

europaean Spa

DIGITAL EDITION

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THE NO.1 MAGAZINE FOR SPA AND WELLNESS LEADERS



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Our pick of the best products and advice to boost revenue

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EMOTIONAL RETREATS

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Welcome

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Lead yourself well...



Autumn brings a renewed sense of purpose as spas prepare for the busy winter season. To help with your planning, our Festive Gift Guide features the latest collections and expert tips to maximise retail potential at this crucial time of the year for spa businesses (p26).

Fresh ideas and collaboration always shape the spa and wellness world, as will be exemplified at the Global Wellness Summit, which will take place at the Old Course Hotel & Spa in Scotland from November 4-7 (p44). We ask Nancy Davis what's on the agenda at this year's water-themed gathering. And to set the backdrop to the event, we celebrate ten of the best Scottish spas and meet their dedicated leaders (p50).

On a new Holistic Leadership Retreat at Euphoria Retreat in Greece, I benefit from the expertise of Marina Efraimoglou and Mary Vandorou (pictured above), and learn about next-level leadership and immersive wellness programming (p82).

With the effect of trauma on individuals moving more into focus in spas, we explore how holistic modalities and coaching can be combined to provide emotional relief for guests (p92). We also bring you Menu inspiration with our pick of the latest products and treatments for spas (p71), as well as stylish equipment innovations in our Spa Specifier (p107).

More expert advice comes from Accor's Emlyn Brown, who explores the rapid rise of 'sweat culture' in spas worldwide (p88), and Arora Group's Rebecca Doyle, whose insightful article asks how diversity and inclusion will shape spa leadership in future (p104).

We hope you are inspired by this bountiful edition and lead yourself well this autumn.

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Image European Spa's Sarah Camilleri (centre) with Mary Vandorou (left) and Marina Efraimoglou at Euphoria Retreat, Greece (see p82)



A new roadmap for leadership?

European Spa heads to Greece to take part in Euphoria Retreat's Holistic Leadership Retreat, rooted in ancient Greek and Chinese philosophies

REPORT BY SARAH CAMILLERI

Renowned Greek destination spa Euphoria Retreat sits serenely in the heart of the Peloponnese. Perched on a mountainside, surrounded by an enchanting pine forest, this secluded deluxe destination is protected by Mount Taygetus to the rear and commands expansive views over the valley below. Blue skies, olive and citrus groves, and rosemary-filled gardens make it a haven from the outside world.

Set above the sleepy terracotta-tiled village of Mystras, Euphoria's idyllic location offers a heady mix of yin and yang energy, which is also reflected throughout its design. A Chinese five-element

philosophy and ancient Greek wisdom guides the holistic delivery of spa treatments and retreat programming, which have garnered an international reputation for excellence since its opening in 2018. With just 45 rooms and a team of 70, at full occupancy the guest to staff ratio is one-to-one.

Behind the vision, Euphoria's entrepreneurial founder, Marina Efraimoglou (pictured far right with energy healer Mary Vandorou), ensures every detail delivers a unique blend of wellbeing and selfcare.

The destination's welcoming 3,000sqm spa sits at the heart of every experience and has been designed to reflect the five-element philosophy. Set over







From above: a sound healing session before pledges are made; an awakening immersion in nature is part of the destination's new Holistic Leadership Retreat

▷ four floors and manned by a team of experienced therapists and practitioners, the offer is extensive with a wide range of holistic therapies and modalities from meditation to medical.

Discovering leadership potential

I have been invited to try out a new four-day Holistic Leadership Retreat. Curated by Marina and her long-term associate and friend, energy healer Mary Vandorou, this four-day programme offers an immersive schedule of workshops, somatic therapies, drama sessions, group discussions and spa activities. It promises to help people explore their own leadership potential.

