

BEST FOR FITNESS

PREIDLHOF
SOUTH TYROL, ITALY

In fine form

Jane Walker shapes up in South Tyrol

Most top spas are good with people who are fat but not so good with people who are fit. I don't want to lose weight so, although Preidlhof caters admirably for the big-boned, I was here to shape up and make the most of its fabulous HIIT studio (and to hit up the Michelin-starred food while I was at it).

Preidl what? I'd never heard of it either, even though it's one of Italy's leading destination spas. That's because Josef and Rosa Ladurner, who opened it 50 years ago, have always had enough loyal German and Austrian customers to fill it. And as their interiors could have come straight from a school production of *The Sound of Music*, we weren't exactly missing out. Recently, though, the reins have passed to son Klaus, who has invested over £9m and added an incredible six-floor Spa Tower, cutting-edge fitness facilities and the Stammhaus with its 41 sexy Scandi-style suites, some with hot tubs and glass-fronted saunas on their private terraces. Suddenly the resort registered on this fussy British spa-goer's radar.

Better still, it's in Naturns, an area that looks like it's been purposefully created for cherry-cheeked activity. It is South Tyrol at its finest: lush valleys surrounded by snowcapped mountains,


with more than 300 sunny days a year. Perfect for hikes and biking in Alpine pastures and inline skating through orchards. One day, I took a canary-yellow Vespa – there's a fleet free for guests' use – and went exploring, nosing over stone walls at chickens and pigs snuffling in farmyards and nodding at the gnarled old farmers.

Of course, there are back-to-back workouts, held in a pretty conservatory; I tried punishing abs sessions and soothing yoga. The gym with valley views was impressive, but the draw for me was the Functional Fitness Hall and HIIT training with super-fit Martina. My circuits included TRX, ropes, the agility ladder, kettlebell squats and ViPR presses, and they were all truly horrible – which meant I could approach that Michelin-starred restaurant guilt-free.

This was handy, as the breakfast buffet sagged with everything from superfood smoothies to home-cured hams, and the affable maître d' was something of a sugar-pusher. Not content with me lunching on salads and pasta on the sun-trap terrace, or testing the limits of the lycra in my little black dress with suppers of mountain lamb with artichoke and wild-garlic polenta, he would wander over and whisper that the apple strudel was delicious today.

Fortunately, I could sweat it all out in the Spa Tower, where the heat rooms are eucalyptus-scented and salt-infused, and there are theatrical sauna ceremonies several times a day and a spectacular rooftop pool for Instagram addicts. (A word of caution: those Teutonic guests not only have a propensity for nudity but consider swimwear in a sauna revolting. I got some looks for wearing mine.)

Add six more pools and jacuzzis, mainly dotted through Preidlhof's meandering Mediterranean park, and this was one of the most well-thought-out and relaxing spas I've experienced anywhere. Preidl what? Preidl-fabulous.

 *Healing Holidays* (healingholidays.co.uk/tatlerspaguide; 020 7529 8551) offers four nights from £1,350, full board, including flights, transfers and all treatments and activities on the Fitness Programme. *Healing Holidays is the only UK tour operator that works with Preidlhof.*

