



UNDER THE SKIN

THE INDIVIDUAL A party-hard model who finds herself anxious and stressed out and suddenly - though well beyond her teens - with a face covered in acne

THE REMEDY A seven-day stay at Germany's digestive-health hub, the Lanserhof Tegernsee

So you know when you're asked, 'What do you like most about yourself?' by a gaggle of girlfriends and you go all coy and say something like, 'My feet...'? Yes, well that's me. In truth I have always loved my skin. Freckled and English it may be, but I admired its sheeny-shininess. Until one day, quite suddenly, I woke up with acne. I had hoped that by some miracle the spots might disappear overnight, just as they appeared. They didn't. Besides which, on top of which, I was living life full-throttle: working hard, playing hard but beginning to feel exhausted and vaguely depressed.

As my husband and I pulled into the Lanserhof Tegernsee near Munich, one of the managers quietly emerged and gently murmured 'Come out of the dark and step into the light', and I immediately felt rescued.

Walking into the medi-clinic, which follows the FX Mayr method, was like a entering giant ball of cotton wool. The halls smelled of toasty-hot towels. Everything was cloudy white. The first thing I noticed in our room was the sauna in the bathroom. The detoxing was going to begin there and then.

Things kicked off with a general medical appointment with Dr Schwarzl. We sat down and I listed all my ailments. I'm the type of person who is convinced that they're dying - indigestion is always a heart attack. So I booked in for every test under the sun. But one of my main concerns, aesthetically (after my skin), was my pot-belly, affectionately named Potters by my husband. I was sure there was something amiss with my squirmy colon and perhaps even my ovaries. It wasn't helped by the fact that I could eat cheese and bread with balls of butter and large flaky crystals of salt forever. But as it turns out, the tummy was not the result of too much gluttony and hell-raising. I had an inflamed intestine. They call it 'leaky gut', which sounds like a death-metal band. Apparently I needed to cleanse my insides, which meant eating very little for a few days and drinking Epsom salts every morning to purge my digestive system. And here already lay the answer to my acne. My face had become the messenger, telling me that something was not quite right on the inside.

That night, after an afternoon of treatments and some vegetable broth, we went to dinner and were given a brief on how to eat. Chewing properly was the name of the game,

and I was confused as I'm sure I had never really chewed my food properly before. Who has time to chew? It turned out my husband munched like an antelope and now I had to listen to it, 30 times per mouthful. Solace came the next day at the crack of dawn when we wandered off into the forest to stretch and wake up. It was called 'changing your state'. I started scoping out hideaways to run to if nature called (the Epsom salts were already taking effect). The sky was twilighty and film-like. I wanted to climb up to the still-visible moon.

Later that day the nutritionist asked me whether my soul was happy. My body knew why my skin was like this, but I didn't. I realised quickly that I wasn't listening to my body at all. The thing is, I am a trooper. I come from a long line of troopers - stubborn and ready to party with a Martini in hand. I used to pride myself on the fact that I could finish an American Hot pizza before anyone else - and all to myself. But here I fell into a new groove. The days ticked by and I took to turning my phone off at night, not on silent. Words floated through my mind while I listened to my breathing, the air rushing in and out of me. I knew I needed more of these moments in my everyday life.

One of my favourite treatments was a facial, but not just any facial. They used aloe vera, algae, mushrooms and daisies. It was going to help 'prevent vinkles'. The therapist was so petite and doll-like I wanted to put her in my pocket. Meanwhile, I learned a lot about myself: I have 24 vertebrae; the ligaments in my ankles are strong like a ballet dancer's; I like infusions; beer is my worst enemy; I have the arteries of a 26-year-old; I have short hamstrings (thanks Dad); I live in fight-or-flight mode. But there's no tiger behind me, just stress. Apparently I needed to tell my right kidney to calm down, that it was safe. And when I had my final check-up the doctor looked at my heart again. When I saw it beating on the ultrasound screen I wanted to weep. I had a new-found respect for my body. I saw my acne as a betrayal. I wasn't treating my body as my temple, instead it was my punch bag. Lanserhof Tegernsee gave me a new beginning. Now I feel proud of my physical strengths and humbled by my weaknesses. I realise it's all about understanding this dance. And listening. I will never shut out my body again. My tummy is as flat as a pancake and my skin so much better. I'm beaming. 🙌

**AND HERE LAY THE ANSWER
TO MY PROBLEMS. MY FACE
HAD BECOME THE MESSENGER,
TELLING ME SOMETHING
WASN'T RIGHT ON THE INSIDE**

BOOK IT Healing Holidays (+44 20 7843 3592; healingholidays.co.uk/condenast) offers a seven-day LANS Med Basic programme at Lanserhof Tegernsee from £2,799 per person full board, including flights, transfers and all treatments as per the programme. Healing Holidays is the sole booking operator for Lanserhof Tegernsee