

THE DESTINATION SPA **SIX SENSES KAPLANKAYA**

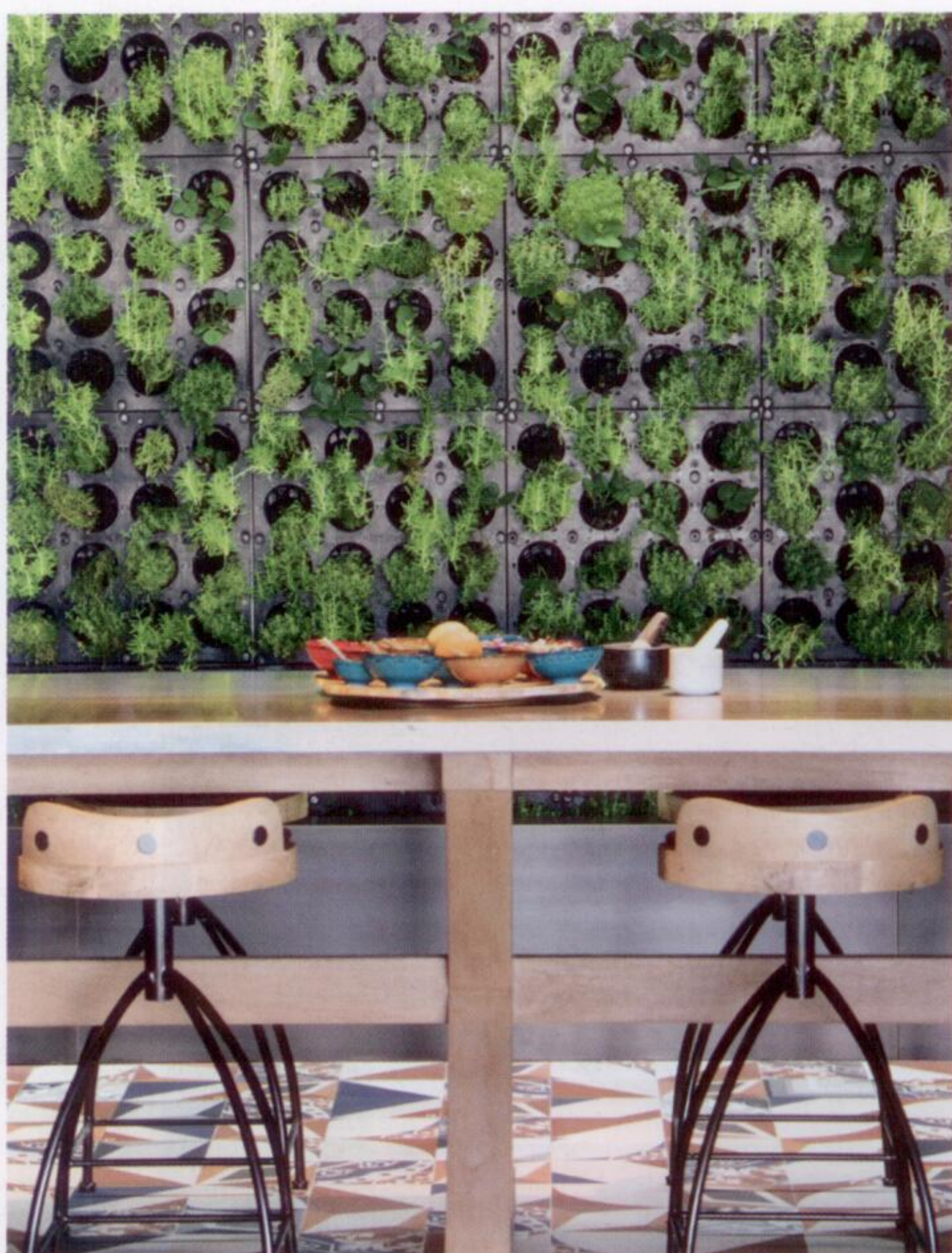
ISSY VON SIMSON IS FIRST THROUGH THE DOORS OF A HOTEL THAT'S REVIVING THE TURKISH RIVIERA