Marina's vision for the leadership programme was inspired by a desire to bridge the gap between two distinct worlds. "In a way, I am bringing my past knowledge of banking and global business together with my knowledge of the wellness world to create something unique," she explains. "Our new retreat is for leaders seeking a new way forward. It has momentum, it doesn't use buzzwords like authenticity and empathy lightly. It asks for more depth, more self-awareness and a greater understanding of the three levels of leadership the world needs right now."



Euphoria's philosophy, 'Your Life, Your Journey', lies at the heart everything, explains Marina. "It reflects the democracy of the ancient Greeks, who believed that we all have the right to be the best we can and also a responsibility to participate as leaders out in society," she says. "We all know the world is changing and most of us are disappointed by the current leadership. So, collectively, we need to find new leaders – a new archetype of leadership."

Somatic dance and trust

Right from day one, my fast-lane existence of being 'always on' – thanks to life, travel and running a

business – takes a welcome pause. I gladly switch off my mobile and leave it in my room as I head down to the spa, where I am warmly welcomed. It already feels like a home from home.

Last night I met my retreat companions for the first time. The international mix – four women and one man – includes two of the Euphoria team. It's Marina's philosophy that everyone on her team should experience everything the retreat offers as part of their own personal development. This may be unusual but it's something I believe more spas should consider if they want their team to work at a higher level and have agency, and create future leaders.

Our facilitators, Marina herself, together with resident healer Mary, have already guided us through the five-elements philosophy and the strands of ancient Greek wisdom they have weaved to address three levels of leadership.

Today is about feeling it and getting into our bodies. I am excited, but also unnerved by the agenda. The

prospect of two hours devoted to somatic dance looms ominously, like a maths exam. I love to dance but not on demand and with five people I have only just met. Thankfully, Marina and Mary ease us in with an extraordinary star meditation and a set of movement exercises to establish trust. Before I can overthink it, I am dancing freely around the expansive yoga studio like a forest fairy. It's exhilarating, joyful and I feel the burn of my fire element kicking in.

Free your voice

Expertly delivered by drama teacher and media coach Chrisanthi Kotsafti, a 'Free Your Voice' workshop puts us in touch with our bodies. We discover the extraordinary vocal range each of us has, and are taught how to project our sound, and importantly, how to speak so that people listen.

Chrisanthi's wisdom is eye-opening. She demonstrates how repression of our natural vocal range is something that most of us do as a result of



A timeline of transformation

How former bank president Marina Efraimoglou changed her life and learned the expertise to bring next-level leadership to Euphoria Retreat

It takes heart and often time for each of us to find our path to purpose and leadership. Marina Efraimoglou began thinking about such things when her father gave her *The Communist Manifesto* to read at the age of 12. It lit a fire in her to change the world.

"When I was growing up in Greece we were moving out of a dictatorship and there was a lot of turbulence – in a good way. At that time my generation thought that politics could fix anything and everything. Now we know this is not the case."

Academic and determined, Marina gained two degrees – in economics and sociology – and a master's in international trade and finance. This led to stellar career in the financial world, which culminated in her becoming the only female shareholder, as well as president and co-managing director, of a bank.



Her life in international finance took a pause when she faced a significant health crisis. Cancer, and her journey to heal from it, led Marina to make purposeful changes so she could follow a deep calling to lead a more holistic and spiritual life.

Making a pivotal decision to sell her bank, she then invested two

further years to help transition her team before dedicating her time to travelling and studying healing modalities under many masters.

It was during this time of enlightenment that the seeds were sown for her next extraordinary chapter: to buy land and build her own destination spa – one that would be like no other.

Euphoria was opened to guests in 2018 and Marina's dream became a reality. The place truly captures the unique soul of Mystras and Marina's desire to bring every guest a sense of healing and transformation.

Since then, Greece's first destination spa has gained an award-winning reputation for its wellness services and retreat programming. Marina's work continues to lead with heart and provide retreats and spa services to the highest standard.



