

## THE SCANDI SANCTUARY

*De-stress Retreat, Kurhotel Skodsborg, Denmark*

**WHAT TO EXPECT** Just 20 minutes from Copenhagen, between beach and forest, is a winning combination of Scandi spa rituals punctuated with hardy outdoor challenges. The hotel's grand white building dates back to 1898 and was originally built as a sanatorium by Dr Carl Ottosen, renowned for his six principles of healthy living: light, movement, air, water, rest and diet, which are still at the core of the spa's philosophy today.

**NEED TO KNOW** In the wake of a burnout, I sign up for a three-day De-stress retreat. I'm greeted by nutritionist Gitte Høj, who assesses my goals, prescribing a paleo diet in lieu of the hotel's Michelin-starred restaurant. My schedule ranges from the sublime – skin-boosting BioEffects facials and Svaroopaa yoga for spinal release (a godsend for my creaky back) – to the more taxing – no-nonsense Thomas Rode's Water Cross Fit class. It's immensely challenging but the post-workout endorphin buzz is phenomenal. Rode explains that an icy dip trains our 'flight or fight' response, making us better able to cope with stress, as well as boosting the immune system and improving mood. Pack a sporty swimsuit rather than a bikini to brave it; although you'll also be given not one, but two wetsuits for the classes.

**THE MUST-TRY** In the SaunaGus, a 'mist master' leads deep-breathing exercises, while dousing hot stones with essential oils and channeling heat with the expert flick of a towel, before dispatching us for yet another bracing plunge into the Baltic. The cold-water ritual is addictive; I repeat it twice daily and am stunned to find it really works to tighten up my body.

**THE RESULTS** Back home I'm two pounds lighter and feel like the weight of the world has been lifted; my dark circles have gone, and I've never slept so well. Learning to embrace the outdoors has inspired me to add an early-morning jog into my routine, too. *Olivia Falcon*

*From £167 per night; skodsborg.dk*

