

# Parkhotel Igls

INNSBRUCK, AUSTRIA

I was apprehensive. Austrian detox is serious stuff. Minuscule portions and laxatives aren't for everyone. Besides, I have a high metabolic rate and a biological need for cheese. I was after gentle re-energising, not weight-loss drama. But as I stepped into the foyer of this restful Alpine retreat, the beautiful apple-green decor (the colour of 'hope,' one therapist told me) worked its magic. Reception staff beamed. Guests in white robes were chatting, laughing – the bonhomie was palpable. No one looked wan or famished. And the smells from supper were tempting.

After an initial medical check, Project Moi commenced. Imagine, you can fling yourself on the couch, catalogue every woe, ailment and ache, and they not only listen but investigate everything – medical tests galore. There was a coterie of eminent physicians, including experts from the nearby University of Innsbruck, a centre of excellence for cardiovascular medicine, plus a world-class musculoskeletal programme.

Treating my ailments – back ache, a troublesome sacroiliac joint and a dodgy thoracic spine, plus low energy – required daily sessions with the biomechanics team. With painstaking thoroughness the 'magic trio' – physio, massage therapist and brilliant personal trainer Michael – deciphered my musculoskeletal mysteries like a cracking CSI team.

My sessions in the plush third-floor gym, with its sheet-glass windows and vast panoramic views of snow-covered mountains, gave my workouts a James Bond quality. Nothing too strenuous, though – here it's all about strengthening pelvic floors, or tiny but neglected muscles in your feet, plus core stability, balance and coordination. Besides, you can't overdo it when you're only taking in 700–1,000 calories a day. Here they espouse the Mayr philosophy, where the way to good health is through the intestine; rebalancing it involves 'a diet of monotony' made up of three modest meals a day. Actually, none of us grumbled about the scant portions. Dishes were meat-free but delicious: veg-rich lemongrass and chicory soup, served with trout, or mozzarella (cheese, oh joy), or dollops of creamy avocado spread.

There was pampering too. I loved my two 90-minute-long mineral-rich Terra-Vit body wraps. The result – infant-soft skin – was a revelation.

For me, the camaraderie didn't quite extend to the mixed Austrian sauna that required you to go starkers. So instead I steamed swimsuited (and alone) in the 'textile' sauna. But I threw myself into everything else – pilates, yoga, dawn and evening walks. And after five days I shed inertia rather than pounds, felt lithe as a kitten and slept like a baby.

Oh, and that obligatory laxative? 'The mildest variety,' the lovely doctor said as he handed me a bottle labelled 'Passage'. A sense of humour, too. Who'd have thought? **Lindy Stone**

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