



Achtung Wellness!

When it comes to selecting a health tourism location, Germany's cultural stereotypes of precision, thoroughness and transparency come in handy. When you add these reassuring traits to the unique design-driven elements of Rocco Forte Hotel's unabashedly superior brand of hospitality, what you get is a perfect meeting point of mind and soul. **Lisa Durante** explores.

By the seamless integration of these different yet complementary aspects, the body stands to gain. So this is why the triad of 'health', 'holiday' and 'Germany', enriched by the ineffable elegance of *Villa Kennedy* in Frankfurt and *Hotel de Rome* in Berlin, make for the ideal elixir of wellness that would put a rosy glow on anyone's face.

If you are coming from the Middle East, then the secret of Germany's advanced healthcare sector is already renowned and increasing steadily. "The health care system in Germany boasts an excellent reputation worldwide thanks to its modern hospitals and clinics offering the utmost in medical technology and services", explains Dr. Ulrich F. Mondorf, medical lecturer and internal specialist driving medical tourism in his private practice. "Additionally, German medical facilities have sufficient spare resources to meet the needs of patients from abroad across a spectrum of disciplines in a swift and organised manner," he explains.

That is not entirely surprising as after all this is Europe's most prosperous and economically advanced nation. However, without a helping hand to arrange for every aspect of one's medical travel, things could be stressful and we all know that stress kills. This is why Med2Heal's care system claims to take the pain out of the process. "It's simple, just tell us about your disorder and what extra services you may require such as travel, accommodation or transportation and we will send you a detailed and reliable

quotation," says Gerrit Wein, managing director, Med2Heal. "Based on your medical records, we recommend patients to a gold standard network of leading hospitals in Germany and coordinate appointments for them. Within a comfortable radius of Frankfurt-am-Main we have numerous specialist and teaching hospitals that thanks to the cities' central geographical location, can be easily accessed" he adds.

What if you are not ill but seek a wellness getaway of the highest order?

This is where *Villa Kennedy*, *Med2Heal* and *ClubSportif*, a premier centre offering exclusive fitness coaching, join forces to unveil 'comprehensive lifestyle optimisation' relished in the lap of luxury as only a Rocco Forte Hotel can accommodate. "Promoting the art of vitality is our primary focus with the prevention of disease and scientific identification of risk factors. This is strengthened by practical guidance on how to maintain and improve health", Dr. Mondorf explains. "However, the overall scope and pleasure factor increases substantially when we offer those who seek to refresh and recharge the opportunity to do so at *Villa Kennedy*."

Transforming wellness into an art.

Minutes from Frankfurt's main train station and approximately 15 minutes from

Frankfurt Airport, *Villa Kennedy* caters to Frankfurt's well heeled citizens seeking a hospitality haven and to foreign visitors that descend upon the city for its high profile exhibitions such as the *Frankfurt Book Fair*, *Musikmesse* and more.

Leveraging the potential of wellness tourism is a growing segment for this 163-room Neo-Gothic luxury property. Named after the street on which it is located, it is built around the traditional 1904 mansion nestled off the south bank



Villa Kennedy



of the Main River with captivating views of the skyscrapers of 'Mainhattan.' Like all of Rocco Forte's 14 properties throughout Europe, the hotel is fashioned along both traditional and innovative lines. With its three newly constructed buildings built around the traditional *Villa Speyer* that once belonged to the affluent Speyer family, Jewish financiers who left Germany in a hurry just before the onset of Nazism, it was sold to the municipality. Today it sets the stage for this luxurious downtown retreat, enriched by minimalist contemporary chic designed by Olga Polizzi, Sir Rocco Forte's sister and high priestess of design. With its picturesque central inner courtyard that makes this refined retreat both an escape and an idyllic meeting place rolled into one, the inviting atmosphere of the hotel's restaurant, *Gusto*, unveils a magical setting for wholesome gourmet explorations. Dario Cammerata, *Villa Kennedy*'s ebullient head chef, knows a thing or two about healthy cuisine. "Essentially it's all about choosing the freshest and most seasonal ingredients and developing a flavourful yet low fat range of dishes for guests seeking to heal themselves through correct nutrition. The kitchen is entirely primed for all levels of personalisation. "We are happy to cater to any dietary requirements based on the recommendations of doctors and fitness trainers. At *Gusto*, we offer Italian cuisine delivered with a contemporary twist. Moderate portions and a palate of flavours intended to appeal, not overwhelm," he explains.

