the founder, Dr Otto Buchinger, whose rheumatoid arthritis was cured by a regime of fasting. Agony for the first day or two, then unexpectedly easy, the programme can cure a range of diseases. A 10-day stay costs from Dh10,778.

India

Astonishingly well-priced for what it offers – excellent practitioners of Ayurvedic, Tibetan and traditional Chinese medicine in an exquisitely minimalist setting backed by forest – Vana Wellness Retreat (vana.co.in) will tempt you to stay put for as long as possible. And not only because of the slog of a journey it takes to get there – a flight to Dehradun and a three-hour drive past paddy fields.

It's a delight: calm, uncluttered, with delectable vegetarian food, yoga classes in the open air, an abundance of health-orientated books in the library and a pleasing sense of privacy. Endering shy, owner Veer Singh, heir to a pharmaceutical family fortune, is often around, quietly delighting in seeing the power of ancient treatments proved yet again. A seven-night stay starts at Dh7,000, while a transformational 30-day stay costs about Dh29,495.

The Philippines

A 33-room "holistic eco-resort" in a deliciously jungly setting 90 minutes by car from Manila, The Farm (thefarmatsanbenito.com) has been a hideout for dozens of high-profile guests wanting to lose weight. Diabetes and hypertension management are specialties.

Founder Dr Elizabeth Ixmeyer practices integrative medicine (blending mainstream and alternative approaches) with IV therapy and live-blood analysis aimed to shock you into wanting to improve the ragged shape of your corpuscles. From Dh2,130 a night.

Spain

Sha Emirates is scheduled to open in 2023, after Sha Mexico, but for the time being, the



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Sha Wellness Clinic (shawellnessclinic.com) has one location, half an hour's drive from Alicante. The founder is a man on a mission. His father saw his cancer cured after switching to the kind of vegetarian diet enforced at

the spa. A drive to spread the word about the life-changing possibilities of a change of diet, plus doctors specialising in a range of conditions, combined with the ease of getting there, have helped ensure its popularity.

Above, the infinity pool at Sha Wellness Clinic in Spain. Left, a spa room at Clinique La Prairie in Switzerland

Switzerland

Excellence in all things could be the Swiss motto. The lakeside Clinique La Prairie (cliniquelaprairie.com), near Montreux, established its reputation in the 1930s and is arguably the best medi-spa in the world. It has 50 specialist doctors, two operating theatres and 14 recovery suites, all just across the garden from a light-filled, elegant spa and 32-room residential building. It's super-expensive, of course. It costs Dh149,000 if you book the week-long intensive Premium Revitalisation programme.

Meanwhile, there's a team of 30 doctors working at Grand Resort Bad Ragaz (resortragaz.ch), an hour's drive from Zurich and in the foothills of the Alps. It's also where the Swiss Olympic ski teams get

checked out. And at the new Burgenstock resort, perched on a mountaintop above Lake Lucerne, the 137-room Waldhotel medi-spa (buergenstock.ch) has such an exhilarating setting that you'll feel healthier before you've settled into any treatment programme. Two-room suites work well for family groups.

Thailand

On the beach at the Thai royals' favoured resort, Hua Hin, a three-hour drive from Bangkok, Chiva-Som (chiva-som.com) has been routinely pulling in celebrity guests

such as Kate Moss for more than 30 years. That's thanks to outstanding yoga therapists, gym instructors and painless detoxes (the food here is a miracle of low-calorie deliciousness).



Saadiyat Beach Club's pool and private beach Saadiyat Beach Club

Beach clubs as pretty as the perfect picture on Instagram

If you're dreaming of your next holiday in the sun, this list of the world's most Instagrammed beach clubs might be a good place to find some inspiration.

Swimwear brand Pour Moi analysed hundreds of the world's beach clubs on the social media site to compile a list of the top 20, ranked by the popularity of their hashtag.

Topping the list is Bali's famous Potato Head Beach Club, which has been hashtagged 70,643 times. The Indonesian island's most renowned seaside spot has all the ingredients needed for a perfect beach club break.

Think lofty cabanas, pool-side sunloungers, a stunning infinity pool and swim-up bar all soaked in a Seminyak soundtrack.

The beach club recently reopened to visitors after closing temporarily because of the pandemic, but it has implemented new Covid-19 safety measures, including reduced capacity, temperature scanning and complimentary face masks made from upcycled offcuts of fabric used in Potato Head's creative village.

The Indonesian island takes five of the top 20 spots on the list, making it a good destination if you want a holiday where you can take your pick of stylish shoreline spots.

A little closer to home, Abu Dhabi's Saadiyat Beach Club ranked 14th on the list.

With stunning views over Saadiyat Island, it is the only beach club in the Middle East to be featured in the top

20 list, with 18,273 hashtag mentions.

The full ranking covers nine countries across four continents, with European beach clubs making up more than half of the top 20.

The country with the highest number of beautiful beach clubs is Spain, with six places from both the mainland and the Balearic Islands making the cut.

