



ESCAPES TO HEALTH

PRIYA RAJ VISITS A FAMOUS SWISS SPA TO SEE IF WELLNESS RETREATS ARE FAB OR JUST A FAD

Wellness retreats are every A-listers favourite option for a spot of rest and recreation, often with a strong focus on the resting element. Not only are they discreet, but such resorts, which centre on quiet luxury, give guests the ultimate perk – choice. Wellness retreats provide holidays that allow people to focus on their health goals. There was a time when wellness holidays only meant checking into a spa hotel or one with a state-of-the-art gym. Now, consumers are getting smarter and want to spend their money on more effective options. In 2021, McKinsey reported that consumers are planning to increase their spending on wellness products and services. Specialist retreats have

responded with scientifically proven programmes and treatments for this next wave of luxury travel. In this demographic, consumers want to get the results they pay for. In 2021, the global wellness industry was valued at more than USD 1 trillion, with an annual growth of five to 10%. This healthy bounce has been attributed to the post-pandemic rebound. Retreats, such as Spain-based SHA Wellness, are expanding to respond to this growing market. SHA Wellness will be opening new properties in Mexico this year and the UAE in 2024. Meanwhile, seasoned players, such as Grand Resort Bad Ragaz, are confident in the support of their existing global clientele who flock to

the quaint Swiss town of Bad Ragaz. It is not unusual for guests stay for months at a time in the presidential suite. Some come for a detox, some for recovery from a long-term issue, and some for tailored programmes to meet a wide range of health and fitness goals. Grand Resort Bad Ragaz staff are attentive and comforting. Everything is curated to nurture an atmosphere of wellbeing, from the art throughout the property to the food in the Michelin-star restaurants – the resort holds six stars in total. Historically, the resort is based around the thermal water from the Tamina Gorge, with a natural temperature of 36.5° Celsius. It is said to have mystic health-giving

properties. This reflects the origins of spa, which has roots in ancient Greece and Rome, where bathing was a spiritual and social experience. However, in the early 20th century, wellness took an aesthetic diversion. Instead of focusing on internal wellbeing, it all became about weight loss. Restricted eating and juice cleanses – most without initial testing or a proper consultation – became commonplace. Today, we know that such drastic regimes are a glaring red flag. Beyond the water, Grand Resort Bad Ragaz specialises in scientifically backed treatments. The weight loss programme begins with a full health check to develop bespoke meal plans

for each guest. Head of nutritional advice, Sonja Ricke, told me that guests are sometimes shocked that they eat more than usual while under her care, but still lose weight. Ricke believes those seeking her advice must learn to be self-aware about their eating, and understand what they eat and where it came from. Everything she does is evidence-based, and exclusive clientele, including Arab royalty, who regularly fly her out, demonstrating the international respect she has achieved. Wellness retreats can be wonderful,

but they require an understanding that the stay at the resort is simply the first step in seeking a better lifestyle, a kickstart rather than a quick cure-all. The old adage that nothing good ever comes easy remains true. There's no magic pill or soup in these retreats to make guests 20 years younger – trust me, I asked – but what they do have is a dedicated team whose sole mission is for you to leave having reached the goals you set for yourself for your stay, while setting yourself up for long-term lifestyle change. To find out more about Grand Resort Bad Ragaz: www.resortragaz.ch

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