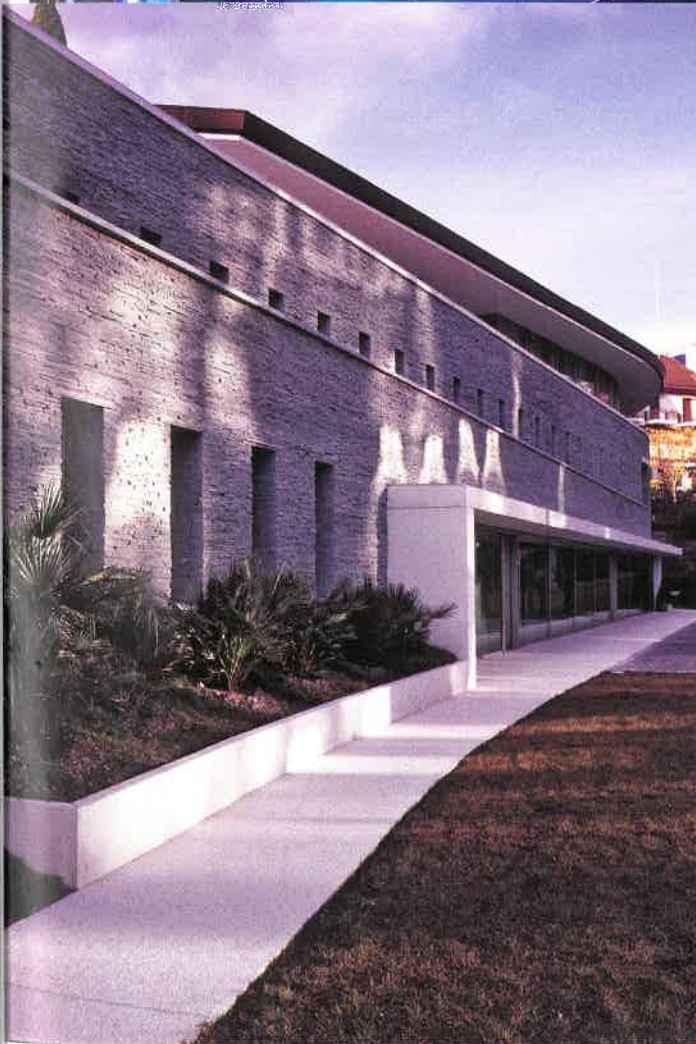


PHOTOGRAPHS: ERIC LAIGNÉL



CLINIQUE LA PRAIRIE MONTREUX, SWITZERLAND

WEIGHT
LOSS

CUTTING-EDGE OFFERINGS FROM THE STEM-CELL PIONEER

Would you spend around £31,475 for a week-long Premium Revitalisation that minutely tests and examines you inside and out, explores your DNA profile for red flags, assesses your vitamin deficiencies and involves a secret formula to boost your immune system? According to Clinique La Prairie's Hermès-shod CEO Simone Gibertoni, no one who has undergone this intensive preventive and diagnostic programme has ever left saying, 'Great, but it's too expensive.' Given that the average net worth of visitors is allegedly £10 million and the repeat-visit rate is 70 per cent, clearly plenty think it's a prudent deal. Significantly, while the number of people signing up to this is increasing, the age at which they're starting is lowering. That goes some way to accounting for the atmosphere here these days. It's transformed. Outwardly, not much looks different. Gold taps in the marble bathrooms, a space-agey spa wrapped around a huge pool and 50 doctors working in one of the world's best-equipped medical centres, reached via an underground corridor. Set in manicured gardens on the shore of Lake Geneva in Montreux where it opened in 1931, Clinique La Prairie still reeks of all the health money can buy. Service is impeccable, smooth and smiling from the limousine pick-up at Geneva airport. The food, pedestrian a decade ago, now primarily vegan, is better than ever. Italian chef Sara Bussetti transforms even a virtuous mushroom soup into something special, with intense nuggets of flavour from slivers of dehydrated orange. It used to be that the place was almost silent. Even when most of the 39 rooms were booked, guests barely saw anyone – doctors and therapists apart – except for the odd stooped, bejewelled figure being attended to by gloved waiters over a hushed supper in the restaurant, looking out onto the lake and Alps beyond. Today, people in their twenties and

THERE'S A NEW EMPHASIS ON NON-INVASIVE COSMETIC TREATMENTS, WHICH A SINGLE SKIN-AGE TEST PROVES TO BE A VERY GOOD IDEA

thirties wearing Dolce & Gabbana tracksuits and cashmere hoodies hang out in a lobby now furnished with acid-yellow sofas. There's a new emphasis on non-invasive cosmetic treatments, which a single horrifying Visia skin-age test proves to be a very good idea. Part of the reason for this fresh spark is Gibertoni, and the owner having passed on overall running to his energetic son. For the first time in its 89-year history, the clinic is launching satellite centres in Madrid and Shanghai, and an on-site sports-rehabilitation space is also in the works. Plus, by the end of 2020 the medical centre will have a staff of specialists in every branch of medicine and cosmetic surgery imaginable, three operating theatres and 20 hospital-grade recovery suites. But the main reason for the transformation is simply that Clinique La Prairie's key treatment, cellular therapy, has become cutting edge. It's what made the hotel famous in the 1930s, when Dr Paul Niehans, an early pioneer in the field, started administering 'rejuvenating' foetal lamb-liver injections and pulling in famous guests such as Charlie Chaplin, Greta Garbo, Cary Grant and, later, a rumoured Margaret Thatcher. By the 1990s, however, when modern clinics and medi-spas were taking off, Clinique La Prairie had made untold millions – hence the extreme luxury of the place – but come to seem like a grand duchess, beloved by an inner circle. Now, however, with a switch in focus to human rather than animal cells, it feels as if the duchess's glamorous, clever, forward-thinking granddaughter has taken over, keen to bring the family business bang up to date. As Dr Mounir Ziadé says, simply: 'Stem cells are where the focus of our research is now. And the future is stem cells.'

INSIDER TIP The great thing about early testing for potential health issues is that if anything does emerge that's cause for worry, there is time to address it. And there are many far less expensive alternatives to the £31,475 programme, such as a comprehensive Master Detox.

BOOK IT A six-night Master Detox programme costs from £11,700 per person, full board, including activities and transfers (cliniquelaprairie.com).

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