As no wellness holiday is complete without some sybaritic pleasures to soothe the senses and hopefully whittle down the waistline, *The Villa Spa* replete with an indoor pool, gymnasium, sauna, steam

bath as well as eight treatment rooms; is an essential prerequisite for any traveller serious about wellness journeys. Based on a philosophy of organic health and wellbeing, caring for what is put onto and into our bodies, it creates an *uber* holistic approach to luxury pampering. If vitality is not just about relaxation, but also about moving your body, calming your mind and feeding your soul, then I was on track. Aside from floating around in the spa's beautiful natural Portuguese granite pool, or in the bubbling waters of the Jacuzzi; during my stay I sampled the *Sepai* organic facial with an awesome Lymphdrainage massage. Cynics could argue that in any luxury chain a pampering treatment would come as a standardised service, similar to just about anywhere else. This is not the case at *La Villa Spa*. Even my pre-treatment interview with the resident therapist was thorough to the point of verging on the empirical with a detailed 20-minute exploratory discussion before starting. Used as I am to the docile ministrations of therapists in the UAE and in Asia, this more rigorous approach to spa



Courtyard, Villa Kennedy

treatments elevated the notion of *sanus per aquam* to *sanus per scientie*. I not only felt soothed by the 90-minute session, but felt engaged in the process; appreciative that a genuine understanding of what I needed was being given to me in the name of evidence-based wellness results; not just a massage for the sake of it.

Is this where the hyperbole ends and the real deal begins?

No. So far it's all true. At the risk of taking flattery to excess, my taste of Frankfurt's wellness escapade experienced at *Villa Kennedy* can only be described in superlatives. As the saying goes however, it's not only 'Italians who do it better.' When you add the German tradition for fine hospitality prowess and flawless service, to Sir Rocco Forte's reputation for taking a property and, together with Olga, enveloping it with a unique charm that surpasses the standard offering of many prosaic five star brands, what you get is universal hospitality magic.

To be honest, however more than a burning curiosity to visit Frankfurt, I had wanted to visit Germany principally because I was curious to see Berlin, the nation's intriguing capital. Renowned for its trend setting vibe and captivating juxtaposition of historical periods coexisting within a uniquely alluring urban-scape, Berlin was where I wanted to be. Or so I thought. Nevertheless, after a few days in Frankfurt, my proclivities had changed. Could it be that this city had grown on me? After all, it is not the most handsome metropolis I had ever visited. If anything, parts of it are so scarred by the Allied bombings of 1944 and 1945 that they are yet to be comprehensively redeveloped and so they remain jaggedly askew, waiting to regain integrity.

I felt at ease there. The city made sense. You could say that it did it for me. Its excellent infrastructure; copious museums of every ilk bordering the River Main meandering across the city; the vibrancy of its cosmopolitan financial centre and the ineffable sense of prime quality that exuded from everything I encountered. For instance, a spotless taxi playing classical music, or the tastiest Waldorf salad I have ever eaten waiting for me in a simple eatery. Affordable, effective and fair... Just like its medical tourism.

Meet the Wellness Experts



An internal specialist and nephrologist, **Dr. Mondorf** has worked in senior academic and consulting roles for several years. With a degree in Health Economics, his current clinical focus is on kidney disease, auto-immune disease, hypertension, diabetes and cardiac disease prevention, on which topics he lectures to both medical professionals and patients.

As co-founder of Med2Heal with wide experience of medical tourism regionally and worldwide, **Gerrit Wein** studied management and aviation economics and management in Frankfurt am Main working as an Investment controller at the biggest German airport. By ensuring that all his clients receive access to a broad range of excellent medical care services, Gerrit is committed to ensuring that every wellness guest is exposed to a superior level of medical travel and facilities.



