



lber Elbaz goes every year."

"It's stuffed with single oligarchs. It's *fabulous*!"

"You feel *incredible* there."

"Mrs. Putin virtually lives there."

There is Austria's Viva Mayr clinic. Over the last few months, at any cocktail or dinner party I attended, someone with absurdly glowing skin always seemed to mention that they'd just come back from an "*amazing!!*" trip to Viva Mayr, which is apparently *the* place for anyone who is anyone fabulous to detox. If this is where the most fashionable ladies and gentlemen in the world were vacationing, I obviously had a duty to report on it for *Vogue*.

One Sunday this past April, a taxi deposited me at a tired-looking vacation resort on the edge of Lake Wörth—which to anyone who is anyone fabulous is frankly the middle of absolutely nowhere fabulous. It was an ugly concrete building painted a migraine-inducing shade of orange. Inside, the vibe was modern asylum: scrubbed white tiles, everlasting tropical plants, and institutional furniture. My room exuded the style of a youth hostel—hard bed, scratchy sheets, orange blanket, desk, hideous armchair. Although the room had a pretty view of the lake, this was marred by the roar of an autobahn and railway in the distance. I couldn't imagine how someone as chic as Lanvin designer Alber could tolerate this decor.

"The earlier you get the Headache," Dr. Stossier told me, "the more you need the detox. It is not pleasant here. Yes, it is punishment"

I had entered a grim parallel universe. Supper that night worsened my mental state. The dining room had the atmosphere of a prison refectory: The patients (as guests are referred to at Mayr) ate in silence. Sallow-skinned, with enormous dark-purple circles under their eyes, the ladies were mainly dressed in white terry-cloth robes and matching slippers in which they shuffled around listlessly. A sign on each table showing a cell phone, a computer, and a Kindle, all with a thick red line through them, banned any form of technology or communication with the outside world. Supper consisted of a single bowl of vegetable soup, a piece of stale spelt bread (Mayr believes the staler the bread, the more you chew it, therefore the better it is for you) and a small saucer of hummus. Drinks of any sort are not allowed with meals, and when I asked for more food I was denied it.

I rang my husband that night from my room. I told him I hated it here. I didn't know how I would survive a week in this health jail.

Monday morning started with instructions to drink a large dose of vile, bitter-tasting Epsom salts, which induced an immediate stomachache and a significant bathroom visit. I soon had an intense headache and felt shaky and weak, the way I had years ago when I picked up a parasite in India. Breakfast consisted of the following: half an avocado; sheep's yogurt; stale spelt bread. Although I found the food peculiar, it was weirdly satisfying, even if it hardly inspired the *joie de vivre* of my usual fresh croissant.

Every patient at the Mayr clinic is seen each day by a doctor. I had been assigned to Christine Stossier, M.D., a 58-year-old

mother of three who dressed in floaty white linen and had a shock of white hair to match. As she explained, the Mayr Cure meant detox. And the Mayr detox was specifically a full-gut cleanse. Dr. Franz Xaver Mayr (1875–1965), after whom the Cure is named, was a legendary Austrian doctor who devoted his life to the study of the digestive system. When he asked his patients to fast in order to identify how illness is affected by resting the digestive system, he discovered that many complaints, from headaches and arthritis to high blood pressure, dramatically improved. (Mayr Medicine, which requires full medical training, is now practiced in several clinics in Europe.) "If we clean the gut, heal it, and then eat a highly alkaline diet [focused on foods low in acidity], our health and energy can be transformed," Dr. Stossier told me.

I wasn't ill before coming here, but I was feeling lousy. I told Dr. Stossier that I felt permanently exhausted. I was so run down that my skin had dried to a reddish crisp and I constantly had dark circles under my eyes. Sinusitis and allergies dogged me. I couldn't concentrate; my two daughters were getting more adorable and requiring more attention, and work was constantly disrupted by e-mail, phone calls, numpty nannies, mad cleaning ladies, or crashed cars. I was eating more and more sugary foods to try and perk myself up during the day but only feeling more tired. My daily intake of espressos, Coca-Cola, chocolate, biscuits, and cakes was, I knew, far more than was healthy, but when I felt shattered I couldn't find another way to restore my energy. My husband had to put up

with a wife who was too exhausted to ever blow out her hair or put on a nice outfit.

"But I eat *lots* of salads in the evenings," I said in conclusion, imagining I was redeeming myself.

