

europaean Spa

DIGITAL EDITION

Issue 87 | Spring 2023



THE BUSINESS MAGAZINE FOR SPA AND WELLNESS LEADERS



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THE RANCH ITALY

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Welcome

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The art of AUFGUSS



Welcome to our hot Spring edition, which celebrates the trending art of aufguss, coming to spas everywhere. Find out how these popular ceremonial sauna rituals can bring a touch of magic to every spa journey (p90). Our informative Expert Guide to Thermal Experiences (p98) also brings you the best suppliers, equipment and expertise on the market.

At *European Spa* we work tirelessly to bring you the latest spa investments and developments. Enjoy our pick of five new spa openings to watch (p60); meet the Winyard family, who are reimagining their father's dream at Stobo Castle in Scotland (p50); and learn how the founders of The Ranch Malibu are partnering with Palazzo Fiuggi in Italy to deliver their award-winning wellness programmes (p16).

Looking to the future, I am honoured to welcome Aradhana Khowala as our new guest columnist. A global force for good in hospitality, Aradhana chairs the Red Sea Development Company advisory board, which drives the biggest hospitality project on the planet right now, under construction in Saudi Arabia. She asks us all to consider how spas can put women first in wellness delivery (p30).

Grasping the nettle, expert columnist Kirsty MacCormick asks how we as a progressive industry can improve therapists' pay (p86). Training expert Neil Orvay shares how repeat and request business brings success (p70); and aromatherapist Laura Broady shares three energising essential oils for spring (p88).

Please enjoy this issue and thanks to you and all our contributors and supporters who make the spa industry such a special place. Be well.

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A handwritten signature of Sarah Camilleri in black ink.

Image: Ryuki Ikeda performs at the Aufguss.it Friends Challenge at Farris Bad, Norway



Reset your compass

Sarah Camilleri heads to Palazzo Fiuggi in Italy to talk to The Ranch co-founders Alex and Sue Glasscock about their first European foray, which promises participants an intensive reset

REPORT BY SARAH CAMILLERI

In 2010, American entrepreneurs Alex and Sue Glasscock took the plunge to switch careers and open The Ranch Malibu, celebrated today as one of America's leading luxury fitness and wellness destinations. Set across 200 acres in the beautiful Santa Monica Mountains, The Ranch promises transformational fitness and reset time without distraction.

Grounded and rigorous, its renowned week-long hiking programmes bring together up to 25 people – including solo guests, couples and small groups – for an immersive wellness experience. Unashamedly premium and positioned to attract C-suite individuals, a week at The Ranch's flagship costs around \$7,600 (£6,340) with extended three and four-week stays available.

The brand's newest retreat – and a first foray into Europe – The Ranch Italy launched in May 2022 at the renowned spa destination Palazzo Fiuggi, near Rome. Here, week-long stays cost from \$9,100 and shorter breaks at \$4,950 can be taken by time-poor guests who need a quicker boost.

Realising a lifetime's dream

Impressively, The Ranch Malibu boasts 50% repeat business – with 35% of new guests attending due to recommendation by loyal Ranch alumni – and there is often a waiting list. Following the recent success of its Italian venture, the brand is now working on opening a second US property in spring 2024, The Ranch Hudson Valley, with more international plans in the pipeline.

“Fifteen years ago, we were ready to change careers to put all our energy into something new. It needed to be something we felt good about, something that we could do for a long time, and selfishly, ▶

Spa Spotlight The Ranch Italy at Palazzo Fiuggi

▷ something that would keep us healthy too,” explains Alex Glasscock. “The Ranch is really an accumulation of both our skills: design from Sue, with financing, real estate and construction from my side. It was also a creative outlet for us – a way to express what we call ‘balanced living’, because that is how we strived to live.”

“We weren’t super rigid about our food, but our approach to life meant that we were full of energy, full of positivity and getting leaner all the time. Back then, we sensed that maybe a few of our friends were not quite in the same place,” he adds.

Together, Alex and Sue created a destination that delivered 360-degree wellness, way before the catch-all term had really gained traction. “Balanced living for us is about incorporating fitness, nutrition, sleep, meditation, thoughtfulness, as well as empathy and guidance from the very best wellness professionals,” adds Sue. “It’s about bringing a group of people together and surrounding them with a positive supporting team and culture. We are not a boot camp, but it is rigorous. It allows people to become fully present.”

