

## Our sleuth investigates the curative claims of wellbeing retreats worldwide

### LEFAY RESORT AND SPA, LAKE GARDA, ITALY

**The spa** Opened two years ago by a local wealthy family, the Lefay Resort is 3,000 square metres of unashamed luxury, clinging to a mountain above Lake Garda in northern Italy. It has a 25m outdoor infinity pool, a heated seawater lake, an indoor pool, and a steaming whirlpool. There are several saunas: steam, aromatic, "bio", Finnish, flower-scented for ladies, one for couples - plus an ice fountain to cool down again. In the spa room, there are seven programmes on offer, all based on Chinese medicine.

**Spa Spy's symptoms** After six doses of chemotherapy, Spy was feeling stressed, sleepless and anxious.

**The prescription** Dr Maurizio Corradin, Spy's white-coated therapist, took what he said were the three pulses in Spy's wrists,

looked at her tongue and said her kidneys were projecting negative thoughts. Spy was lacking "energy in the liver", should "take a lighter view of life", and "think less". The 30-minute consultation over, Dr Corradin suggested a programme of massage, reflexology and moxibustion - a needle-free acupuncture technique in which fragrant herbs are burnt over pressure points. He also recommended Tuina, a Chinese "press and hold massage" to "lower the heat which is damaging the Yin", and a range of treatments to "nourish the Yin in the kidneys" and to reduce anxiety. He was also hot on herbal tea.

**The procedure** During the 50-minute Tuina (£78) set to ambient music, a masseuse explored all of Spy's pressure points, even down the side of the nose. Spy felt herself relinquishing her anxieties. It isn't possible to say whether the Alta Marea anti-aging energy massage (£104) rolled back the years, but



**'Overall wellness': Lefay**

being covered in oil by a personable young man gave Spy a lighter view of life, at least for 30 minutes. Giacomo pinched Spy's feet until she nearly screamed as he delivered an hour-long energy reflexology massage (£78). When he recommended "avoiding shoes and walk on the grass for its energy", Spy had trouble not laughing for the first time in ages. Moxibustion felt like a fly tickling

the shoulder blades, followed by a warm afterglow that travelled down the spine.

**The verdict** During the massages, which were gentle but thorough, Spy obtained rare moments of tranquillity. Sleep came easily afterwards, but that could be due to the fresh air and increased swimming and walking. It would be impossible not to relax at Lefay.

**The medical opinion** "Tuina massage can have genuine effects - de-stressing, lowering blood pressure, decreasing muscle tone which relieves back pain," says Dr Edzard Ernst, professor of complementary medicine at the Peninsular Medical School in Exeter. "Two thousand clinical trials have been carried out on acupuncture, though it is still uncertain whether it has a specific impact on pain. There is less data on moxibustion, but some encouraging evidence suggests it might be effective for pain relief."

**The feelgood factor** Guests are curiously quiet, even teenagers, hushed by an atmosphere of reverence, as if Lefay is a white marble chapel dedicated to what their brochure calls "overall wellness". Not a place where you need any thoughts at all, Lefay describes itself as "a holiday for people who look beyond things". Spy was happy to sit on her terrace sipping a cocktail, watching the sun set over the encircling mountains and olive groves.

*Kuoni (01 306 747008, [www.kuoni.co.uk](http://www.kuoni.co.uk)) offers three nights at Lefay Resort and Spa on Lake Garda, half-board, including British Airways flights from Gatwick and airport transfers, from £812 per person.*

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