"Do *not* eat salad in the evening. Nothing raw after four is a golden rule," barked Stossier. "Digestion slows down in the evening, and we can't digest raw food. This affects the liver, and it produces a lot of alcohol in your gut."

Dr. Stossier weighed me. I was 128 pounds. For five feet ten, I was underweight, she said.

"But I eat so much," I protested.

"But if you are toxic, you are consuming your own minerals. Look at your nails," she said, examining my hands. "They are covered in white spots, which indicates a zinc deficiency."

Dr. Stossier performed an uncomfortable tummy massage followed by an Applied Kinesiology test, after which she determined that I was gluten- and fructose-intolerant. She said that honey and tomatoes, which are full of natural histamines, were aggravating my sinuses, and I must not eat them. I nodded politely and thought, Never.

For the next week, I would take eleven different vitamin, mineral, and amino-acid supplements each day, and drink an alkaline "base powder" (designed to further combat acidity in the gut) four times a day between meals, plus at least three-and-a-half liters of water to flush out my kidneys. "If you want to clean the house, you need water," lectured Stossier. My Mayr diet would consist of cooked vegetables, soy, goat and sheep protein, and would be free of gluten, fructose, raw food, caffeine, and alcohol. Stossier instructed me to chew each bite 50 times (to make digestion easier) at meals, during which

time no conversation was allowed. "If someone tries to tempt you, do not speak to her," she warned me. I would be sent to the Kneipp Department several times a day for various water treatments, or cures, as they are known in Europe. (Sebastian Kneipp, 1821–1897, was a Bavarian priest who pioneered water-healing after curing his tuberculosis by bathing in the River Danube.)

Dr. Stossier's final instruction was to start each morning by drinking magnesium citrate dissolved in warm water, a saline laxative only slightly less brutal than the Epsom salts.

"I want you to have diarrhea," she declared. "Take one teaspoonful in warm water, then wait fifteen minutes," she ordered. "If nothing happens, repeat until diarrhea. Repeat four, five times until d—"

"—OK!" I interrupted, to no avail.

Although I didn't know it yet, Continuous Bathrooming, as I will henceforth refer to it for the sake of politeness, would be a central theme of the week, from which there is no escape for any patient at the Mayr clinic.

My next appointment was nasal reflexology to treat my sinus problems. Lindsay, a beautiful Canadian nurse, sat me on a red sofa in the Kneipp Department. A woman and a man were sitting opposite me with a cotton bud wedged up one of each of their nostrils. They were chatting as casually as if they were having coffee at Starbucks. Suddenly Lindsay approached wielding a cotton bud that had been dipped in a minty-smelling oil. She jabbed it straight up my nose.

Then something odd happened. After those first few days of feeling ghastly, I pinged awake Wednesday like a firework waiting to be lit

"Eeeeeoooougggh!" I yelped as it headed north. The other patients appeared uninterested in my plight. After two minutes, Lindsay removed the bud. Then she stuck it in again at a different angle. She did this *six times*.

This torture was followed by a perfectly heavenly massage, grisly doses of base powder, which tasted like salty, watery milk, and finally, lunch. By now my headache was starting to make my skull feel like it was a pulsating balloon.

"Oh, you've got the Headache," whispered a petite blonde in her 50s, breaking the no-talking rule. "It's the withdrawal-from-sugar headache. Don't worry. It only lasts three days. I've got it, too. I feel dreadful." This lady, a Mrs. Ann Passmore, was a golf-crazy woman from the English home counties who had taken the Mayr Cure four times over the years after suffering from chronic fatigue syndrome.

"I've been so *ill*," a woman we shall call Helen added in a faint voice from the next table. Her hair was knotted messily into a scrunchie and her complexion was deathly. Her eyes were masked by enormous sunglasses. "I came five days ago, took the Epsom salts, and threw up all weekend."

We were brought a bowl of root-vegetable soup, followed by a small piece of salmon with Asian vegetables and a tamari-and-ginger sauce. The food was extraordinarily fresh and flavorful. Starving, I immediately forgot to chew 50 times and gobbled the lot in about ten minutes. "You need to slow down your chewing," scolded Mrs. Passmore.

"Anyone want to go cycling?" I asked, trying to change the subject.

Mrs. Passmore shook her head; she felt so weak she was planning on resting all day. Ms. Gloria Budd, an immaculately

groomed life coach in her 60s who had a distinctly green pallor creeping across her visage, whispered, "I don't think I can cycle today. I mean, I have to keep *going* . . ."

"Going?" I asked.

"I've already *been* six times since breakfast."

