



High-Maintenance Woman has a bloody good time

Arabella was one of the City's highest flyers. She played footsie with the FTSE index, could broker a financial deal quicker than you can say 'Donald Trump' and crunched numbers for breakfast. But recently she had been performing distinctly under par. Overstretched and overstressed, she was running on empty. Marion, the matronly human resources director, sensed a crisis and demanded Arabella take a two-week leave of absence, non-negotiable.

She had heard that the Viva Centre for Modern Mayr Medicine in Austria was the place to convalesce when you'd burnt out. It specialised in stress-related ailments – allergies, immune deficiencies, irritable bowels – and combined a strict gut-cleansing regime with hi-tech treatments to purify the blood. It sounded like a scary cult centre, but in reality it was far removed from the Transylvanian-style place she was expecting. Set among the cosy, wooden chalets of the sleepy village of Maria Wörth on picturesque Lake Wörthersee, it looked like a Malibu beach house: glass walls, heated limestone floors and jetties decked with elegant sunloungers.

Arabella, who was squeamish at the best of times (she once fainted at the Savoy Grill when she had been on the receiving end of a rare steak), glanced nervously at the treatment menu. It looked mediievally gory, with hyperthermia treatments, electrolysis baths and bloodletting. She gulped. Did that involve leeches?

Lying on Dr Harald Stossier's examination bed, she was relieved to see there was not a leech or a Nurse Ratched lookalike in sight. The place was friendly and warm, a world away from the starchy clinic she had envisioned. Dr Stossier (Viva's top doc, who previously oversaw treatment at the legendary detoxing boot camp, the Mayr clinic) massaged her hard and bloated

abdomen, which responded with an embarrassing growl. A healthy intestinal tract was the key to good health, he said; blockages caused by semi-digested food stopped the body absorbing nutrients and vitamins and formed toxins that could cause headaches, lethargy and dull complexions. Arabella had all the symptoms; it was time for an internal spring clean.

Her new regime started at 7am with a wake-up call and a glass of eye-wateringly bitter Epsom salts – the doctor explained they worked on the intestine the way drain-cleaning products work on hair-clogged pipes, gradually removing food residues and faecal impact stuck in the gut. For the first time in her life, Arabella resigned herself to the fact that she could be dealing with a significant backlog. Thankfully, the pre-breakfast gymnastics class was not too strenuous (just a few squats followed by a bit of goosestepping and heel-clicking), as the Mayr regime stipulates that too much exercise impedes the detoxification process.

The dining room, she discovered, was also run with Austrian precision, the main feature of the menu being 'therapeutic' chewy bread rolls which increase the production of saliva and teach patients how to chew food properly (at least 50 times a mouthful). The rest of her day was taken up with restorative therapies. There were tension-thawing back massages and reflexology sessions. A stint in the sea-climate booth, a remarkable machine that mimicked sea air by piping a mixture of salt and ozone in a fine dry mist, cleared her sinuses and her stress-constricted chest; a 20-minute session was apparently equivalent to a two-hour walk on the beach. And some hyperthermal warming therapy – which meant lying in a hammock, suspended above a bath filled with piping hot water that cooked her temperature up to a fever-inducing 40 degrees – encouraged her blood to increase its healing white cell count, boosting her immune system.

By week two she was half a stone lighter, visibly brighter and averaging a blissful nine hours sleep a night. For a final boost she even let Dr Stossier talk her into trying one of Viva's signature treatments: HOT (short for Haematogenous Oxidation Therapy), an intense transfusion process, worthy of Keith Richards, that infused her blood with oxygen before putting it back into her body. The doctor informed her that professional athletes often got HOT before running a marathon because the oxygenation helped every muscle in the body to work better. He was right – for the first time in months she felt ready to battle it out in the boardroom. □

A week's stay at Viva costs about £1,100. Ring 00 43 427 331 117 or visit viva-mayr.com.

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The centre's treatment menu looked mediievally gory at first