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(Health)

I Went To Ibiza In Search Of Eternal Youth

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by HANNAH BAXTER

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Behind the scenes at a luxury wellness retreat.

Despite the intense public interest in total body wellness (an industry that was valued at \$1.5 trillion in 2021), and my own career as a beauty journalist, I tend to approach many of these burgeoning products and practices with a healthy level of skepticism. That's not to say that I don't want to feel better, lower my stress levels, and generally enhance my mind, body, and spirit. On the contrary, I'm willing to try pretty much anything that crosses my path that promises improvements in these areas. It's whether or not they stack up to the hype that's the issue. After all, if it sounds too good to be true, it probably is, right? For many things in the wellness arena, yes — just look to the surplus of celebrity-endorsed supplements — but for Dr. Mark Hyman's Young Forever Retreat at Six Senses Ibiza, the outlook might be a refreshingly optimistic one.

If you're not regularly perusing the internet for answers to some of our society's most pressing questions — namely, how you can live a longer, healthier life — you might not be familiar with Dr. Hyman or his role as a champion of longevity practices. Essentially, the scientist, best-selling author, and chief medical officer of RoseBar, a new longevity club housed at Six Senses Ibiza, advocates for a lifestyle that supports the body's fundamental processes and does away with things that interrupt them, like a diet high in sugar, processed food, and refined carbohydrates, as well as a lack of regular exercise, not enough sleep, and various environmental toxins. Add in plenty of supplements, a few targeted treatments like cryotherapy and vitamin drips, and together Dr. Hyman claims they can help to lower your body's biological age (as opposed to reversing your chronological age which is, to date, still impossible) and keep your body functioning at an optimum level for as long as possible.



Courtesy of Hannah Baxter

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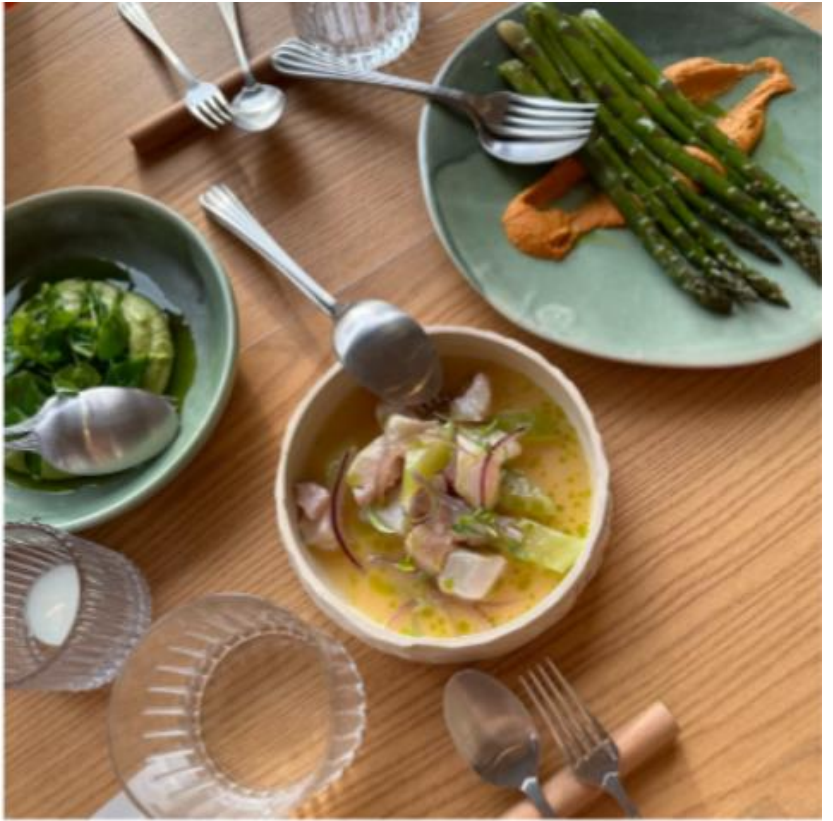
Given that I'm a millennial woman living in New York City, these types of daily stressors are basically synonymous with my lifestyle, so I was curious to see if spending a few days at the Six Senses resort and experiencing the various wellness offerings from RoseBar would help set my body on a path of improved longevity. Or, would the retreat simply reinforce my skepticism about pay-to-play wellness and the people who promote it?

