



short haul

HOORAY



Clockwise from left: Vineyards surrounding L'Albereta; Pool at Spa Espace; Chenot; Vista Lago; Bistro; La Riserva del Leone at Lesome Felice; La Bottega di Mariella boutique; Terrace; All courtesy of: L'Albereta

Discover the antidote to stressful city life at Italy's L'Albereta, where Henri Chenot's renowned spa and detox programme draws the crowds

words by Sophie Halse

If someone told me I'd one day be taking beauty tips from Arsenal's long-standing football manager, Arsène Wenger, I wouldn't have believed them. Not your average pin-up, the football icon is more renowned for his penchant for roomy puffer coats than he is an enviable physique – but when researching wellness maverick Henri Chenot's dedicated fan base, Wenger's was one of the first names to pop up. And he's not alone: Elle Macpherson, Salma Hayek and Princess Caroline of Monaco are also rumoured to be among Chenot's loyal clientele, who flock to his spas in France and Italy for the ultimate detox retreat.

Chenot, a self-proclaimed "biontologist", founded his health concept in 1999, based on an innovative study that looked into the way we age, both physically and mentally. In 2000, he opened his first wellness centre, Palace Merano Espace Henri Chenot, which quickly became a hotspot for the detoxing celebrity. Three years later and a second Espace spa was launched at Italy's

HENRI





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osteopaths and beauticians are on hand to prod, scrub and knead away at the bad stuff, with a host of massages and body wraps tailored to suit your individual needs. My schedule involves an energetic massage, in which hot cups are used to drain toxins away, and a body scrub and a mud wrap that work wonders on my skin.

Each treatment is designed to nurture the body to the height of physical and mental wellbeing, and to help alleviate any personal complaints, from stress and weight gain to sleep and skin disorders. The schedule is busy, but there are gaps for free time, which can be spent enjoying the hotel or undertaking one of the Pilates or Aquagym classes. Foodies will be horrified to

learn that mealtimes are regimented too, but my bio-light menu is surprisingly tasty and, more to the point, filling, with dishes such as gluten-free risotto and hearty salads.

By the end, I feel rejuvenated; my energy levels are sky high and my troublesome skin and dark circles are looking brighter. Far from the scary “vampire spa” I was expecting, Espace offers a tranquil refuge from the bustle of city life and I leave feeling more relaxed than I have in years. Having had a taste of Chenot’s world, I’m hardly surprised that so many frequent his spas, and those who are yet to discover his tricks are certainly in for a treat. After all, if it’s good enough for Arsène... ◇

Rooms available from €260 per night based on two sharing a double room; Henri Chenot detox programmes start from €1,260 per person, albereta.it/en/hotel

L’Albereta resort, and it’s to here that I come to test out my very own bespoke detox programme.

I’d signed myself up with some trepidation – along with a list of celebrity fans, my Google search had unveiled articles dubbing Espace a “vampire spa”, so called for its blood re-oxygenation treatment – but on arrival I’m greeted by a verdant haven boasting 61,000 hectares of park land and its very own botanical garden that instantly puts a city girl at ease. Inside, just 38 rooms (each design different to the others) mean the space has the air of a stately home and never feels overcrowded.

I could happily while away my time exploring the surrounding gardens and lake, but the spa is, of course, the main attraction, and I meet with my therapist to begin planning my programme. Comprising a mix of medical and beauty treatments, the schedule follows a strict agenda from which there’s no deviating: acupuncture sessions and health tests are as important as the massage and body scrubs that follow.

We begin with a questionnaire that charts my family history and diet, before testing my energy levels and analysing my body composition – none of which reveals particularly positive results. But there are no qualms, as Chenot’s 30-strong team of doctors, therapists, dieticians,

