



VIP TREATMENT

A personal chef, bespoke treatments and a luxury penthouse overlooking Lake Zürich. Welcome to Paracelsus Recovery, the £65,000-a-week rehab for royalty and the really rich

By SACHA FORBES

‘CORONA MADE A LOT OF people even more vulnerable than they usually are,’ explains Marta Ra, the quietly spoken chief executive of Paracelsus Recovery in Switzerland. ‘The uncertainty created a lot of fear, so we called all our clients when the pandemic started.’ Which might have been you, if you’re a Saudi prince with a drug problem, or a high-flying banker who’s too fond of a drink. Paracelsus is the go-to luxury addiction clinic for the super-rich, set up in the centre of Zürich eight years ago by chairman Jan Gerber and his family. ‘Every patient we treat has one thing in common: they can all afford to come here,’ says Marta.

They have another thing in common, too: a desire for privacy. There’s no grand entrance at Paracelsus – not even a business name on the front of the building. You are driven around to the rear of an anonymous-looking apartment block, then led up the back stairs and into a lift, which delivers you directly into a luxurious penthouse overlooking Lake Zürich.

Costing £65,000 a week, Paracelsus is the clinic of choice for ultra-high-net-worth businessmen, celebrities and royalty. Secrecy is paramount: even though I am a journalist and not a patient, I’m given a pseudonym to use for all my correspondence with my client-relationship manager. And once I arrive, my presence is guarded as if I were the subject of a national-security operation.

Landing at Zürich airport, I am met by an immaculate clinic co-ordinator and a driver in a gleaming Bentley, then whisked

off to my apartment to be greeted by the team that will be looking after me, which includes a private chef, a housekeeper, three trained nurses, a live-in therapist, a psychiatrist and a trauma therapist. As I stand in the bright apartment, I wonder who else has sat at the large, flower-filled wooden table, or lounged on the vast L-shaped cream sofa, or played the baby grand piano. My bedroom and bathroom are spacious and calm: a writing desk, a comfortable armchair, a huge vase of roses by the bath, and a vast selection of Jo Malone bath oils. My live-in therapist will sleep in the room next door – it is their job to be on hand 24 hours a day. This is a key role, and the clinic takes great care to match the client with the right therapist. Your entourage, should you wish to bring them, can all stay at the nearby five-star hotel, The Grand Dolder.

As well as asking me to provide my medical records, Paracelsus wants to know both my favourite flowers and my dietary requirements. The latter are tended to by a soigné chef I meet in the kitchen, who is busy creating healthy daily menus of homemade granola, coconut porridge and green juice for breakfast, followed by grilled sea bass for lunch. Not only is he a talented chef, he also happens to be a German prince.

As for physical health, I spend my first morning at The Grand Dolder’s gym, training with a fitness instructor. Afterwards, the Bentley arrives and sweeps me off to see the clinic’s doctor, who practises in a local hospital. Arriving in secrecy via the

underground car park, I am taken for food-intolerance analysis on a bioresonance machine – then comes the first of many IV drip infusions, of vitamin B and iron. By 5pm, I am lying on a bed with acupuncture needles positioned in various energy points on my ears. The acupuncturist asks if I would like ‘takeaway’ needles to be left in for a week – to extend the benefits of the treatment.

If this all sounds more like a cosy-slippers-and-dressing-gown spa experience than a serious clinic for serious addicts, you should be under no illusions: in-patients here are subject to thoughtful, 24-hour surveillance by the 10-strong team assigned to their care. There is no escape and no respite: once you check in to Paracelsus Recovery, with the exception of your team, you are by yourself. They become your ‘family’, creating a bespoke itinerary to get you back on the path to recovery. Only one patient is admitted at a time, for the minimum requirement of one month (many stay for up to three).

Over dinner, Marta goes into more detail about the kind of clients Paracelsus looks after. They come, she says, from Russia, the Middle East, Europe – all over the world, in fact – seeking help for all kinds of reasons: cocaine addiction, alcoholism, burnout, pornography and sex addiction, and depression. ‘Some arrive in a very bad way – people so intoxicated that they have to go to a hospital nearby for two days to detoxify. The people who come are very vulnerable, but they are here voluntarily, they seek us. They haven’t been put on a plane here.’

But they can be a very particular sort of person. ‘We have clients here who cannot just abandon their daily job,’ she says. ‘We work the schedule around them. We have had an alcoholic CEO whose company’s share price would crash

if people knew where he was. Here, they are able to carry on their work, in between appointments with the medical professionals and renowned psychiatrists.’

I’m curious to speak to someone who has experienced the clinic as a patient, and a 37-year-old Eastern European man, working in private equity, agrees to talk to me. Living between London, Switzerland and Germany, he found his lifestyle spiralling out of control before a friend recommended Paracelsus. He ‘really appreciated the confidentiality’, he says. ‘I manage other people’s money – I couldn’t afford to bump into someone I knew.’

He continues: ‘With the help of the therapists and psychiatrists, I was really able to target the origins of what made me abuse alcohol and drugs. People like to drown out their problems with these things, but these problems know how to swim.’ Having booked to stay for one month, he ended up remaining for two. ‘I could see the progress – I could see it in my face. Slowly, I began working again from there, taking conference calls and regular calls – the [Paracelsus] team scheduled everything around me. I felt that it really was all down to me... taking care of myself.’

When he left, the therapist stayed with him for a month. Has he relapsed since leaving? ‘I would never touch cocaine again, I don’t even think about it. I drink occasionally in social situations and I am very comfortable with that.’ The occasional drink? Paracelsus’s approach is different from the classic 12-step programme of total abstinence, explains Marta. So how do they measure their success? ‘If a person can go back to their normal life, living it in a controlled way, if they want to have a glass of wine, they can have one. That is considered a success for us.’

And a success for its clients. My Eastern European contact says: ‘I spent so much money on nonsense. What I pay to Paracelsus is a fraction of the money I blew on parties with people who weren’t even my friends.’ □