



GRAND RESORT BAD RAGAZ SWITZERLAND

**WEIGHT
LOSS**

IN BRIEF Hard-hitting programmes with an Alpine backdrop

THE LOWDOWN The source of the Bad Ragaz thermal spring is at the otherworldly Tamina Gorge, where medieval monks used to lower the ailing down on ropes so they could bathe in the healing waters. The hour-long walk there from this civilised spa hotel is lovely, but you will be far more comfortable in the 36.5°C, mineral-rich Helena pool, where jet sprays tackle computer-crunched shoulders and you can float your cares away. Afterwards, you might find yourself sweating in the Swarovski-crystal steam room, trying a cold shower affusion (hosing yourself down with icy water), spending time in the fragrant sanarium, then, showered and re-robed, eating a delicious ripe plum in the fresh air. There's a Kneipp pathway, and thermal taps and jugs everywhere make it easy to drink great gulps of the water throughout your stay. What stands out here are the quick-burst programmes covering areas such as mental health and gynaecology devised by experts who look after the Swiss Olympic team. The popular four-day women's check-up includes mammograms, bone-density testing, digestive-system analysis and a colonoscopy. There are relaxing breaks that mix yoga with beauty treatments (young therapist Joana is very good at Thalgo paraffin wraps for feet and nourishing Sisley facials), but also more serious stays dedicated to weight loss, detox, sleep issues, burn-out – you name it. Getting in and out of the stress-busting water will be a part of everything you do, plus there are daily drop-in fitness sessions of aquafit, Pilates and Nordic walking. Those who want to eat healthily won't feel deprived: the Cuisine Equilibrée menu was developed with nutritionists and is available in two of the eight restaurants. Dishes such as poached trout with orange, sautéed venison with cranberries and salad bowls with quails' eggs are delicious, and the chef still uses a little butter and sugar 'for taste'. Unless you stay in the modern, slick spa suites (definitely try to), or the elegant Palais rooms, bedrooms might feel a bit old-fashioned and fusty, though not without charm. Kids are looked after in the Children's Villa, and get their own spa menu too.

INSIDER TIP Book holistic therapist Zandi who has a wonderfully sensitive touch, whether he's massaging you with Melissa oils or doing sound-waves meditation with singing bowls.

BOOK IT Healing Holidays (+44 20 7843 3592; healingholidays.co.uk/ condenast) offers a three-night Inspiration and Vitality wellbeing package from £1,059 per person, including breakfast, flights, transfers and activities as per the programme.

NEW LONGEVITY VILALARA ALGARVE, PORTUGAL

**WEIGHT
LOSS**

IN BRIEF Destination spa set-up in a fresh location

THE LOWDOWN Once you've acclimatised to the resort feel of this well-established family hotel, with rooms inspired by Gaudí and 11 hectares of tropical gardens, you begin to relish this unique collaboration. Dedicated spa team Longevity has teamed up with the Vilalara hotel to create a fantastic healing experience. You can come on your own and immerse yourself in the spa but, even better, bring the family. Children will love the private beach, cliff-top pool and grounds to roam. There is an amazing doctor, Bianca Többen, who combines Western medicine with Eastern intuition. She reads your pulse and gives weary mothers a maternal shoulder to cry on, before prescribing special vitamin tonics. Osteopath Ricardo Rosa does extraordinarily original manual lymph drainage. His soft, rhythmic pulsing across the lymph nodes releases gallons of fluid. You'll fall into a comatose sleep as he soothes your revved-up nerves. This is the place to come if you suffer from fluid retention. Over-taxed systems will let go and puffy bodies will deflate. The underwater drainage massage leaves you wonderfully woozy. The slimming massage includes an effective clay body mask; you won't stop peeing afterwards. There is special alkaline water on tap to glug until skin brightens and sluggish systems sparkle. More clinical treatments include carboxytherapy, in which fat cells are injected with carbon dioxide to destroy them. It's short-term agony for long-term effects. They also have a nifty infrared machine which tests for minerals and heavy metals in the body. This is also the ideal restorative holiday because you can follow a healthy eating plan, or even a three-day juice fast. The food is sensational and the diet menu, ingenious: swordfish on courgette linguine, prawn with pineapple carpaccio. For fewer than 800 calories a day, it includes low-fat, sugar-free puddings such as iced lychees with chocolate fondant. The average weight loss varies from two to four kilos a week. There is hardcore mat Pilates, and yoga includes Tibetan sound-bowl healing. The result is an efficacious melding of a traditional holiday destination and a modern spa with bang-on-trend treatments.

INSIDER TIP Book a personal workout with Elier Castillo. He'll inspire even the most hardened gym phobe.

BOOK IT A seven-night Intense Detox and Weight Loss programme costs from about £4,235 per person full board, on a healthy meal plan or liquid diet, including daily group activities and thalassa, and medical spa consultations (+351 967 108 244; longevityvilalara.com).

