



Swiss perfection

Professional Spa & Wellness visits Switzerland's state-of-the-art **Clinique La Prairie**, which merges medical and holistic wellness into one five-star package, to take part in its Stop Smoking programme

WORDS VICKY ELDRIDGE

It's said that between 30% and 50% of smokers will develop lung disease, cardiovascular disease or both and it's well known that smoking is one of the biggest causes of premature skin ageing, after sun damage. I've been a smoker for more than 20 years and after giving up alcohol a year and a half ago, I felt it was time to quit tobacco too; I didn't want to be one of the statistics.

As luck would have it I was given a timely opportunity to visit one of the most sophisticated and advanced health and medical spas in the world, Clinique La Prairie, to take part in its newly launched Stop Smoking programme. Situated in the beautiful Alpine town of Montreux on the edge of the breathtaking Lake Geneva, Clinique La Prairie (CLP) combines a state-of-the-art multi-disciplinary hospital with medical aesthetic and dermatology clinics, spa and fitness facilities and a five-star hotel; all in one stunning resort.

Founded in 1931 by professor Paul Niehans, a pioneer in the development of cell therapy, CLP has established an international

reputation as a world-class medical clinic and spa. Part of CLP's philosophy is that it's "necessary to care for and treat the entire person rather than a single organ or illness" and this philosophy is very much reflected in its comprehensive residential programmes, which encompass weight loss, rebalancing, revitalisation, beauty and medical check-ups.

The Stop Smoking programme is one of CLP's latest offerings and is marketed as the only such programme of its kind in the world. Developed by Dr Olivier Staneczek, a pneumology specialist with a particular interest in tobacco addiction, the programme fuses holistic and medical methods to quit smoking for improved success rates.

It was Dr Staneczek's unique understanding of the complex nature and psychology of tobacco addiction that led him to branch away from traditional single-approach methods to quitting nicotine and develop a programme that not only tackles the physical side-effects and cravings for nicotine but also the psychological attachments to smoking.

Play your cards right

Dr Staneczek believes that the key to long-term success in breaking tobacco addiction is combining different methods that have all proven their worth individually. This includes but is not limited to nicotine replacement (using e-cigarettes and medication), holistic therapies such as hypnosis and acupuncture and psychological support and strategies. "It's

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a poker game, you have to play all the cards in an intelligent way to win the game, otherwise it doesn't work,” Staneczek explains.

Dr Staneczek is particularly passionate about understanding the psychology behind smoking and believes giving up is a different journey for every patient, which is why it's important to tailor each programme to the individual. "Everyone has their individual reasons for smoking and for why it is difficult for them to quit and this should be taken into account," he says.

Programmed for success

It's the potential damage I may have caused to my health that is most on my mind as I begin my week at the clinic, as a significant part of the programme involves thorough medical evaluations of my heart and lungs. The majority of my tests are carried out at the medical centre and a timetable for my daily programme is delivered to my room the night before to let me know where and when I need to be the next day.

The programme is incredibly comprehensive and runs like clockwork and because the hotel, medical clinic and other buildings are all linked by underground tunnels, it's easy to find my way to my appointments. The medical tests include an electrocardiogram; pulmonary function tests; abdominal ultrasound; CT scan; radiography; blood, urine and stool tests; cardiological assessment; stress tests on an exercise bike and an off-site visit to a local ENT surgeon, Dr Luc Bron.

I also meet with the psychologist, Fatima Santos, who specialises in sophrology, relaxation and hypnotherapy, have a psychotherapeutic session with Dr Svetlana →





Kravcenko Cappi and an acupuncture session with Guy Ducas. In addition to all this, I visit the aesthetic clinic, where they examine my face and discuss the effects of smoking on my skin, and have a full dermatological screening with Dr Laurent Berger in the dermatology department.

There is also an appointment with the dietician, Veronica, to discuss my nutritional needs and ways to help me avoid putting on weight after I stop smoking, and personal training sessions in the gym. There are a number of spa treatments during the week, including a massage, facial, detoxing body scrub and wrap and one of the spa's signature treatments, craniosacral therapy. This is designed to release physical and psychological blockages, tension and pain.

Time to spa

The spa is an integral part of the programmes at CLP. In 2013 it underwent a full refurbishment to enhance the link between the medical centre and spa and extend the

