

After her sister's death from cancer, our writer finds solace in Emilia-Romagna
Inside Italy's healing haven

WHEN my sister lost her two-year battle with pancreatic cancer, I was at rock bottom. Angela had always been such a healthy person, so watching her succumb to this awful disease at 76 was unbelievably hard.

Some weeks later, though, I came across an Italian medical spa, reading that it provided a holistic approach to emotional healing, which can be beneficial for someone navigating the complexities of grief.

My foggy brain couldn't determine whether this was a pretentious advert or exactly what I needed. But I was running on empty, and Angela's passing had made me acutely aware of my health. I was willing to take a chance.

An hour's drive from Bologna airport, the Lucia Magnani Health Clinic sits in Castrocara, a valley in the north Italian region of Emilia-Romagna known for its iron-rich thermal hot springs and mineral-filled mud. While the area is home to numerous spas, the weight of my grief made me yearn for something more fundamental than mere pampering.

The Long Life Formula practised by the Lucia Magnani Health Clinic, with its focus on healthier lifestyles, appealed. I arrived at a magnificent Art Deco building in extensive parkland and was shown to my comfortable bedroom, where a white tracksuit

and T-shirt were laid out. I felt vulnerable, but I needn't have worried. I had been allocated an 'angel' (the clinic's term), Chiari, who spoke perfect English and was there to look after me. Her understanding about my recent sadness put me at ease, too.

A small, nutritious lunch was followed by appointments with specialist doctors. My blood was taken, and my nutrition, posture and fitness was checked by

sympathetic physicians. I can't recall having so much attention paid to me since I was a child.

It was wonderful. After thinking about, and helping to look after, my sister for so long, to now be cossetted left me feeling comforted and reassured. The rest of the day was given over to an exfoliation treatment and a massage, followed by dinner in the adjoining 1930s Grand Hotel.

Each morning began with

exercises with an instructor in the thermal waters. You were given a schedule. It listed exercise classes, treatments such as mud baths and what you needed to eat. I didn't have to think or worry, and there was little opportunity for me to get too weepy.

There wasn't much time to

explore the local area, but the one exception was visiting the opulent Padiglione delle Feste (Party Pavilion) in the grounds. Mussolini grew up nearby, and I learned that he built this whole complex.

On my last day, I met Dr Lucia Magnani, who founded the clinic 12 years ago. 'My love for life and for feeling well made me decide to study cellular ageing, to take care of general health through prevention – and make full use of the thermal traditions here,' she said.

Four days here left me feeling lighter. A stronger body and mind has enabled me to deal with my loss and do what my sister would have advocated: get on with life and enjoy it.

LUCY DALTROFF



Soothing: Lucia Magnani Health Clinic. Inset, Lucy, left, with Angela



TRAVEL FACTS

THREE night stay at Lucia Magnani Health Clinic costs £3,120 with medical tests and spa access (luciamagnanihealthclinic.it). Donate at pancreaticcancer.org.uk.

Over 50s Travel Insurance with no upper age limits

- ✓ 24/7 English speaking emergency helpline
- ✓ Unlimited medical cover available¹
- ✓ Covered over 27 million travellers
- ✓ Trusted for 25 years



INSUREANDGO

Go without the doubt

Call our UK Call Centre FREE
0800 249 4538

InsureandGo.com

¹ InsureandGo Gold and Black achieved Which? Best buy. InsureandGo Gold and Black has been 5 Star rated by Defaqto. ² Unlimited emergency medical expenses available on Black policies. ² Discount excludes any premium generated to cover medical conditions or optional extras & is automatically applied. This offer cannot be used in conjunction with any other offer. Discount tiers of 5% for premiums between £0-49, 10% for £50-249, & 20% for £250+ apply. Offer ends at 23:59 on 01/09/25. See website T&Cs for more details.