Below: Four-hour forest hikes are a daily part of life at The Ranch Italy

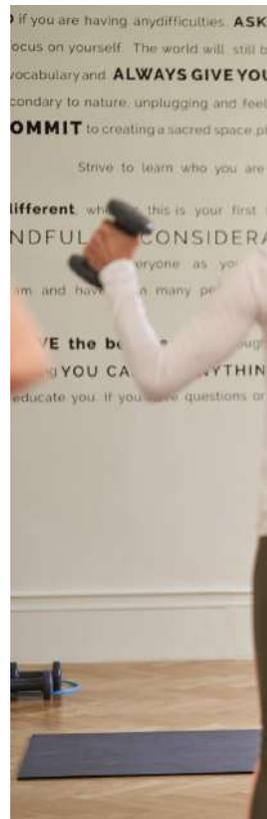


“At The Ranch our philosophy is based on asking our guests to relinquish control. We have created a programme where you just need to show up and everything is taken care of.”

Alex Glasscock
Co-founder, The Ranch

A European adventure

The Ranch Italy is the result of an imaginative collaboration between The Ranch team and wellness experts at Palazzo Fiuggi. Perfectly poised on the rolling foothills of the Apennine Mountains, guests are promised “an authentic Ranch experience with an Italian twist” as well as the ‘plug-in and go’ spa and medical excellence of one of Europe’s leading destinations. Palazzo Fiuggi is just 50 minutes by car from Rome, making it hassle-free for loyal Ranch guests





From top: Palazzo Fiuggi in the foothills of the Apennine Mountains; daily PT sessions give guests the opportunity to step up their fitness



travelling from the US and Canada as well as easy to access for international wellness seekers from the UK, Europe and the Middle East.

“Italy is one of our favourite countries and the climate here at Palazzo Fiuggi is absolutely ideal – it closely mirrors the climate we enjoy in Malibu,” explains Alex.

“We did a pop-up for several years in the Dolomites and this gave us experience of running a ‘planted programme’, and propelled us to find the right location and partnership with Palazzo Fiuggi,” adds Sue.

Serene, green and close to nature

Positioned within striking distance of many incredible hiking trails, Palazzo Fiuggi provides The Ranch’s guests with an elegant setting for their Italian journey, including their own dedicated wing and accommodation at the property, which features a communal dining room and a PT and yoga area. This separation recreates the autonomy of the Malibu experience, although guests are free to roam and book treatments with Palazzo Fiuggi as they wish. In addition, Ranch guests have full access to Palazzo Fiuggi’s 6,000sqm spa, which is a whole world of relaxation and rejuvenation.



Spa Spotlight The Ranch Italy at Palazzo Fiuggi

Below: plant-based cuisine is enjoyed as a group in the restaurant, which has panoramic views

Measuring your biomarkers

For those who have time to prepare before they arrive, which is highly recommended, a comprehensive 30-day preparation programme is supplied, as well as a detailed health and fitness questionnaire. This information also sets out what to pack and how to best prepare physically and mentally for life at The Ranch.

On arrival, each guest has a health check, including ECG, blood tests, body measurements and a weigh-in performed by an experienced medical team. These metrics are revisited at the end of the guest's stay to offer a more complete picture of each individual's overall health upon departure, together with recommendations to take home and follow.

Plant-based, clean eating

A keystone of each guest stay is a nutrient-dense combination of detoxifying plant-based cuisine, curated by The Ranch Malibu's executive chef

Meredith Haaz. All attendees are asked to follow a strict regimen of no caffeine, sugar or alcohol during their stay. Also, daily calorie totals come in at around 1,400 a day. Selfcare here is not about à la carte choices – everything is fully delivered so people can focus on their fitness. Every appetising set meal is artfully prepared by Palazzo Fiuggi's three-Michelin-star chef Heinz Beck and his culinary team.

“At The Ranch our philosophy is based on asking our guests to relinquish control,” explains Alex. “We have created a programme where you just need to show up and everything is taken care of. The most important thing is to be mentally willing to let go. Many people find that challenging as they are so used to maintaining control. The most cathartic thing we can give at The Ranch is time to be able to release yourself from life.”

Everyone eats together in The Ranch's own relaxing dining room, which offers panoramic views across the valley. Unquestionably, some guests find The Ranch's highly prescriptive approach to food a little challenging at first, especially after a four-hour intensive hike when appetites are strong. Yet, as the body starts to adjust to this level of physicality, the strictness becomes normal.