KAPLANKAYA IS QUITE OUT OF THE ORDINARY. Not a gentle, low-key production, nor the usual reimagining of a tumbledown Turkish village. On the contrary, it is huge, impactful, challenging. A private estate of rocky terrain, sheltered coves and clear waters as playground for architectural oneupmanship. It has villas and beach clubs, a hotel, plans for more hotels and a marina by Sir Norman Foster. If you face out to the inky deep Aegean, all is supremely well with the world. If you turn and look behind you, the sheer scale of the place is quite shocking. An entire town carved into a

pristine pine- and cypress-covered hillside. And yet, there is method to this Simcity madness.

This part of the coastline, north of Bodrum, is where Monaco-based property developer Burak Öymen came on simple childhood holidays. When the deeds to the land came across his desk 12 years ago, he couldn't resist. But charming 40-something Öymen is not your regular suited hotel owner. Dressed head-to-toe in Orlebar Brown, he and his wife Tereza Maxová, ex-Victoria's Secret model and two-time *Condé Nast Traveller* cover girl, live here with their

Clockwise from top left: Küçük Kumsal beach at Six Senses Kaplankaya; the library space; one of three pools; the sunset bar at Anhinga restaurant



children. As do many of their friends in the villas he's built along the ridges. Eva Herzigová and Karolína Kurková flew in the summer before last for Öymen and Maxová's wedding. Author Nevbahar Koç is here hunting for hidden beaches in Öymen's helicopter, for her next Assouline coffee-table book. The morning spin class is packed with women from Portland, Oregon, as well as Istanbul. In other words, here is a turbo-chic nomadic community that ebbs and flows with long weekends and summer breaks. As an onlooker, it is captivating.

In 2016, the first hotel arrived at Kaplankaya. Canyon Ranch – the phenomenal wellness programme from the USA – set up a property of the sort never seen before in this part of Europe. A vast building reaching wide arms across the hillside and tumbling down five levels, but with a mission statement ultimately too prescriptive for the Bodrum peninsula. A hotel, but actually a destination spa. Villa owners would stroll in with their families for an early supper, only to be told no children were allowed. They tried to order a drink. No alcohol. Then light a cigarette, at which point they'd be firmly shown the door. That, perhaps, could have been worked on. But the Istanbul and Ankara coup d'état attempt against President Erdoğan that followed soon after opening meant Canyon Ranch simply never got off the ground. American guests were scared off. BA cancelled the direct flight from London. Suddenly, even those who wanted to come, couldn't.

Öymen is the first to admit he made a mistake with this initial partnership, but he remembered discussions with BB (Bernhard Bohnenberger, the president of Six Senses) some years before, and put in a call. 'Where are you?' Öymen asked BB. BB was about to

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fly from Bangkok to Vienna for a dinner. 'Can you come and meet me? At Kaplankaya?' When BB disembarked off the overnight from Thailand, Öymen's private jet was waiting for him. 'I promise, this will just take a few hours'. So he flew from Austria to Turkey for lunch and by the return leg, the deal was sealed. Six Senses would come in and take over the property that Canyon Ranch left.

This was not as straightforward as it sounds. Until recently, Six Senses has been a byword for barefoot retreats that had wellbeing at their core but weren't puritanical or hair-shirt-like. The spa proposition, based on Chinese, Indian, Thai and Indonesian therapies, was a holistic option, gentle but effective. The aesthetic was textured, soft, a sun-bleached representation of local culture. People go to Six Senses for winter sun, and to feel good about themselves while drinking biodynamic wine on the beach. And here, in Turkey, was a medical clinic of hospital-sized proportions to call their new

home. Everyone thought BB was mad.

Clodagh, the New York-based designer who worked on Six Senses Douro Valley in Portugal, was brought in to impart the signature Six Senses styling. The setting is dramatic but the building is not beautiful by any stretch. It's an airport terminal dialled up to 10. Not a blot on the landscape, but not far off. Inside, though, it gets interesting. Soft leather ottomans, bright patterned kilims reimaged as cushions, Turkish rugs underfoot, lanterns flickering along pathways at night. It is, actually, quietly glamorous and rather wonderful.

