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OUTDOORS



THE ART OF THE
PERFECT PICNIC

ESCAPE *Routes*MAKE YOUR PASSPORT
FEEL WANTED

THE SPA'S RELAXATION AREA,
WHERE YOU'RE GUARANTEED
TO REMEMBER YOU FORGOT
TO LOCK YOUR FRONT DOOR

LA GRANDE LIMONAIA
RESTAURANT EXCELS IN
MEDITERRANEAN
CLASSICS, WE LIKE

LEFAY RESORT & SPA
LAGO DI GARDA. TRY TO GET
UNDRESSED BEFORE DIVING IN

Unwind in an Italian spa with a difference

Stylist has a tendency to return from our travels looking greyer and more exhausted than when we left. That, however, was before we discovered the Lefay Resort & Spa Lago di Garda in Italy. Sitting on a poppy-covered hill overlooking Lake Garda (Italy's largest lake, situated between Venice and Milan), the spa is perfect for boosting your energy levels.

As soon as my travelling companion and I arrived, we were presented with complimentary grapefruit cocktails on the starlit terrace before being taken to our environmentally friendly suite complete with our own private patio and lawn, screened by roses and vines. It was here, at our white-linen covered table, that we enjoyed fresh tomato and basil spaghetti and a bottle of Barbera under the stars.

The next morning gave us the chance to investigate the spa's 25m open-air pool, giant Jacuzzi and the awe-inspiring infinity pool which overlooks the 30 miles of Lake Garda and its surrounding hills.

Off-site, we explored Lake Garda from the windsurfing haven Riva del Garda in the north to the olive-tree covered town of Sirmione in the south (it takes about two hours to go the length of the lake on hydrofoil and twice that on the slower but more scenic ferry; navigazione.laghi.it).

Why it's hot Apart from the food and culture (in summer the lake's all about jazz and opera festivals while September plays host to wine events), what sets this resort apart is its Lefay Method which combines Chinese medicine with Western techniques.

On arrival, I had an energy interview with on-site *il medico*, Dr Maurizio Corradin, a ridiculously healthy looking six-foot Italian doctor, who felt my

pulse and enquired about everything from my sleep patterns to exercise regimes before declaring that by Chinese medical standards I was a mess, citing an absence of any energy and serious back and neck problems (all of which were spot-on).

Based on his observations, I was prescribed two aromatherapy massages to increase my energy levels, my own personal blend of tea (to be drunk throughout my stay) plus a Tuina massage (where warm coal was placed on my back's pressure points to rebuild energy). After two days, I felt like new.

Eating and drinking The resort's main restaurant, La Grande Limonaia, offers a twist on Mediterranean favourites. For dinner, we tucked into duck-breast

salad, mushroom ravioli and rosemary potato chips, lamb and baby vegetables followed by a palate-cleansing apricot and chocolate sorbet - all complemented by Lefay's vast wine list (the sommelier picks the perfect bottles for your

mood and food). For breakfast and lunch, the spa also offers laid-back buffets of salad, fish and desserts, best enjoyed al fresco under flapping white umbrellas.

Photo opportunity If you're not content taking photos of the lake and spa's garden (there are five different walks amidst the meditation and yoga zones), use the spa's free shuttle to visit the tiny harbour village of Gargnano. With winding streets, crumbling arches and cafes, its must-visit spot is a tiny wine shop hidden next to the Co-op - which has a vast range of Italian labels unheard of in the UK.

Purse-friendly alternative Book a night at the four-star Hotel Sirmione from £102pp* (termedisirmione.com).

Lefay Resort & Spa Lago di Garda (lefoyresorts.com). Kuoni (01306-747 008; kuoni.co.uk) offers three nights including flights with British Airways from £862pp based on two sharing**



UNTANGLE BACK KNOTS IN THE
INDOOR POOL - KEPT AT 32°C