Villa Stéphanie is the place to go on a weight-loss mission

Mary Lussiana meets a doctor who holds the cards to a healthier life in the German mountains

by MARY LUSSIANA

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I had heard about the medical wonders of Villa Stéphanie, part of the Oetker collection along with Le Bristol in Paris and The Lanesborough in London. The celebrated spa has a reputation for its thoroughly effective medical as well as therapeutic treatments, but what had me considering a trip to Germany’s Black Mountains was the reputation of one of its crack
team of medical experts, Dr König. The very Dr König who met a friend of mine and felt there was something wrong with her, insisted on a check-up, and found a tumour for which there had been no symptoms.

So, I booked. The Belle Epoque building began life as a royal residence in 1890, and its 15 rooms are everything a five-star lodging should be, a digital detox button the only telltale sign that this is somewhere where ‘H’ stands as much for health as hotel. These rooms are for the guests who might come simply to lose weight with a calorie-controlled diet and a huge variety of exercise and spa treatments. They are also for visitors to Haus Julius, a 1,700-square-metre mansion directly accessed from Villa Stéphanie, where an expert medical team awaits. Both look out on to the leafy gardens of Lichtentaler Allee in Baden-Baden, a charming German town where 19th-century villas line the streets.
In this atmosphere of genteel wellbeing, Dr König has recently started a weight-loss programme – The Kings Way (from könig, German for ‘king’), which involves a staggering 91 treatments over 10 days. It was to this that I’d signed up and so, upon my arrival, I found myself waiting for Dr König. He strode in clad in a white coat, his penetrating blue eyes and silver-fox persona an immediate presence. Sitting at his desk, he picked up a Montblanc fountain pen from a collection in a silver tray, revealing his Cartier cufflinks. It’s safe to say that I have never had such an exhaustive consultation. Posture check? Tick. He got me down to my underwear and crunched my bones. Make no mistake, Dr König knows what he is doing, and he also cares passionately about making people better. He left no stone unturned, no question unanswered, from emotional happiness to work-life balance to having podologist Herr Busch fit me for insoles to rebalance me, and suggesting a few pieces of dental work that might need looking at. Apart from a battery of blood tests and a body scan to spot any inflammation, I also did a Lüscher test – a ‘mirror of your soul’, Dr König called it – which evaluates emotional stability.
Each day started with a detox foot bath and ended with a liver cleanse. In between there were detox infusions and Airnergy oxygen therapy. There were colonic hydrotherapies (I'll spare you the details) and there were personal-training sessions. I mixed Pilates or aqua gym with bike rides and brisk walks around Baden-Baden with fitness instructors Andreas and Kevin, the latter of whom smiled sweetly and occasionally said things like, ‘Jawohl, now we will have a short break,’ – we never did. Otthoman, a fantastic masseuse, left me writhing with pleasurable pain, and the meals assured weight loss (think smoothies packed with super-greens and low-fat, low-carb dishes).

The Kings Way requires total commitment – I found little time to think beyond keeping to the relentless programme, which was an endurance test. When I had finished, my newly toned body was leaner by four kilos and my mind sharper, and that really was why I had wanted to go. Dr König has put Baden-Baden on the map for an annual pilgrimage. Now I just need a holiday…

Healing Holidays (healingholidays.com/tatlerspaguide; 020 7529 8551) offers a 10-night The Kings Way programme from £11,600, full board, including treatments, activities, flights and transfers.