And in the belly of the building were the bones of a full-scale medi-clinic, to be given the Six Senses once-over. Dr Claudia Aguirre, a quietly-spoken molecular neuroscientist and TEDx speaker from Venice Beach, LA, has flown in to create the all-new

Top: the hotel's Alchemy bar, for preparing scrubs and masks for spa treatments or private anti-ageing suppers; the sunbathing deck at Anhinga



Holistic Anti-Ageing centre, for cleansing the brain, the skin and the gut. A highly personalised timetable could be filled up with relaxing oil-dripping shirodhara, sessions in the watsu pool, as well as with the skin diagnostics team, Biologique Recherche facials (with the amazing cult P50 treatments) and Ila massages. It's not the sort of place that you'll experience aura cleansing or shamanic healing, but there are therapists – seek out Sibel – with magic hands and the most open hearts. Six Senses' Integrated Wellness immersions, launched last year, step up a notch here too. Physiological biomarkers are measured (detailing everything from insulin resistance and arterial stiffness to skin micro-circulation and recovery capacity) by Dr Ranjan Kapoor, who'll also throw in an off-the-cuff Ayurvedic lowdown ('make sure you have a cooked breakfast, you're Vata, you need warming up').

Most interesting, though, is the physical assessment centre with its Bod Pod body density calculations (also used by NASA), metabolic testing contraptions and medical diagnostics labs, all a hang-over from the Canyon Ranch days. The director of exercise physiology, Erkan Güneş, is also ex-Canyon Ranch, and offers the sort of evaluation only pro-athletes would usually have access to. At his command is a truly incredible hi-tech gym and fitness outfit, the best I have ever seen in a hotel. It is super-sized and incredibly kitted out: packed with Technogym machines, indoor volleyball and basketball courts, indoor pools, yoga studios, reformer Pilates rooms. And because the regime is totally tailored, results are as good as they can be.

Of course, food also plays a crucial part. Gut health is at the centre of the spa's methodology (try the intestinal cleanse yoga

A MOLECULAR NEUROSCIENTIST WAS FLOWN IN TO CREATE THE HOLISTIC ANTI-AGEING CENTRE, FOR CLEANSING BRAIN, SKIN AND GUT

and menus are designed to complement the programmes. You can include raw food, vegan food, dishes high in antioxidants or resistant starches. Chefs look to local food lore, so you'll find stinging nettles turned into an aromatic pesto for courgette noodles (the Turkish have used them for millennia, blanching and whizzing into a restorative soup). Collagen-fuelled bone broths are made from scratch. Soya is forbidden. Nut milks, probiotics, kefir, kombucha and apple cider vinegar are the order of the day. But it's not all deprivation. For anyone not following a prescribed diet, there's stunning mezze, wood-fired pizzas, street-food-style lamb kebabs and gin cocktails made using honey and home-grown lavender.

Perhaps therein lies my concern. Can this really work as a destination spa if it offers everything else? Can you have bottles of rosé and fig crema catalana with almond biscotti on the menu and kids dive bombing in the pool while immersing yourself in a detoxing cleanse? For those with steely resolve and rock-steady willpower, who can put the blinkers on and focus on the task at hand, this could be a brilliantly happy medium. As somewhere to dip your toe into a meaningful spa experience, to try a programme without the guilt of leaving the children at home, to consider gentle fasting or hardcore exercise with the reward of a sunbed on a perfect crescent of beach, I can think of nowhere more enticing right now. 📍

BOOK IT Healing Holidays offers a five-night Cleanse & Detox programme from £1,749 per person, including flights, transfers, breakfast and all treatments according to the programme. +44 20 7843 3592; healingholidays.co.uk

Top: underneath the olive trees; the concrete fireplace created by New York-based designer Clodagh, who used kilims, ottomans and Turkish rugs