This was what the world's most glamorous chose to do on vacation? No, I couldn't think about it.

Lunch was followed by a head-pounding exercise session on a power plate and a lengthy "chew training" lecture. By three o'clock I felt weak, shaky, headachy, sick, and depressed. I felt too unwell even to read, and finally gave in to the tiredness and slept until supper—another bowl of soup.

The next day I rose at 6:00 A.M. in order to take the prescribed magnesium citrate well before breakfast. It tasted like a tongue-stinging combination of neat lemon juice and salt, and produced an immediate and violent result. I attended my daily session with Dr. Stossier feeling glum.

"The earlier you get the Headache," she told me, "the more you need the detox. It is not pleasant here. Yes, it is punishment. But Plum, you need to get better."

The day was busy. I started with blood tests for free-radical levels and mineral deficiencies, had a wonderful massage and a lengthy session in the Kneipp Department. Lindsay attacked my nostrils again, and a stocky nurse named Roswitha subjected me to an electrolysis foot bath. Along with three other poorly-looking ladies, I sat with my feet in a bowl of orangey-brown brine with an electric current running through it, which

would supposedly pull out impurities. I chatted with an amusing Englishwoman who was here with her husband. He was refusing to do the Cure on the grounds that if they were both Continuously Bathrooming they would not be able to drive to Cannes, their next destination, at the end of the week.

The foot bath was followed by a relaxing herbal soak infused with fresh-smelling fir-tree salts (in private, thank goodness, although Roswitha walked in and out freely. Embarrassment soon fades at Viva Mayr). I had an interesting lunch of quinoa risotto and sweet potato, then headed to the pool for an underwater bike session. Later that afternoon I went for a walk up the mountain behind the clinic with Karl, one of the fitness instructors. Using Nordic poles, a walk becomes an excellent full-body workout, with your arms working as hard as your legs. The mountain path was pretty with its gurgling streams, but I couldn't help noticing that the occasional hotel we passed on the mountainside looked shabby and run-down.

"They've all closed," said Karl.

What about the cafés?

"There is only one, and it's only open in the summer. If any of our patients go there to have a coffee, the owner calls us. We know."

After a supper of potato soup with herbs, I went to bed early. I felt excruciatingly tired and weak, but the quiet room with its lack of e-mail and media felt strangely agreeable.

Then something odd happened. After those first few days of feeling ghastly, I pinged awake on Wednesday like a firework waiting to be lit. I bounced into breakfast, my hair blow-dried(!), and wearing skinny khaki pants and a silk blouse. The other patients looked at me, startled.

"You look so well!" exclaimed Mrs. Passmore.

"I feel *amazing*," I told her. I did.

I was experiencing a sudden burst of extraordinarily healthy energy. Stripped bare of everything, I felt wonderfully calm. Snacking between meals was forgotten, replaced by drinking those three-and-a-half liters of water. I couldn't care less about Coca-Cola or cakes. If you felt this incredible without them, who needed them? But the diet was only part of the Cure: Not being chased around by a ringing iPhone was detoxing my mind, which felt sharp and focused, rather than frazzled. My headache had completely disappeared.

It was the famous Mayr energy surge—payback for the agony of the withdrawal days. Patients who had been here before told me they usually didn't experience the high until at least two weeks after starting the detox, but in three days, I was already beginning to feel physically and mentally transformed.

"My sinuses are clear!" I shrieked at Lindsay that morning. "See," she said, "it works." I sat happily chatting about how marvelous I felt to the other patients while she dealt with my nostrils with fantastic German efficiency.

As the week passed, the detox program became more pleasurable. Instead of pining to go home, I wanted to stay and feel even better. I read voraciously, and persuaded Gloria and Ann to get out on the electric bikes and cycle round the lake with the fresh air whistling through our hair. One day, Roswitha treated me to a VINO-Forming Treatment: After a salt bath and scrub with the essence of grape, she wrapped me in an orange blanket with a hot-water bottle under my ankles and ordered me to go to sleep (which I did immediately). I sat in a white box and breathed in saline air for my lungs. I took a cooking lesson with an incredible chef called Andreas, who showed me how to cook the Mayr soups, vegetable spreads, fish dishes, and sauces. I ate sheep's curd for breakfast and thoroughly enjoyed it, indulged in goat-cheese soufflés and beetroot purees, and wondered how on earth I hadn't known about all this simply delicious, healthy food before.