A Sports Science graduate and expert in holistic Lifestyle Management, **Michael Schmeltzer** is the founder of Clubsportif. By developing an individualized, holistic support and consulting concept driven by practical expertise, he offers clients a high degree of experiential value. Clubsportif builds bridges and partnerships between the medical and wellness communities while advancing medical wellness standards, outcomes and quality care.

Executive Chef **Dario Cammarata** is part of the tasteful staff of *Gusto* in *Villa Kennedy*. A devotee of traditional flavors, he loves experimenting on cuisines that belong to his native land (Italy) adding a personal touch with his contemporary flair. His distinctive passion for cooking puts his eccentricity on the salver. He is one of the best Chef's at *Gusto* pleasing diners with his exquisite cooking served with flavourful gourmet style.



The Medical Check-Up Program from Med2Heal offers comprehensive treatment measures with individualised Medical Check-Ups and supplementary services in German specialist clinics in Frankfurt such as Dr. Mondorf's private clinic. The Holistic Medical Check-Up provides patients with sustainable healthcare

Prices for the core Basic Medical Check-Up start from 3.300 Euro including the pre consultation, personal support in the native language and transfer from hotel / airport to clinic and vice versa. **Tel** +49 (0) 69677 01438 **Email** info@med2heal.com www.med2heal.com



Hotel de Rome

Unter den Linden, it is one of the few luxury hotels in Berlin thriving in an original building that makes full use of its architectural splendour, offering guests an authentic Berlin experience. Resplendent with sober yet fanciful Art Deco elegance that has been given a contemporary twist by designer Tommaso Ziffer, who also designed the *Hotel de Russie* in Rome with Olga Polizzi, the 146 bedrooms and suites of varying sizes have high ceilings and the classical proportions that hotels nowadays can only dream of.

For me, this was less of a wellness destination and more of a city stay experienced in grand style, everything about this hotel is extraordinarily imposing. For instance, the impressive ballroom with its double-height ceiling and glazed roof that used to be the bank's counting room, the gourmet restaurant leads into a terrace ideal for *al fresco* dining, a bar overlooking Bebelplatz and the Opera Court that is a grand room with its original glazed ceiling - the focal point for afternoon tea. Being a *spa aficionada*, I loved the steam, sauna and relaxation area and even found time to use the fully equipped gym, just as I had at *The Villa Spa*. With the original vault of the bank having been converted into a 20-metre swimming pool, whilst swimming I could sense the waves of history lapping all around me. Unforgettable and surreal; at one point I felt as if the ghost of Marlene Dietrich was there with me gliding through the water...

Hotel de Rome, Berlin

Aside from the burgeoning German wellness tourism sector, or the cultural attributes of the cities I visited, the most personal reason I had for wanting to explore Rocco Forte Hotels in both cities was because my grandfather Luigi Capocci and Sir Rocco Forte's father, the late Sir Charles Forte, who created a worldwide empire of restaurants and hotels from virtually nothing, came from the same village in the province of *Frosinone*, south of Rome. My grandfather's family who immigrated to the UK at the turn of the century were, like many Italians, in the food business. Luigi was born in England but his mother Brigida Valvona who was born in Italy, started with an ice cream cart and over the years had built up the business to over 10 coffee shops and ice cream parlours throughout the East Midlands. I never met my grandfather Luigi but my grandmother spoke with reverence about how entire villages left rural Italy to start a new life in different countries. For them the stellar example of their generation was definitely Lord Forte who had actualised their collective dreams of success. So for me, visiting the Rocco Forte's *Hotel de Rome* was, in a sense, like a homecoming.

Constructed in 1889 by architect Ludwig Heim, it originally housed the head office of *Dresdner Bank* until 1945. What can you say about a property that has been so artfully restored that its main vaults are still positioned in what are now the spa treatment rooms? Located on *Bebelplatz*, off



Opera Court, Hotel de Rome

Frankfurt-am-Main

Founded in 794 AD, an original Stone Age settlement near present-day Frankfurt's cathedral developed during Roman times into a garrison town. Frankfurt later became a hub in the Holy Roman Empire renowned as a trading city; by the 12th century the 'Frankfurt Fair' attracted business from the Mediterranean to the Baltic.

