

Vision for the future

European Spa visits Switzerland's renowned Clinique La Prairie to tour the recent spa refurbishment and meet the holistic-hearted team dedicated to delivering pioneering medi-spa services

[Report by Sarah Todd]

Located on the tranquil shores of Lake Geneva in Montreux, Switzerland, Clinique La Prairie has long been recognised as a world-renowned centre of medical excellence.

The clinic was founded in 1931 by cell therapy pioneer Professor Paul Niehans and more than 80 years on it continues to combine a holistic approach to preventative healthcare and wellbeing with a comprehensive clinical capability.

As well as a multi-disciplinary surgical and medical team comprising more than 25 specialists, Clinique La Prairie has a large medical spa facility, which underwent an extensive refurbishment in 2013 to significantly expand its health and wellness offering.

So successful was this transformation that it was recently named Destination Spa of the Year at the World Spa & Wellness Awards 2014.

Back in 1931, cellulotherapy began at Clinique La Prairie when Prof Niehans first injected fresh animal cells into a human organism. A burgeoning reputation led to the clinic hosting a range of famous patrons including Winston Churchill. However, it was in February 1953, when Dr Niehans was summoned to the Vatican bedside of Pope Pius XII, to whom he successfully administered cellular therapy, that the global reputation of Clinique La Prairie was assured.

That same, papally popularised Revitalization Treatment is still perhaps what the clinic is best known for – a medically supervised rejuvenation programme in which CLP Extract (derived since 1992 from lamb's liver) is administered orally to help strengthen the body's vital functions and defence mechanism.

Five years after Prof Niehans passed away in 1971, at the age of 84, La Prairie was purchased by Armin Mattli, who began a widescale and continuous programme of development which led to advances



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Gregor Mattli
President, Clinique La Prairie



Blending contemporary architecture with traditional design, Clinique La Prairie is sympathetically set into a hillside on the shores of Lake Geneva in Montreux



Clockwise from top left: The relaxation area offers five large beds, each with controls for lighting and music; also on the upper level is the spa's swimming pool; the Swiss Perfection Spa Lounge displays products devised in co-operation with Clinique La Prairie's laboratories

in cellulotherapy and the creation of the modern CLP Extract, as well as the creation of a new medical spa to complement and support the clinic's surgical treatments. Today, an impressive 60% of Clinique La Prairie's annual guests are returning clients, with some having visited the clinic for more than 30 years.

Palatial infrastructure

Comprising three main buildings – The Residence, The Chateau and The Medical Centre – Clinique La Prairie offers a range of rooms and suites as well as its medical and spa programmes.

The oldest building on the clinic's site, The Residence was built in the early 20th century and is linked to the Medical Centre by a French-style garden. Each room or suite has its own garden-facing balcony.

The Chateau is located at the top of the hill that borders the clinic, overlooking Lake Geneva. Following a full refurbishment in 2005, it now houses the clinic's main hotel facilities including the reception and welcome area, and is linked to the spa by an underground passage. The Chateau's 24 bedrooms are arranged over three floors; each is decorated in a classical style and most of the rooms have either a balcony or terrace offering views of Lake Geneva and the Alps.

Opened in 1991, the Medical Centre features contemporary glass facades which stunningly mirror and reflect the sunlight from the lake and the mountains. The centre has 20 post-operative rooms,



two junior suites and four suites situated on the top floor of the clinic.

Transforming the spa

As one of the world's first medical spas, located within the impressive contemporary building, Clinique La Prairie's spa offers a comprehensive range of services and treatments that combine contemporary science with ancient healing philosophies to great success.

Originally opened in August 2005 as the Beautymed Center, the spa initially featured a range of private rooms for various face and body treatments as well as an aquatic centre, a thalassotherapy centre (Thalassomed) and a gym.

In 2013, the spa's ten-month redesign over two floors was project managed by Joël Brönnimann of Brönnimann & Gottreux Architectes SA. The refurbishment team also included architect Cédric



"I hope we can educate our clients about the impact their lifestyle has on wellness, so they don't have a passive spa experience"

Dr Adrian Heini
Medical director
Clinique La Prairie

Clockwise from right: One of the 11 individual treatment rooms featuring furniture by Gharieni; the light-filled lobby bar; the spa's natural, white palette continues into the female changing area



Laurence Grosjean
Head dietician

"All of the food programmes at the clinic are based around re-education. We aim to provide our guests with a foundation of nutritional knowledge based on our personalised dietician service.

