

RELAX

REVIVE

SURVIVE

Who wouldn't want the liver of a 13-year-old, a blissful break from everyday stress or the blessing of a blinged-up priest? Kickstart your healthy new year with one of these detox programs.

The Zen-inducing pool at Fivelements, Bali



Cure-all: Vivamayr's luxurious spaces and sauna (left) belie the medical spa's clinical approach

DETOX FACTOR:

HARDCORE

Vivamayr Altaussee

Austria

vivamayr.com

NEWS of his youth, *ER* levels of handsomeness and way-above-average bedside manner had already reached me. But I'm under no illusions: Dr Sepp Fegerl is going to subject me to a seriously hardcore detox.

The no-holds-barred Austrian approach kicks off within minutes of entering his consultation room. He asks me, kindly, to stand in front of the mirror in my underwear while he gently prods my stomach and says, "This is fat." Then, touching just above it, "This, however, is unnecessary intestinal bloating." He tuts at the metal in my teeth, the brown patina on my tongue and my "weak" back muscles before he says sweetly, "Welcome to the Vivamayr." (Translation: we caught you just in time.)

When it comes to medical-grade detox, the gold standard is the Vivamayr clinic in Lake Wörth, Austria – which teaches that good health starts in the gut. Its new outpost, Vivamayr Altaussee, near Salzburg was the most significant spa opening in 2015.

The setting is part of the appeal. The idyllic village of Altaussee moonlights as a spa town, summer lake resort and winter ski centre and is a self-proclaimed *luftkurort* (air spa) because of its wonderfully clean air. The hotel fronts

onto a peacock-green lake and overlooks carved timber houses bedecked with window boxes bursting with geraniums. Men in lederhosen waft around.

From the moment I am welcomed by the dirndl-wearing women at reception, I'm mollycoddled like a newborn. The modern chalet-like building has underfloor heating and plenty of space and there are marshmallow-soft beds in the guestrooms. The spa area is roomy and peaceful. As I swim in the pool I gaze at the mountain.

However, this detox is not for the faint-hearted. It starts with comprehensive diagnostics – blood, urine, cardiovascular and kinesiology tests, depending on what you want or need. My tests reveal unhealthily high levels of free radicals, as well as vitamin-D, potassium and magnesium levels that are on the floor.

At the heart of "the cure", as they call it, is a dietary regimen that aims to treat health issues

such as allergies, joint problems, inflammation, obesity and autoimmune diseases. Nicotine, alcohol, sugar and caffeine are outlawed and in the evenings I subsist on broth and bread, chewing each mouthful of food a mandatory 30 to 50 times. I drink a magnesium-citrate solution to trigger gut elimination and endure deep abdominal massages and liver compresses.

I progress through a marathon of treatments: salt scrubs, mud wraps, saline air therapy (breathing salt air in a chamber, which is allegedly good for joints and reducing inflammation), vitamin drip infusions, nasal reflexology (cleansing the nasal passages with essential oils) and electrolysis foot baths. The hypoxia training, which involves wearing an oxygen mask that alternates between delivering oxygen-reduced and oxygen-enriched air, is a therapy for weakened lungs and chronic fatigue.

Once I get over the death-warmed-up phase as my body adjusts to a clean, pure existence, days pass in a haze of bliss and timetable-keeping. Between treatments I collapse by the lake and read under cloudless skies. As the week draws on, I feel like a snake shedding its skin, growing in calm, empowerment and blissful solitude. By the final day my abdomen is less inflamed and I've lost 2.5 kilograms. My skin, eyes and hair look better, I feel more youthful and my stress levels have plummeted.

Back at home, for three weeks I continue cutting out dairy, sugar (including in alcohol) and caffeine, tapering off with the magnesium citrate and alkalising base powder. I lose about five kilograms in total.

Detoxing at Vivamayr may be the healthiest thing you ever do. But a word to the wise: if you cut out booze for a month, you won't acquire the liver of a fighting dog, which I mistakenly presume when I break the sugar fast for my 40th birthday celebrations. Your liver will be like that of a 13-year-old who has never had a drink. I beg you to go easy.

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