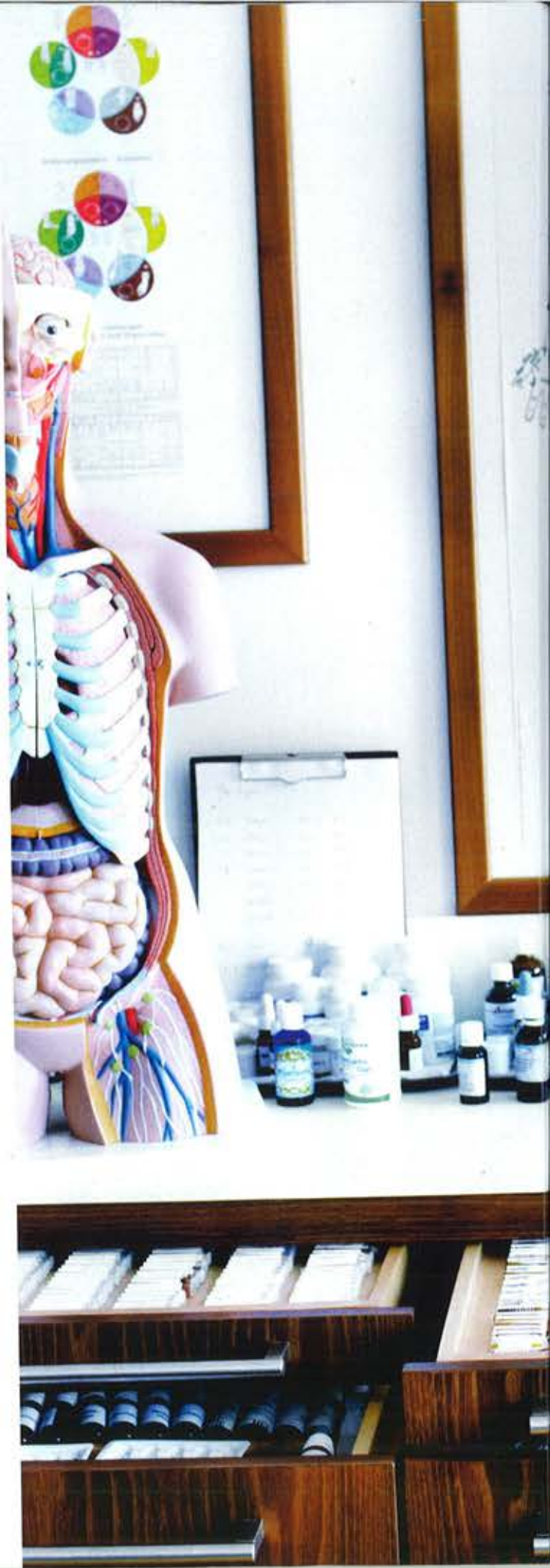
On Thursday night I stayed up after supper and interrogated the other patients. Three 25-year-olds—by far the youngest patients at the clinic, simply known as the Girls—had been sent on a mission by the father of their best friend to keep her company while she lost weight. The best friend, who looked like a very curvaceous Doutzen Kroes, had lost fourteen pounds in two weeks.

"I had eleven pimples on my face when I arrived, and now they've all gone," chirped one of the Girls. "But we are going crazy in here. We are desperate to get out!"

"When you get out," said Bea, a Mayr veteran who works as a period hairdresser on movie sets, "you can smell sugar everywhere, and it's revolting. If you eat chocolate, you run to the loo. What they do here really stays with you."

On my last day I tested Bea's theory. On the way to the airport I took a car to Klagenfurt and headed straight for a café. The glass case full of cakes, which once would have drawn me like a bee to honey, repelled me. I ordered a latte. As the waitress approached, a sickening caramel scent wafted over. The latte, which smelled more disgusting the closer it got, tasted like artificial sweetener. A nibble of the biscuit was akin to eating solid deep-fried sugar. Café life—ruined in one fell swoop!

Everyone wants to know: Does the Mayr Cure last? Well, yes and no. I felt utterly incredible when I got home. Three weeks later, my sinuses are still clear, and I am doing the nasal treatment every day. The one time (continued on page 150)



BEAUTY AND THE BEAT

(continued from page 118)

because of her parents' itinerant life. Though she was born in Santa Barbara, from the age of three or four she moved around the country about seven times. At ten—which is a little late for catch-up from kindergarten—the Hudsons moved back to Santa Barbara for good, but she says, “I wasn’t going to great schools, because my parents didn’t believe in public education. They wanted the education to be influenced by their religion, so I was going to these halfway education-slash-Christian schools that were like pop-up shop-style education.”

