

Pella's hot springs draw visitors from far and wide

Therapeutic waters at Pozar ideal for relaxation and easing aches and pains

Necessary accessories when visiting the mountains of Pella in northern Greece are a warm jacket, a woolen cap, a bathing suit and a towel. The reason for such incongruous gear is simply that after walking the beautiful trails of Mount Kaimaktalan, it has become something of a tradition to visit the hot springs in the gorge down below.

Located at an altitude of 360-390 meters, just 2 kilometers from the village of Loutra, the area of the hot springs known as Pozar, among other names, is fed by the Thermopotamos (or Hot River) and features natural springs with an average temperature of 37 degrees Celsius as well as ice-cold river waters.

It is a strangely beautiful experience to be sitting in a naturally hot pool in the middle of a forest, with cold waterfalls crashing nearby and the steam from the baths lending the entire area a fairy-tale quality. A few of the more daring patrons, and there are hundreds every day, will leap out of the hot pools and into the chilly river water, treating themselves to the very therapeutic effects of the switch.

Those looking for a more exclusive experience head for the outdoor swimming pools, which boast a stunning backdrop of cliffs and are fed by the same thermal waters as the natural springs. Among the families enjoying a day of fun as well as serious-minded spa aficionados, there are also those who go to Pozar for therapeutic reasons, as the waters are considered beneficial for a variety of skin, heart and lung disorders, and also soothe the aches and pains caused by rheumatism or arthritis.

For decades, the area of Pozar has served the residents of central and northern Greece, though it is fast growing into a national and even multinational industry, with increasing arrivals from other parts of the country and elsewhere around the Balkans. The first indoor hydrotherapy unit opened in 1960 and is now e-



quipped with individual bathing pools, two swimming pools that accommodate 12 people each, and two natural outdoor pools. The facilities were all given a revamp four years ago and are clean and very well maintained, while the new Alexandreio Hydrotherapy Unit offers more modern facilities and eight pools that can accommodate six people each.

The prices – in the outdoor facilities at least – are very affordable and this is one reason why Pozar is so popular. Admission is free to children under 7, while the cost for older children and adults is just 2 euros for

30 minutes in the small outdoor pool and 4 euros in the big pool.

In the old hydrotherapy center, the cost is 5 euros per person for 30 minutes in all the swimming pools except the springs from Monday to 1 p.m. on Friday, and 15 euros for the same facilities on weekends. For the natural springs, the cost is 15 euros for 30 minutes throughout the week. In the summer the price is 4 euros for the swimming pools and 5 euros for the springs. At the Alexandreio Hydrotherapy Unit, the price is 15 euros per person for 30 minutes.

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