Above: the stunning and unique poolscape at the award-winning Euphoria Retreat, which opened in 2018 in Mystras, Greece

New frontiers: metabolic health

This autumn, Euphoria Retreat will launch a medical-based Metabolic Health programme that is designed to deliver healing at a cellular level.

The new longevity service aims to give guests a true picture of their health status and how to improve it. The watchword here is 'precision' and the retreat will feature a unique integration of Euphoria's extensive range of holistic wellbeing modalities.

"We have been working with the University of Thessaloniki and our team of medical experts to develop a truly integrated approach to preventative health," says Marina Efraimoglou. "An excellent new diagnostic kit is sent out before each stay to collect samples of your blood, saliva, urine and microbiome. These are then analysed in the lab."

Euphoria's founder recognises a growing demand for preventative health services backed by science and wants to make these services more accessible.

"On arrival guests will have a consultation to understand their test results and we will build their programme based on this data. The gut-brain axis is so important to understand. We look at bloodwork, skin health and a unique set of parameters to really get a true picture of your metabolic health.

"We have invested in the best cutting-edge technology to get real health metrics," says Marina. "This is the future of preventative healthcare."

social conditioning – it's a false constraint. We are taught to find the range of our first voice – the one we entered the world with, the cry. It's powerful, emotional and leads to some tears.

"Free Your Voice is the point at which people melt and become connected. Sometimes they cry and open up. To be part of this retreat you really must free your voice and feel able to express yourself," explains Marina.

We finish day one with a personalised Five Element Balancing spa treatment before embarking on a two-hour evening drama workshop, after which the group has effortlessly bonded.

Forest bathing and the power of silence

Day two brings a completely different focus. It's first thing in the morning and our guide stands before us, gentle, calm and quiet. He asks us to follow him and stay silent. We leave together in single file, walking very, very slowly up the trail into the forest.

It takes some time for me to shift down into a suitable gear as following and walking slowly are clearly not my natural settings. However, gradually the grace of nature around us quietens my mind and I forget about the pace – and everything – taking in the birdsong and the smell of pine around us. Time falls away as we move through the trees together.

Our guide takes us up to a clearing where together we flow easily through three sessions taking in Qi Gong, tapping and breathwork, before finishing with a memorable tree meditation. The peace I have been seeking starts to land as I connect with my earth and wood elements.

“Our work here is to quieten things down and take you into your body using meditation, walking, movement and somatic awareness sessions,” says Marina. “This approach of three layers – mind, emotional and somatic – over the three days, helps each person connect with their leadership potential.”

Bringing it home and making pledges

Our final day is all about integration. We spend the start of the day working on the three levels of leadership with a group discussion led by Marina and Mary, who use an ingenious set of cards to facilitate a ‘soul conversation’. This allows intuition to flow and frees the group to listen to one another’s life challenges and potential purpose. We explore our

Below from left: drama therapy helps guests on their journey of transformation in the Peloponnese sunshine; the spa’s Holistic Leadership Retreat employs a combination of modalities to help participants find their voice

own limiting beliefs and relationship with boundaries. The flow of encouragement and feedback from several of the group is invaluable.

“Importantly, everything is integrated on the last day with a closing session where each person in the group shares their progress and thoughts on how they can best lead in their lives,” says Marina. “This integration is so important when it comes from the group. It has a higher power when we support each other this way. We also have a ceremonial part, which reinforces the importance of the third level and the intention of each person.”

As a group we have laughed, cried and shared so much together in such a short time. It has been a liberating, thought-provoking and enlightening experience. I am certainly leaving Euphoria with a renewed sense of purpose.

Going forward, Marina explains that she believes the new retreat will evolve to meet demand. “It takes a lot of energy to run a leadership retreat – it’s intense to hold space for different sets of people at different leadership levels. Our work will constantly evolve,” she says. “We hope to bring together people from both the corporate and wellness world, to find new ways to lead change for our future world.”

www.euphoriaretreat.com

