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Clean living at Lonhea

TRAVEL

## Spa review: a health overhaul at Lonhea

*The streamlined Swiss health clinic Lonhea has one aim: to ensure its patients' long-term health*

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**The goal:** I spend my life in offices, at functions, on planes and in hotels, hence my body size (the largest it has ever been) and my level of fitness (dire; I pant running up stairs). What I needed was time off to help me refocus on my health rather than my deadlines.

**The treatment:** The clinic insists its aim is not weight loss or fitness, but long-term health. Most guests at [Lonhea](#), from Alzheimer's patients to national athletes, stay one or two weeks and continue a tailor-made regime at



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home for four months. The man in charge is Dr Michel Golay, a chiropractor who believes optimum health can only be achieved if there is stimulation of what he calls the “reptilian brain” (the oldest part, which regulates everyday instinctive actions) and the intestinal bacteria are well-fed and balanced. His Lonhea programme aims to stimulate the brain through exercise and physiotherapy, and to feed the gut with prebiotics (good food that nourishes the intestinal flora) and, if necessary, probiotics (good bacteria).



Lonhea's simple exterior

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**The place:** Situated in the village of Villars-sur-Ollon, at an altitude of 1,300m, the clinic comprises three traditional Swiss

chalets overlooking the world’s most expensive school, Beau Soleil, with the Alps as a stunning backdrop. The nine bedrooms are simply decorated and the compact gym and spa are equipped with Technogym machines, a hammam, a Jacuzzi and infra-red and outdoor saunas.

**The therapists:** Golay has assembled an able team: the super-fit French climber Xavier Gerfaud to train panting lumps like me with admirable patience; the British physiotherapist and yoga teacher Rose Caseley, who massaged my digestive system back into working order, unknotted my neck muscles and loosened the tense fibres between my skull plates using a terrifying-looking hook; and the Portuguese cook Pedro Alexandre, the Ottolenghi of the Alps, whose delicious meals ranged from Bircher muesli for breakfast and oriental ginger salmon for lunch to inventive, well-spiced salads and fresh sorbets for dinner (no protein is allowed after lunchtime).

**How it went:** Having analysed the results of a fitness test and in-depth lifestyle questionnaires, Golay set up a bespoke regime. Mine comprised 45 minutes on a treadmill each day, 45 minutes of personal training, an hour of physiotherapy, two hours of fast mountain hiking, and a yoga class followed by a massage. My heart rate was monitored during exercise and sleep to see how my body responded to exercise (badly) and repaired itself during the night (equally badly: on a scale of zero for burnout patients and 200 for professional athletes, my score was 40, indicating an urgent need to slow down). After the first day’s exercise, I could hardly walk because I was so stiff. But Xavier kept on calmly pushing me (literally, sometimes, up mountains), Rose kneaded my knotted muscles and stretched me in yoga poses, Pedro brightened my days with sensational food, and Golay plied me with articles to read about the gut and probiotics, and sent me home with a tailored personal-training plan.

Four days later, I haven’t lost weight – but I have lost 3 per cent of my fat mass, I feel 100 per cent healthier, and I have just turned down chocolate on a Swiss Air flight. In my universe, that means the change has begun.

**The details:** Seven days’ treatment, a Garmin exercise watch and heart monitor and a four-month home exercise programme, with online analysis every two weeks, costs from £5,225.

*This feature originally appeared in the autumn issue of Ultratravel, The Telegraph’s luxury-travel magazine. Catch up on previous issues [here](#).*

LONHEA  
[www.lonhea.com](http://www.lonhea.com)



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