Making small, incremental changes to create big shifts

Livia Oliveti, The Ranch Italy's programme manager, explains how the retreat works

All of The Ranch's programmes are designed to improve the quality of one's life by improving health. We ask guests to unplug from their everyday lives and reset their minds and bodies. With us, they can realise just how much they can impact their health through small, incremental changes to create big shifts.

Our programme includes six hours of daily exercise, centred around a four-hour hike each morning, paired with a plant-based diet. This allows every guest to really immerse themselves in nature and learn more about their health.

Our partnership with Palazzo Fiuggi really embodies our values and sensibilities too. It's an extraordinary private sanctuary with world-class fitness and spa amenities as well as medical services.

This breath of expertise allows guests to gain a deeper insight into their health status through diagnostics and



Livia Oliveti The Ranch Italy

blood testing with one of Palazzo Fiuggi's expert physicians. The biomarker testing not only informs the medical team of any underlying concerns, but also opens the conversation up to explore areas that can be improved to increase vitality.

Guests also have access to the Palazzo's state-of-the-art 400sqm fitness centre, complete with Technogym, Pilates, yoga, and Reaxing training equipment, as well as enjoying our nutritionally dense, artfully prepared plant-based menu.

Our goal is that every guest departs with a greater sense of self, feeling rested and rejuvenated while having lost weight, gained muscle and experienced the benefits of a plant-based diet. The

final consultation with one of Palazzo Fiuggi's world-class physicians also gives them a complete picture of their health and longevity."



Experiencing The Ranch Italy

The Ranchers meet up soon after a friendly wake-up call at 5.30am on their first full day. After an early morning stretch session, a light breakfast is eaten. A daily foot clinic is also available to soothe and nurture sore soles that will be seriously tested as the days progress. Then it's off out for the first of six four-hour morning hikes.

Hikers are each given a minuscule healthy snack (The Ranch is famous for its three-almond quota!), a walkie-talkie, call-of-nature doggie bags and trekking poles. After that it's a solo effort, although key to making it through the sometimes gruelling treks is the encouragement passed on – and the pacing provided – by some of the more experienced hikers in the group.

"You can't think about a lot of other things when it's precarious and you're with people you don't know. Yet, this can be a cathartic experience," smiles Alex.

"Every group we see is different. Many end up having deep conversations. You can be surprised by how much you open up and share things. It's important to be reminded of our humanity, particularly in these times that are so technology-based and busy. Basically, we challenge you to do things that are outside your comfort zone."



"Balanced living for us is about incorporating fitness, nutrition, sleep, meditation, thoughtfulness as well as empathy and guidance from the very best wellness professionals."

Sue Glasscock
Co-founder, The Ranch

Forests, mountains and pilgrim paths

As each hike unfolds the challenging trails weave through forests, over mountains and along ancient pilgrim paths. Through conversation, connection and kinship grow each day and a real bond is forged as each mountain is conquered. Even the restricted diet starts to feel normal after five days, as stamina begins to grow and guests' appearances begin to glow. There is a sense of freedom in unquestioningly following the Ranch routine. "Nurturing body, mind and soul is something



Red flags, time out and being human

Sarah Camilleri describes how her time at The Ranch Italy led to moments of enlightenment

One of the most magical elements of 'Ranch Time' is the group dynamic and having time out to be 'off grid' and fully present with such a group of interesting people.

During my week of punishing yet glorious hikes through the Apennine Mountains, my fellow Ranchers band together and we become family. Like shoals of fish, we hike solo stretches but then come back together in comfortable silence or to enjoy life-affirming conversations when the terrain eases.

Our shared experience, blisters and daily efforts somehow bond us as humans – as if we had known each other for years.

My thighs grumble at the intensity of exercise but the challenge of following the red marker flags over a different route each day – not to mention trying



to keep up with other Ranchers – draws out a level of motivation and confidence that surprises me.

'Ranch Time' can feel a little like Groundhog Day as your body and mind initially resist the shift that is happening – but gradually the magic starts to happen.

Six days in I really start to enjoy the physicality of the hikes, and a truly sublime moment eventually takes place above the cloud line – when all that matters is breathing and pacing my stride. In this moment I feel totally at one and all is right with the world.

