Regena: A health retreat in the Bavarian forest for frazzled parents

Busy mum Amy Hopkins took a break from family life and checked into Regena Health Resort & Spa in Germany, in search of child-free rejuvenation.

It’s not uncommon for people to leave Regena weighing less than when they arrived, explained Sandra Huerge Kandler, the resort’s fresh-faced manager, as she showed me around. I’ve always thought of holidays as the ultimate excuse to gorge on unhealthy treats, so the idea that staying at a spa could actually make me healthier (and slimmer) was intriguing. But then, Regena is not your typical spa. Tucked away in Germany’s Bavarian forest, this adult-only resort is serious about health.

Taking a nature-led approach, Regena offers holistic therapies for everything from cancer to 21st century burnout. Men and women have been coming here for physical and spiritual treatments for 45 years, long before ‘wellness’ breaks became cool. I left my husband and toddler at home in London, and checked into Regena for a few days, to find out what the restorative, child-free environment could do for frazzled parents like me.

The resort’s blocky 1970’s buildings are quite austere looking, but the Brutalist architecture is softened by the surrounding forest. After checking in I spent several moments looking out from a window on the 11th floor over the soaring broccoli-green trees that stretch as far as the eye can see in every direction. Enveloped in nature, I could already feel the pressures of London life seeping away.

The entrance to the forest is only a few metres from Regena’s front door. There are acres and acres to explore, with options to hire hiking poles and e-bikes. After a quick lesson in hiking pole technique, I set off on foot. I was a little nervous about getting lost in the vast thickets, but I found the trails clearly marked. A ten-minute stroll from Regena is Bad Bruckenau. The town is home to seven natural springs which are said to have unique healing properties. Several of them even flow directly to taps inside the resort. At the town’s smart visitor centre I sampled water from all seven. Some are crisp, refreshing and naturally carbonated, while others are less palatable with a strong mineral taste.
This was my first visit to a medicalised health retreat and, flicking through the six-page booklet of treatment options in my room, I was amazed by the range of therapies on offer. As well as the recently renovated spa, with its 15m indoor pool, steam room, salt room, sauna and whirlpool, Regena offers a huge selection of health treatments and diagnostic tests. Until now, my experience of spas was limited to fluffy dressing gowns and pedicures – I’d certainly never been to a spa like this, where guests can be screened for allergies or have their free radicals measured.

As well as natural beauty treatments, exercise classes and healthy cooking tutorials, guests can cherry pick from dozens of medicalised therapies (many of which I couldn’t even pronounce, let alone explain), including acupuncture, homeopathic injections, colon hydrotherapy and physiotherapy. Mental wellbeing is taken care of with sessions of meditation, life coaching and ‘burnout reorientation’.

If you prefer a tailored programme, there are special packages for weight loss, immunotherapy, ‘good ageing with oxygen’ and more. Unsurprisingly, the most popular is the Burnout programme, which involves detox, a detailed medical and a individualised diet plan and anti stress regime. As Sandra explained the benefits of tackling burnout, I suddenly wished I was staying more than three days.

Given my limited time at Regena, I decided to focus on relaxation rather than remedy (plus I’m too much of a wimp for diagnostic tests). I took an excellent pilates class and tried the flotation tank, which was like being wrapped in a warm duvet and floating on a lilo. I devoted a whole afternoon to sampling the spa, sitting in the outdoor whirlpool with jets bubbling against my legs and spring sunshine on my face. It’s easy to see why Regena is a magnet for the frazzled.
People come to Regena to overhaul their diets too. As a working mum, my own eating habits often go out the window, as I find myself tucking into beans on toast in front of the TV once my daughter is in bed. In need of a nutritional reboot, I signed up to Regena’s popular Alkaline Diet Programme. The idea is that you can improve your health by replacing acid-forming foods with an alkaline diet of fruits, vegetables, seeds and legumes. The alkaline meals were artfully presented and delicious, but the radical change in diet came as a shock to my (unhealthy) system. Going cold turkey from all my favourite vices – caffeine, dairy and alcohol – left me with a headache. After just one day I fell off the alkaline wagon and headfirst (so to speak) into Regena’s buffet of bread, cheese and desserts.

For me, Regena’s appeal is that guests can embrace the resort’s health programme as much or as little as they choose. If you’re feeling utterly burnt out by running around after the kids and you’re serious about detoxing and getting healthy, this is the place to do it. You can even lose a few pounds, if you want to. On the other hand, Regena is equally welcoming to busy parents who, like me, are simply looking to press pause, and take a few days out from the chaos of family life. I may be an alkaline diet drop-out and I certainly didn’t lose any weight, but I left Regena feeling thoroughly rejuvenated by my own programme of forest walks, spa sessions and the odd glass of wine.

Regena Health Resort & Spa

Getting there
Regena is a hour and a half’s drive east from Frankfurt airport

Price

- A full board stay costs £131 per person per night in a double room. Includes full spa access, plus select activities like aquagym, aerobics, mental training and lectures from the doctor.
- Alkaline diet package costs £1,083 per person per week (single room), or £997 per person per week/double room), includes 3 appointments with nutritionist and a recipe booklet to take home.
- Pilates sessions from £13
- Flotarium sessions from £15

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