So, Can RoseBar Actually Reverse Your Age?

Dr. Hyman's theory of longevity and commitment to functional medicine are all centered around combatting the 10 hallmarks of aging, which includes things like mitochondrial dysfunction, deregulated insulin sensing, and microbiome imbalance, in order to halt and reverse your biological age. "Functional medicine is the science of creating health," he explained to the group of press and retreat participants during our first morning at Six Senses. "Getting chronologically older is not a disease, but getting biologically older is. Everything you do is influencing your gene expression."

In other words, the choices we make when it comes to the food we eat, the amount we exercise, how much we sleep, and how stressed we are not only impacts how long we live, but how well our body and mind functions during those years. This is, as Dr. Hyman calls it, the difference between your health span and your life span, and personally, I'm interested in improving both. It was also particularly fortuitous timing for this kind of trip since I had just spent the week prior in France, and any Francophile will understand that my diet consisted mainly of wine, cheese, and chocolate croissants. There's certainly a case to be made for enjoying the best parts of any country's cuisine, but following my week of indulgence, I was ready for a wellness detox.

Hannah Baxter



Hannah Baxter



Hannah Baxter

What Happens During The Young Forever Retreat?

For starters, the grounds at Six Senses are breathtaking. Perched on the rocky island coast, the hotel is a masterclass of earthy, minimal luxury, even if half the clientele is nursing a ruthless hangover at the pool and the other is taking an ocean dip after their morning yoga class. I fell into the latter category, although I swapped the yoga after day one for more time in the sea and sun, aka my own personal version of wellness.

Since the majority of Dr. Hyman's longevity philosophy involves obtaining the right vitamin and nutrients to improve mitochondrial health, lower insulin levels, and reduce internal inflammation, food was a major focus of the RoseBar programming. Essentially, we're eating too much of the bad stuff and not enough of the good stuff, and it's wrecking our health in more ways than we ever imagined. Granted, eating healthy meals full of beneficial fats, protein, and leafy green vegetables is simple when a professional chef is preparing them for you, but I appreciated the relatively straightforward idea of eating better, cutting out sugar and white flour, limiting alcohol and caffeine, and rejecting all things processed.

Then there were the supplements.


After an intentionally light 9 a.m. breakfast of bone broth and smoothies, each participant ingested their first round of supplements — a dosage designed by Dr. Hyman — including: NAC (N-acetyl cysteine), polyphenols, vitamin D3, omega 3, and vitamin C (if you're feeling constipated). Then we dove into our daily lecture before splitting off for various RoseBar treatments, which were assigned by the team of medical experts based on our epigenetic data (aka the expression of your various genes) to “biohack” our way to better health.

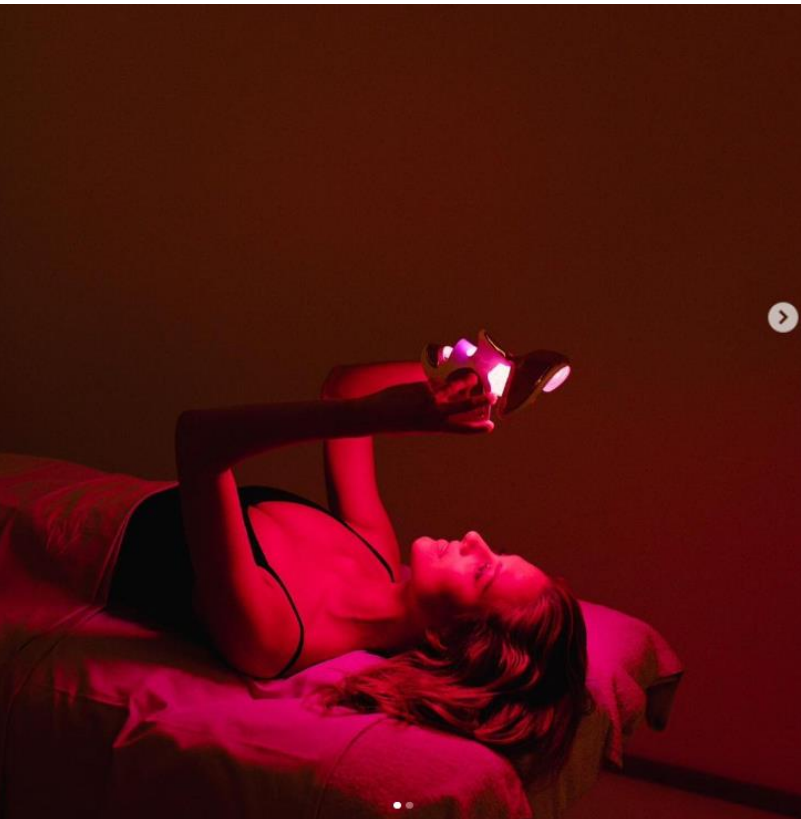
Lunch and dinner was a group activity and featured organic, local ingredients with plenty of protein options (even T-bone steak) and at least half a dozen types of vegetables. It was, to put it simply, delicious, and although I would have appreciated a glass of red wine to accompany our evening meals, I'll admit that I woke up each morning feeling energized and looking radiant. The night finished with our second round of supplements and then it was off to bed for (hopefully) eight hours of sleep.