With Frederick I (Barbarossa) in 1152, Frankfurt became the site of the election and coronation of all German kings. The last German emperor was elected in 1792, and by the time the Holy Roman Empire collapsed in 1806 the region was under French control. It was in Frankfurt in 1848 that Germany's first-ever parliamentary delegation met at the Paulskirche. Although the Prussians disbanded this parliament, Frankfurt was hailed, much later, by US President John F Kennedy as the 'cradle of democracy in Germany'. Allied bombing raids destroyed about 80 percent of the centre in March 1944. Plans to raze the remains of the *Alte Oper* (old opera) were vigorously opposed by residents and a reconstruction of it, along with much of the historic city centre,



was undertaken. Known as the *Römerberg*, it was completed in 1983. Today it's a banking district - a shimmering symbol of Germany's post-war economic re-development - continues to reach new heights. Unlike any other German city, Frankfurt-on-the-Main (pronounced 'mine') is unashamedly high-rise. As a business capital, it attracts thousands of foreign expats and exiles from other German cities that have come here to work. It is home to one of Europe's largest stock exchanges,

the *Bundesbank* (Germany's central bank), and the European Central Bank. Its enormous airport is the region's largest employer and, after Heathrow, Europe's second-largest airport, handling over 50 million passengers annually. Frankfurt also hosts a string of important trade events, including the world's largest book, consumer-goods and musical-instrument fairs. With a rich collection of museums, second only to Berlin's, it is the capital's only serious rival.

Berlin

Twenty years after its post-Wall rebirth, Berlin is a scene-stealing combo of glamour and grit, teeming with top museums and galleries, grand opera and guerrilla clubs, gourmet temples and ethnic snack shacks. Whether your tastes run to posh or punk, you can satisfy them in Berlin. When it comes to fashion, art, design and music, the German capital is the city to watch. A global influx of creatives has turned it into a cauldron of cultural cool reminiscent of New York in the '80s. What draws them is Berlin's legendary climate of tolerance,



openness and experimentation infused with an edgy undercurrent that gives this 'eternally unfinished' city its street cred. Cheap rents don't hurt either. All this trendiness is a triumph for a town that's long been in the cross-hairs of history: Berlin staged a revolution, was headquartered by fascists, bombed to bits, ripped in half and finally reunited - and that was just in the 20th century. Famous landmarks such as the Reichstag, the Brandenburg Gate, Checkpoint Charlie and what's left of the Berlin Wall are like a virtual 3-D textbook in a city where you'll find history staring you in the face every time you turn a corner. Perhaps it's because of its heavy historical burden that Berlin is throwing itself into tomorrow with such contagious energy. At times the entire city seems to be bubbling over into one huge party. Cafes are jammed at all hours, drinking is a religious rite and clubs host their scenes of frenzy and hedonism until the wee hours.

Yet despite its often hectic pace, Berlin functions on an exquisitely human scale. Traffic flows freely, public transportation is brilliant, you can walk without fear at night, clubs have no velvet ropes and your restaurant bill would only buy you a starter back home. Come and join the party and be swept away by the riches, quirks and vibrancy of this fascinating city.



Well kept secret

Air Berlin is Germany's second largest airline, after Lufthansa, and Europe's sixth largest airline in terms of passengers. Operates an extensive network including holiday destinations in the Mediterranean region, the Canary Islands and North Africa as well as intercontinental destinations in Southeast Asia, the Caribbean and the Americas, Air Berlin now also flies to Dubai. Concentrating on serving major German and European cities to attract business traffic, 23 German cities are served. In 2010, the Oneworld airline alliance announced that Air Berlin had been invited to join. Full membership is planned for the start of 2012. In March 2011, it had 8,900 employees. The airline carried 33.6 million passengers in 2010. Source *Wikipedia*