"Firstly, we listen to our guests in order to understand their relationship with food. Then, through discussion and information, we can improve both their diet and their health.

"Our guests often travel a lot and have high levels of stress, so it's also very important that we look at the psychology behind why they eat, as well as what they eat.

"All food should be eaten with pleasure and be flavoursome. At Clinique La Prairie, we understand that taking care of yourself means focusing on your whole wellbeing, in which food and nutrition play a vital role.

"We believe health is a state of mind, so we try to ensure our guests always enjoy the food we provide."

Schiess, building site manager Alessandro Frezza and interior designers Anna Fenini and Pauline Puenzieux.

As the president of Clinique La Prairie, Gregor Mattli explains, the extensive refurbishment of the spa was essential. "We needed to create and reinforce the connection between our medical centre and wellness teams. Our clientele visit Clinique La Prairie with specific needs and expect results. It became necessary for us to implement the same level of innovation in the spa as in the clinic's other departments."

One of the most significant additions to the 1,600sqm spa is the café and terrace now situated on the upper level. With contemporary furniture by Cassina, the café offers a large range of fresh, healthy and natural fruit juices and smoothies as well as a menu created to complement detoxification, firming,

relaxation and anti-ageing programmes, all overseen by the clinic's dietician department.

Clinique La Prairie's medical director, Dr Adrian Heini explains that the addition of the café was a priority for the clinic. "At Clinique La Prairie, we reinforce, wherever possible, the concept of combining spa with diet. This is why we created the spa café; we plan to further develop the connection between fitness and health, which is another domain of expertise here.

"In the future, I hope we can educate our clients further about the impact their lifestyle has on their wellness, so they don't have a passive spa experience, but take more responsibility for their health. We very strongly believe in a holistic approach to health and are all-inclusive, so beauty and comfort should not exclude health and good nutrition. We look at both the 'internal' and the 'external' to show our guests that it's really very simple to eat well and live healthily."

The clinic has seven dieticians as well as two dietician cooks, led by head dietician Laurence Grosjean. The team works on all the menus for both the café and the main gourmet restaurant, which are changed three times a year, under the guidance of head chef Jean-Bernard Muraro. "We have an approach to food and nutrition that takes in the whole body," says Grosjean.



Clockwise from top left: The VIP suite can provide private treatments for couples; the new spa café features contemporary furniture by Cassina; one of three Thai treatment rooms created due to increased demand for Oriental massage



"Eating nourishes every part of your body so our new spa café menu has been created to be full of colourful, flavoursome, healthy food to enhance our guests' spa experience and boost their overall feeling of wellness."

Perfectly Swiss

A Swiss Perfection spa lounge has also been created as part of the newly envisaged spa. Using a predominantly white palette, to retain a medical element in its design, the lounge is furnished with contemporary white designs from BD Barcelona. It has been intended as a space where guests can discover and experience Swiss Perfection products; an exclusive range used for all treatments at the spa, as well as being available for retail, that was developed in collaboration with Clinique La Prairie's laboratories.

As Dr Heini explains, the spa's revamp is the first part of a wider redevelopment at the clinic. "At all levels of Clinique La Prairie, we don't want to hide our medical aspect, but instead incorporate it into the design by using a white palette and a clean aesthetic. We also wanted to retain and embrace our Swiss identity and reputation for innovation, as well as elevate the awareness of the Swiss Perfection brand. "This is the first step towards a more modern future for Clinique La Prairie. Our customers travel extensively and have a global vision of hospitality and we wanted to make the overall spa experience both more holistic and enjoyable."

Innovative flourishes

On the upper level, running parallel to the spa's swimming pool, are sensory showers and a Kneipp path, as well as a new relaxation area that provides an intimate cocoon of tranquility in the shape of five large beds, supplied by Molteni & C, with personalised controls for lighting and music.