When it comes to the most expensive beach clubs, one of the priciest contenders is Nammoss in Greece's Mykonos (of which there is an outpost in Dubai).

The stylish set-up is modelled on life aboard a luxury yacht and the club is a favourite of celebrities – Mariah Carey and Leonardo DiCaprio have both been pictured sunning themselves there. It's ranked 16th on the list, with 16,641 hashtags.

For anyone planning travel on a smaller budget, Ibiza's Sunset Ashram ranks at number 13 with 19,950 Instagram hashtags.

This chilled-out spot has a fantastic Mediterranean menu, with main courses starting from only Dh85 and being served up with spectacular views of the Ibiza sunset.

Hayley Skirka

THE FULL TOP 20

- 1 Potato Head Beach Club** Seminyak, Bali – 70,643 hashtags
- 2 Phi Beach** Sardinia, Italy – 66,624 hashtags
- 3 Blue Marlin** Ibiza, Spain – 65,593 hashtags
- 4 Le Club 55** St Tropez, France – 42,348 hashtags
- 5 Scorpios** Mykonos, Greece – 37,149 hashtags
- 6 La Brisa** Canggu, Bali – 35,171 hashtags
- 7 Ocean Club Marbella** Marbella, Spain – 28,108 hashtags
- 8 Sundays Beach Club** Uluwatu, Bali – 25,515 hashtags
- 9 Nikki Beach Marbella** Marbella, Spain – 24,143 hashtags
- 10 Ku De Ta, Seminyak** Bali – 23,639 hashtags
- 11 Noa Beach Club** Novalja, Croatia – 21,766 hashtags
- 12 Marina Beach Club** Valencia, Spain – 20,566 hashtags
- 13 Sunset Ashram** Ibiza, Spain – 19,950 hashtags
- 14 Saadiyat Beach Club** Abu Dhabi, UAE – 18,273 hashtags
- 15 Shimmy Beach Club** Cape Town, South Africa – 17,492 hashtags
- 16 Nammoss** Mykonos, Greece – 16,641 hashtags
- 17 Single Fin** Uluwatu, Bali – 16,098 hashtags
- 18 Cotton Beach Club** Ibiza, Spain – 16,098 hashtags
- 19 Paloma Beach** Cap Ferrat, France – 14,192 hashtags
- 20 Classico Beach Club** Brazil – 13,813 hashtags

Lebanese-Australian influencer chronicles the 'heart-warming' charity of UAE people

In the days following the tragic port explosion in Beirut, people from all walks of life have stepped up to help. Some have donated goods, while others have volunteered their time.

Social media star and philanthropist Jessica Kahawaty has been chronicling the efforts of people in the UAE who are pitching in. The Lebanese-Australian model volunteered with the Emirates Red Crescent last week and captured the experience on social media.

"With the money we are collecting, we are buying non-perishable goods, medicine and

other necessities that will be flown to Beirut, Lebanon. With the help of Emirates Red Crescent, we are able to send planes with 40 tonnes of goods each trip.

"Two planes were already sent with three more scheduled," her caption on an Instagram post read.

Kahawaty told *The National*: "Generous donations are being collected throughout the UAE. When the goods arrive into Beirut, they are handled by the UAE embassy in Lebanon who then distributes them directly to families. Lebanon, we are

with you and we are not leaving you."

"There were a lot of volunteers on the day and it was so overwhelming to see people



There were a lot of volunteers and it was so overwhelming to see people from all nationalities

from all nationalities. This issue is not country specific – it is a humanitarian crisis and has touched people from all backgrounds."

"Dubai has always had a myriad of nationalities, but to see everyone so involved in community issues was so heart-warming," she added.

Kahawaty is also involved in other ways, buying and donating goods, as well as transporting them. She is using her online platform to shine a light on the realities of the disaster, while encouraging more people to come forward and help.

"We've all been very heart-broken. All my friends back home are injured, without exception. Our hearts are heavy for them and with them. We are now trying to mobilise the community to come forward and help in any possible way. Volunteers are doing a great job – both on the ground in Lebanon and here in Dubai."

Kahawaty was in Dubai when news of the explosion broke. She says her initial reaction was shock, followed by the need to call and check on friends and family. "When I

saw the full extent of the destruction, when I saw the pictures and videos, I went numb. I had sleepless nights. I was not able to eat for days. If I did not experience it as I was so far away in proximity, and I could feel like this, I really cannot imagine what the people there must have gone through."

Kahawaty is no stranger to using her influencer status to raise awareness of humanitarian issues. While several of her posts are hard-hitting, there are also positive moments highlighting the bravery of the people in Beirut – such

as a musician playing for an elderly woman who has had to evacuate her home, or a nurse who managed to save premature babies from the blast.

She says: "People need to feel hope. In times of crisis, that is what you need to instil to get them to move forward. That is why it is just as important to highlight the positive as it is the negative. Alongside the stories of tragedy and negligence, the resilience of the human spirit needs to be felt."

Janice Rodrigues



Jessica Kahawaty is volunteering with Emirates Red Crescent @jessicakahawaty