This flash of enlightenment refuels my desire to make positive change. The Ranch helps me reconnect with my body and feel stronger and much more alive than when I arrived. The afterglow lasts for weeks.

Spa Spotlight The Ranch Italy at Palazzo Fiuggi

Right from top: medical consultations are an integral part of the The Ranch's personalised approach; bathing in the magnesium-rich pool promotes natural joint and muscle relaxation; a strictly controlled plant-based diet is designed to help guests achieve the most from their stay

- ▷ we are very passionate about,” says Sue. “The Ranch is a place for no decisions, everything is being done for you – it’s a place where you can really reset.”

Reset with spa time

Post-hike it is time for a very welcome plant-based lunch before some much needed recuperation, including an expertly delivered massage to remove lactic acid that has built up in the muscles.

The afternoons can be spent as each guest wishes. There are different high-intensity PT sessions for the dedicated, so you can top up your fitness with two additional hours each day if you wish. For those who need to unwind, restorative yoga sessions and plenty of relaxing spa time are available.

After a friendly communal dinner at 7pm, where guests are specifically asked not to dress up to stay true to the Ranch 'vibe', a meal, herbal tea and good conversation lead to an early night in order to be ready again at the crack of dawn.

The Ranch Vail, The Ranch Hudson Valley and Costa Rica

Alex and Sue are enthused and excited after The Ranch Italy's debut year. “Well, we've learned a lot, opening in a new location 7,000 miles away from home with just seven months out of the gate to prepare everything,” smiles Alex. “We are really pleased with our teams' efforts and that we have achieved 65% occupancy, but we also learned that we would never do it in that timeframe again. It was fun but it stresses the system. Next time we will be more patient!”

And the next opening is set for the US this autumn when The Ranch Vail opens at The Ritz-Carlton, Bachelor Gulch for an exclusive programme from September 3 to October 20. In the Spring of 2024, The Ranch Hudson Valley launches in 200 acres of private parkland in New York State.

“We are completing the restoration of a beautiful estate in the lower Hudson Valley, which was built by financier and investor JP Morgan for his daughter and was more recently run as a catholic girl's school,” confirms Alex. “The Ranch Hudson Valley will offer three and four-night programmes to meet an uptick in demand to allow people to come for a shorter amount of time – also, to serve companies who have reached out to us for corporate wellness retreats. We're excited that corporations can now



Spa Spotlight The Ranch Italy at Palazzo Fiuggi

Right from top: the relaxing pool deck at Palazzo Fiuggi; a strong sense of camaraderie is built during the sometimes challenging hikes; luxury and wellbeing await beyond the marble interior of the spa reception area

- ▷ come into this space for team-building, instead of heading for Las Vegas and, you know, coming back feeling bloated and polluted,” he adds. “We will also offer takeovers for private groups of friends, which we know will be popular.”

“It’s an architectural masterpiece, the panelling, the coffered ceilings. It’s extraordinary,” Sue adds. “And so, we’re spinning it into a Ranch. It’s so unlike in Malibu, where we have all these individual buildings – in Hudson Valley we will have 25 bedrooms and suites over four stories as well as a solarium with an indoor pool, an outdoor pool and our own thermal journey on property. We’re now also working on a new initiative in Costa Rica. I think we’ll be opening a Ranch soon in one of the world’s extraordinary Blue Zones in 2025.” ●●●●●

SPA STATISTICS

The Ranch Italy

www.theranchmalibu.com

Co-founders: Alex and Sue Glasscock

Programme manager: Livia Oliveti

Palazzo Fiuggi Wellness Medical Retreat

www.palazzoFiuggi.com

General manager: Pietro Zanzot

Medical and scientific director:

Dr David Della Morte Canosci

Spa director: Sharon Cassius

Spa size: 6,000sqm

Treatment rooms: 21 multi-use treatment rooms, eight beauty rooms, six medical rooms and a private spa suite

Hydrothermal experiences: 700sqm Therme Roman bath, two hammams, steamroom, sauna and experience shower, far infrared sauna, salt room

Pools: Two thalassotherapy pools, contrast cold plunge pool, panorama pool

Suppliers: Gharieni, Stenal, Unbescheiden, Technogym, Reaxing and ICAROS

Product partners: Team Dr Joseph, Dr Barbara Sturm, Charme d’Orient, Piroche, Therabody