No one can help how badly one’s dumb or downtrodden or damaged parent copes with child-raising. But Perry’s parents were none of these things, and certainly not dumb. “And my father is hilarious. That’s where I get my sense of humor from.”

Me: Well, of course I was going to ask you where you got your sense of humor. Perry (deadpan): “Oh, you’ve seen it already? Sooo, he’s very funny and a practical joker, but he’s more emotional and driven. I mean, my mother is very emotional as well, but my dad is more of the guts of the family. He was the main preacher, so he kind of had this little Pentecostal flair, but they are born-again. So there’s a little bit of my background.”

She says her mother was “very smart. She went to a girl’s school in Monterey and then went to Berkeley and studied abroad in Paris. She speaks French, she used to be a painter, but now she is just in the ministry. She used to be a reporter, actually. She wanted to be Barbara Walters.” Hard to understand why a woman who understands the value of (and benefited from) study appeared to disdain schooling for her children—Perry has an older sister, who works for her, and a younger brother, a musician. (Mrs. Hudson is reportedly writing a memoir, which I hope I get to review.) Perry herself is very forgiving of her messed-up education, though she recognizes (and regrets) her weaknesses: “I have a

problem reading,” she said at one point, and she tries to listen to tapes to get stuff into her head. Her parents, she says, are different now; far from merely being tolerant of her strolling-player life, they’re “participating.”

Perry started singing when she was nine—in church, during the collection of “tithes and offerings.” She’d heard little “secular music”—the stuff that most American kids grow up with—which was forbidden in her own house. But by dripping “Chinese water torture on my parents little by little and day by day,” she eventually came out from under. She wrote and recorded a gospel album when she was fifteen. Her mother went with her to record it in Nashville. It didn’t sell, but she’d begun her climb.

As we sit in the Old Adobe house in the lengthening shadows, she has asked the waiter for “some of those cookies” that are up in the main reception, with a light in her eye that tells me they’re dangerous cookies. I say preemptively, “We had a huge lunch, and she says, ‘Are you judging me? Are you saying a woman can’t eat cookies?’” “Well, hellooo,” says a voice from outside, and there is a young man standing there in the half-dark. “Do you know Orlando Bloom?” Perry asks me. We say hello, Miranda Kerr says hello, too, and their son, adorable little Flynn, says hello. It’s always funny watching top-of-the-poppermost celebrities meet and greet one another. Everyone’s performing except the baby.

After the Blooms disappear into the night, Perry says, “Please, can I play you my song now?” Are you kidding? Do we go sit in your car? We sit in her car. She hooks her phone into its cradle and turns it on, and her swooping, emotional voice chokes me up almost at once. I don’t have my notebook in the car, nor my recorder. So I can’t remember the words (unlike the one about the unhappy photographs, for which I even remember the tune), only the tone of her voice, and the emotion roaring like a seashell in your ear. It is a sad song,

very sad. It’s not about Russell Brand. It’s about the other broken bird.

She says, “I hope I don’t have to live as a widow.” Whaaat? “An emotional widow,” she explains, and after a pause to think, she says, “No, I don’t believe that. But I think that I can just right now focus on me and strengthening myself and my emotional support system.”

“I’m not in a relationship, I’m just on my own—I am myself in my own bed,” she says. “I have to be happy being alone, and I am happy.” She tries so hard, Katy Perry. It’s what she does. “I believe that I will be loved again, in the right way.” Bright-eyed, she looks up. “I know I’m worth it.” □

DESTINATION DETOX

(continued from page 108)

I ate a bite of honey, my nose and eyes ran like crazy. I haven’t gone near a tomato. My skin, which looked restored and smooth when I arrived home, is far clearer and more even-toned than it was before, if not quite as springy as it was while at Mayr. I can stomach only very fresh food—a good thing—but it requires a lot of time to shop for and prepare. I haven’t touched a Coca-Cola, but espresso has come back into my life. Breakfast has been revolutionized and usually includes avocados and goat cheese. Chocolates and sweets hold no appeal—I know they will only make me feel exhausted. But the best thing? Turning off the e-mail and the cell phone when I am working or with the children. Now I check my e-mail only once or twice a day and reply to messages instead of constantly picking up the phone. The Mayr clinic has not just detoxed my body, it’s cleansed my mind. The real proof that something very, very good has happened? My husband took one look at my glowing person when I returned and declared that he wanted to book into Mayr immediately. Even when I told him about the Continuous Bathrooming. □

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