What Kind Of Treatments Help Reduce Your Biological Age?

Now, eating healthy is all well and good, and yes, my body felt phenomenal after the five days were up (if a little cranky from sugar and caffeine withdrawal), but RoseBar offers many more treatments than just a meal plan during the Young Forever retreat. It would have to considering the week at Six Senses will run you close to \$15,000.

It was impossible to try every single treatment option, but among my favorites were the spa's bespoke massage (my stress levels melted away), and an intravenous vitamin drip containing vitamin B3, vitamin C, magnesium, and zinc, plus an extra push of glutathione, all while I wore compression boots (you can actually buy these to use at home). I also tried the cold plunge, which I've done multiple times at the Russian Baths in the East Village (decidedly less chic but still amazing), and an energy healing massage (which was perfectly fine but didn't feel as noteworthy). There were also options like ozone therapy and a hyperbaric oxygen chamber, but considering the fact that we were in Ibiza, I wanted to prioritize my time outside by the water, a setting I can't easily find in my Brooklyn neighborhood.

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Six Senses Ibiza View profile



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Red Ligh Therapy supplies energy (in the form of light) to mitochondria, the energy batteries of cells.

In turn, this helps the mitochondria relieve inflammation, stiffness and soreness by increasing blood circulation and carrying off more metabolic waste products.
It also supports skin integrity by stimulating collagen.

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#redlight #redlighttherapy #redlightsauna

Nightly activities also included sound baths, a cocoa sunset ceremony, and group sharing — things that focused more on building community and reducing stress, both central tenants of Dr. Hyman’s longevity teachings.

Did I Find The Secret To Eternal Youth In Ibiza?

After my five days at Six Senses (the typical retreat is at least a week) I left the property feeling rested and contoured, my body free from any hangover bloating or excess salt intake that usually accompanies an island vacation. All it took was one sad airport sandwich on my journey home to remind myself how easy it is to fall back into the reality of our daily lives, which are often not set up to prioritize longevity, much less total body wellness.

As much as I would love to schedule a biannual detox at a high tech wellness facility like RoseBar, that is sadly not feasible for someone in my tax bracket. However, Dr. Hyman's three most important longevity practices are accessible, even if a trip to Ibiza isn't in the cards.

"It's easy," he explained during our last lunch at the resort. "It's about your diet, like fasting overnight, getting protein in the morning, and cutting sugar and starch way down with no processed foods. Resistance training, and emphasizing that as you get older [since we lose muscle]. Then building community. Having a network of friends and a social fabric where you feel connected. [This] is the hardest one, but loneliness and isolation are the biggest killers, and we don't address that. Community is medicine just like food and exercise [are] medicine."

So, if the rest of my year looks like getting lunch with friends after a yoga class, sipping green juice and eating arugula and salmon salads, just know that I'm not only improving the way I look and feel — I'm actually tapping into the fountain of youth, or as close as we can get in 2023. I'll still take the occasional trip to Ibiza if I can manage it, because what is life without a few indulgences?