



PHOTOGRAPH BY ELINOR CARUCCI

## FOR WHAT IT'S WORTH

**Vivamayr Maria Wörth aims to address the root of what's really going on in your body.**

In his essay "On the Shortness of Life," the ancient Roman philosopher Lucius Annaeus Seneca wrote, "Vices assail and surround us on all sides, and they don't allow us to rise again and lift our eyes to the clear discernment of truth. [...] It's never possible for their victims to return to their true selves." Nearly two millennia later, this prescient meditation springs to mind as I hear Dr. Adriana Fink describe the ailments of modern life.

"Many people are doing somersaults in the wind, always moving, like marionettes," Fink declares. "Awareness is decreasing because of the influence of social media; people aren't questioning what they are hearing and seeing. And we are more ill, physically and mentally. That leads us to doing things that aren't helping us, which means we aren't connected to our inner selves and cannot hear our inner voices. We're overwhelmed with information. We struggle to get out and don't know how." Just look at TikTok's promotion of "adult tummy time" or the latest report linking coffee to thriving (or dying, depending on the day) to confirm the veracity of Fink's assertion. This modern malaise would be disheartening if Fink weren't part of a team offering a solution.

Vivamayr Maria Wörth, where Fink has worked as a general practitioner since its opening 20 years ago, is a medical health resort located in southern Austria, on the shore of Lake Wörthersee. Its stated purpose is to impart its guests with "an unprecedented sense of well-being," and Fink's lecture is part of my outreach following a week-long stay at the resort, during which I've undergone a Rebalance & Energy program to return me to my true self, and optimal health.

The program's roots lie in the F.X. Mayr cure—a fast of milk and stale bread developed by Austrian physician Franz Xaver Mayr at the turn of the 20th century. Intended to give intestines a rest, it also instilled proper chewing practices to aid digestion (hence the stale bread). But Modern Mayr Medicines, based on evolv-

ing science, has greatly advanced the cure, continuously corroborating Mayr's findings that the gut is the root system to the human body, its condition inextricably linked to our holistic health.

Today's Mayr Prevent therapies, upon which Vivamayr's programs are based, comprise four principles: rest, cleansing, training, and substitution. These manifest in personalized medical care, mindful eating, holistic therapies, and individually tailored diets. Read: detoxification of the body and mind through small, sparse meals, lots of water, lots of downtime, and lots of massages, exercise, and other complementary treatments.

Vivamayr adds upscale hotel amenities to the mix: award-winning alkaline cuisine and plush guest accommodations, crisp, serene sanctuaries with spacious terraces surveying the cinematic mountains or crystalline lake, as turquoise as the Caribbean Sea and so clean—I'm told by the resort's managing director, Serhan Güvenc—that you can drink from it. There are also indoor and outdoor saunas, a pool, a lakefront gym, a comprehensive spa, and a nearly 2-to-1 staff-to-guest ratio.

Guests come here from all over the world to set aside life for long enough to reorient their inner compasses (the minimum stay is seven days, though the average is 18, with some guests remaining for three months). "People are spinning so fast these days," Fink expounds, "that they think blue and red are purple and blue and yellow are green. They are no longer experiencing reality." Vivamayr's attempt to halt this kaleidoscopic confusion could account for the resort's striking white interiors and the matron-of-fact yet jovial medical staff's all-white ensembles: white jeans and sneakers paired with polo shirts—disrupted only by the hot-pink Vivamayr logo. The neutral surroundings offer a blank slate against which a guest's true colors can reemerge.

My journey begins with gathering diagnostics (ranging from >

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Words by Erin Dixon  
Photography by Elinor Carucci  
and Lisa Sorgini

➤ baseline blood and urine workups to functional myo diagnostics) to help diagnose my physical and mental state, establishing a baseline for treatment. “You mostly need to relax,” Fink tells me after the intake process. My CardioScan — a machine that measures heart health, stress level, and fitness condition in just two minutes — results confirm it. The carbon dioxide concentration in my breath indicates that, even at rest, my body is in fight-or-flight response. It’s a condition brought on by chronic stress, quite common these days, I’m assured by Dr. Werner Zancolo, Vivamayr’s head of the medical department.