The spa's treatment facilities, previously decorated in shades of brown, have been refreshed using warm white shades and the spa now offers 11 individual treatment rooms, a junior suite and a VIP double suite including a steamroom, sauna and bath with chromotherapy jets by Italian specialist Starpool. In response to an increased demand for Oriental massages, three Thai treatment rooms have also been created – including one catering for couples.

Each treatment room has its own shower as well as a bed and furniture supplied by Gharieni, and a multitude of functions including light colour, ventilation, music and temperature can be operated by a single touchscreen interface, some using iPads.

A dedicated manicure and pedicure room has also been created to offer treatments from OPI, with a multi-purpose pedicure seat supplied by Gharieni. New changing areas have separated the men's and



"Our new spa menu will focus on specific aims such as anti-ageing targets or relaxation methods"

Hanneke Stoop
Spa director
Clinique La Prairie



From left: The Medical Centre, which will be refurbished using the spa as a design reference; the high-tech LED therapy room

women's spaces, with the women experiencing a continuation of the pure, warm white palette and the men's area incorporating a striking granite grey and deep red combination.

A new gym, with views of the lake and mountains, has been equipped by Technogym and includes a range of individual equipment as well as a Kinesis station. There is also a separate studio, designed as an 'indoor-outdoor' concept, for classes such as acrobatic yoga (using TRX suspension harnesses), martial arts and meditation, which can be taken *al fresco*.

Technology and treatments

The refreshed spa and wellness areas have been complemented by a range of new spa treatment packages. The spa's previous treatment menu worked on a sort of *à la carte* basis, but the new selection of treatment programmes and spa days have resulted in a more structured and coherent offering.

"We felt that our previous menu was so detailed that sometimes our guests could get lost in the choices," admits spa director Hanneke Stoop. "Our new spa menu will instead focus on specific aims such as anti-ageing targets or relaxation methods; it has been designed to better complement the clinic's medical programmes."

Combining the latest technology with dermatology

and wellness means the spa's 40 different treatment programmes now offer a comprehensive range of updated spa classics alongside anti-ageing, detoxification, weight loss and fortification regimes.

There are also eight Clinique La Prairie Spa Days available to choose from, each of which combines human expertise and mechanised technology to provide therapies such as cellular photostimulation, which are enhanced by the purifying elements of exclusive Swiss Perfection products.

Looking to the future

According to Dr Heini, the ten-month refurbishment of the spa is only the first part of an ambitious redevelopment of the rest of the property. "We are just at the beginning of a range of new wellness concepts and developments which will encourage more dynamic collaboration between all areas of our operation", he states. "It is important that the entire clinic moves in the same aesthetic direction."

Next to be refreshed will be the Medical Centre, with the spa serving as a design reference. "The future design of Clinique La Prairie will follow our spa's medical, modern and minimal design aesthetic", says Dr Heini. "This is our ideal – that we retain our medical element, but we prevent and heal in a space that is soothing, calming and above all, holistic."

Stoop concurs: "Our vision is to inspire people to live with greater health and harmony; through the continuous innovation of our facilities and services, we aim to create an unforgettable experience for our guests." ●●●●●

SPA STATISTICS

Clinique La Prairie Spa
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www.laprairie.ch

President: Gregor Mattli
CEO: Mark Baier
Medical director: Dr Adrian Heini
Spa director: Hanneke Stoop
Head dietician: Laurence Grosjean
Spa interior design: Brönnimann & Gottreux Architectes

Spa team: 25
Treatment facilities: 18 treatment rooms (comprising 11 aesthetic rooms; one junior suite; VIP room for couples; three Thai massage rooms; photostimulation room; manicure and pedicure room); Technogym-supplied gym with a studio; Swiss Perfection spa lounge; spa café; relaxation room

Wet spa: Indoor swimming pool; sauna; steamroom; Kneipp path; sensory showers; ice showers and cold mist

Product partners (treatments): Swiss Perfection

Suppliers: treatment room furniture, Gharieni; treatment room light and sound controls, Basalte; wet area, Starpool. New treatment machines include 'Oxy Megastation' by Kairos Medical; 'Photostimulation' by Beauty Swiss Concept; 'Icoone' by Be Well Concept

Furniture: BD Barcelona, Cassina and Molteni & C