

AWARD-WINNER DESIGNER DETOX

NEW OPENING

VivaMayr Altaussee

ALTAUSSEE, AUSTRIA

I am a glutton for punishment. A 'no pain, no gain, beat me with birch branches' kind of girl. Forget pampering and moderation; give me total abstinence and misery. So that's what I was primed for when I set off for VivaMayr Altaussee.

Open almost a year, it's the newest member of the Mayr family, a behemoth of larch, marble and glass set on Lake Altaussee and surrounded by dreamy mountains and a chocolate-box village. Inside, it's cosy contemporary and staff scurry about in dirndls, all smiles and encouragement. I couldn't have been more surprised.

But I wasn't deluded. It was still a Mayr clinic and I had steeled myself for the endless chewing (30-40 times per mouthful), daily stomach manipulation and prolonged stints on the loo.

But I discovered two significant differences that separate Altaussee from her siblings. One: the morning salts are Glaubersalz – not the usual Epsoms – sourced from the nearby Sandling mountain, where salt has been mined since Roman times. They taste just as ghastly and deliver the same results, but are thought to be kinder to the system. Two: every patient sees a doctor every day (except Sunday) to keep check on the holistic healing process – a special bonus, as mine was Dr Sepp Fergerl, head of the medical team and a Clark Kent lookalike with the gentleness of Pope Francis.

At our first meeting he admonished me (in the nicest possible way) for being alarmingly acidic: too much chardonnay, seafood and artificial sweeteners. I was weighed (ugh!), measured (I had somehow misplaced 2cm of height) and dispatched for tests: blood, mineral nutrient analysis, urine and spiroergometry (where my lungs were measured during exercise as a performance diagnostic). None of the results were a surprise: eight months of stress, monthly transatlantic travel and sporadic illness had taken their toll. The prescription? A strict nutrition plan, moderate exercise, massage, Watsu and osteopathy.

I found the first three days of the diet a killer: millet in the morning, plain broth with a spelt 'chewing trainer' for lunch and more broth in the evening. However, I wasn't alone, and misery loves company. We were mostly British women: a title here, a philanthropist there, a handful of media types. Hunger is a great leveller and we bonded in our dressing gowns. We tried Nordic walking, aqua biking, cooking classes. We were wrapped in mud, given vitamin infusions, and endured colonic irrigation. We moaned about not sleeping, the headaches and the diarrhoea. And when day four finally came, we rejoiced. It meant more food and more energy; we were through the worst.

I left a peppier, (slightly) slimmer, healthier version of my former self. And I'll go back to VivaMayr because abstinence definitely makes this heart grow fonder. I LOVE it. Besides, I believe Dr Fergerl actually *is* Superman. **Gerri Gallagher**
BOOK IT Healing Holidays (healingholidays.co.uk/tatlerspa; 020 7529 8551) offers seven nights, full board, from £1,200, including flights, transfers, diet plan and activities.

TATLER EXCLUSIVE For the most up-to-date offer at VivaMayr Altaussee, visit tatler.com/spaoffers. □

FOR MORE
DETOX SPAS
VISIT
TATLER.COM/SPA



HUNGER IS
A LEVELLER – WE
BONDED IN OUR
DRESSING GOWNS