Vivamayr’s use of technologies such as CardioScan underscores how seriously the resort takes its “medical” moniker, differentiating it from many wellness resorts; the wellness tourism industry has boomed in the past decade. “We’re not just about wellness and well-being,” Zancolo clarifies. All of the resort’s doctors are GPs with supplementary Mayr-Prevent certifications, with specialties spanning from nutrition to psychology to sports therapy, and the resort has a full medical lab.

Fink prescribes me a custom program comprising ample massages (lymphatic, reflexology, and craniosacral), exercise (pilates, yoga, qigong, and muscle training with a vibration plate), and detoxification therapies (sea weed wrap, electrolysis footbath, and nasal reflex therapy, which involves Q-tips dipped in essential oils being

inserted in my nasal passages). I voluntarily add sauna (infrared and Finnish) sessions as well as swimming, e-biking, walking, and paddleboarding in the later afternoons, as my prescribed treatments tend to conclude after lunch.

Meals aren’t just a note in the schedule at Vivamayr — they’re the main event, intended to correct the cardinal errors of modern-day eating: We frequently eat too quickly, a diet that is too acidic, too much, at the wrong times, too often, and when we are tired. These habits tax our digestive system, which can lead to fermentation and inflammation, which in turn can lead to digestive disorders, irritable bowel syndrome, food intolerances, metabolic disorders, joint and back problems, sleep disturbances, and a general reduction in well-being. Vivamayr’s attempt to reverse those bad behaviors makes mealtime at the resort a highly regulated affair. To encourage slow, mindful eating of invariably excellent food, technology is disallowed. Lunch — the largest meal of the day — features dishes such as scallops on a fen hand-carrot puree, or celeriac fricassee with prawns and pilaf, served after, say, tomato-and-pointed-pepper soup. Other meals star a chewing trainer (a more flavorful version of Mayr’s stale bread) and two

tiny sides, such as avocado mousse, beetroot hummus, buffalo mozzarella, or bresaola.

At its core, Mayr Medicine really is as simple as this: a reformation of diet and lifestyle habits. That is, perhaps, why some are quick to dismiss the program. “Some doctors think it’s rubbish because it’s too easy,” Fink explains. “Mayr Medicine is all about natural laws. It’s all out there for us to see, hear, feel. But it’s up to us to see, hear, feel.” Beyond what I feel after my stay — physically rejuvenated, with a returned sense of possibility — the veracity of Vivamayr’s program is evidenced by its guests, who return to the resort at a rate of around 50%.

An American CEO tells me he first came to Vivamayr at 49, in anticipation of his 50th birthday. On that visit, he met a fellow guest whom he guessed to be 55 years old but who turned out

to be 75, which convinced the CEO to return every year. (He’s now 62 and comes back annually for 10-day stays). Other legacy guests whom I encounter include a South African couple in their 90s, a London-based working mother in her 50s, an English couple in their 70s, and a Russian couple in their late 40s. The average age of visitors is 54, but it ranges from 25 to 95. And there are notably some younger guests: an Indian couple in their mid-30s, plus a pair of professional athletes. “The returners understand what it’s about,” Fink confirms, “keeping your feet in the soil and your head

in the air.” Every one of the doctors I speak to at the clinic says it’s ideal to do a cure once a year.

In the outdoor seminar, Fink focuses as much on what we need to continue doing after we leave — chew lots, eat tiny evening meals, no raw foods after 4 p.m., rotate foods, eat seasonally and regionally, drink water but not during meals — as on why it’s important: It gives us agency to control what we can in our world and the world.

“Do your best, and then let go,” she encourages. “Make important decisions based on who you would have wanted to be at the end of your life — that is the energy that will impact the world and which will remain after you are gone. If everyone had positive thoughts, the world would be a very different place. Remember, if a butterfly flaps its wings, it’s felt around the world.”

That’s the “bigger work” that’s being done at Vivamayr. Fink tells me: helping people calm their overactive nervous systems to see reality for what it is, so they can be better to themselves and others, and in doing so, make the world a better place. It’s why she stands behind her work here — because, as she says, “A snowball starts with a snowflake.” //

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