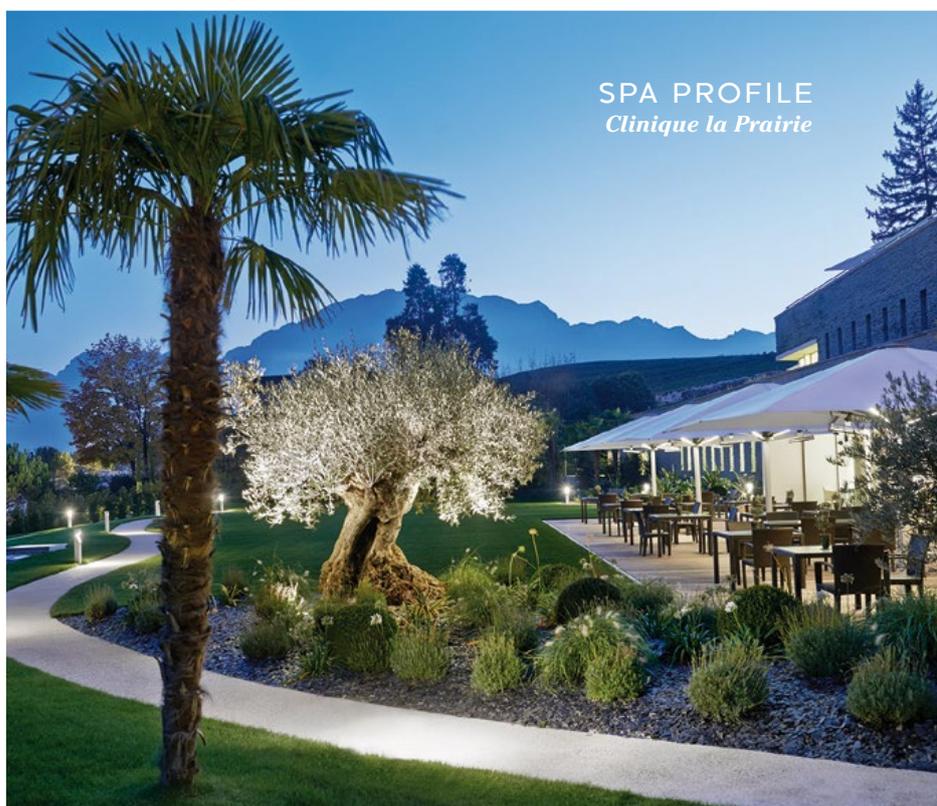
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services and facilities it offers, with the spa menu also undergoing an overhaul. Technology, dermatology, beauty, cosmetics and wellness have now been brought together to form 50 different treatments programmes, with CLP's own cellular skincare range, Swiss Perfection, incorporated into treatments.

“We use the spa and the spa treatments specifically to enhance the effects of the programmes,” explains international luxury spa consultant Nigel Franklyn who was brought into CLP last year to maximise the spa experience for guests. “Medical wellness is the new big thing. My job was to integrate a little bit more of a traditional spa experience into what was a very clinical, medical experience, to take away the hard edges.”

One of the things Franklyn was keen to make sure was that clients have a “seamless journey” throughout their stay and that the medical and spa sides of the facility work hand in hand. The spa is in constant contact with the specialists at the medical centre and treatments are custom-made to the needs of the individual. “We even have meetings about individual guests and patients to come up with a better plan for them”, Franklyn says.





“Because we’re a medical spa, clients come here with specific needs and expect results,” he adds. “They may be having aggressive treatments so it’s really important for them to just be taken care of during this process. There may also be times during the programme where they’re feeling vulnerable and need support. In the spa, we’re responsible for putting that relaxing element into the experience.”

My CLP experience certainly was the seamless journey Franklyn aims for guests to have. Having the spa treatments at the end of each day’s programme made me feel pampered and looked after in the midst of all the invasive tests and emotional turmoil of giving up two decades’ of tobacco dependency. The service at the clinic is out of this world. The staff were amazing and the food was delicious: every plate looked like a work of art.

On my final day, which marked day five off the cigarettes, I had my last meeting with Dr Staneczak. He presented me with a folder containing a CD and printed out all my test

results, which I was able to take home and pass on to my own GP. It was a relief to discover that the tests showed no major problems as a result of smoking, making me even more determined to stop for good.

His final recommendation? That I take the afternoon to breathe in some fresh Alpine air and take a steam boat trip around the lake. You can’t argue with doctor’s orders, so I did just that. The region surrounding the clinic is truly breathtaking and so peaceful I didn’t want to leave. It was the perfect end to an amazing, life-changing visit. As I write this it’s been two months since my last cigarette and I haven’t found it half as challenging as I thought I would. **PSW**

www.laprairie.ch

FAST FACTS

- **OPENED:** The Clinique La Prairie Spa opened in 2005, was refurbished in 2013 and reopened in 2014
- **SPA SIZE:** 1,600sq m
- **TREATMENT ROOMS:** 18 (11 aesthetic rooms; one junior suite; one VIP couples’ suite; three Thai massage rooms; one photo-stimulation room; and one manicure and pedicure room)
- **FACILITIES:** Swiss Perfection lounge, relaxation lounge, spa café, indoor swimming pool, vitality pool, Kneipp course, experience showers, ice fountain, cold mist, hammam, Finnish sauna
- **BRAND:** Swiss Perfection
- **STAFF:** 300 across Clinique La Prairie as a whole

