

Travel

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'I'm on the Arctic tundra in Canada — and I'm about to walk with a polar bear'

Ian Belcher on a breathtaking encounter

Constance Le Prince
Maurice, Mauritius (2)



50 great spa holidays for 2014

Lose weight and get fit, take a life-changing break or just get away for a reinvigorating weekend, says **Caroline Sylger Jones**

*All prices exclude flights unless otherwise stated

Lose weight

1 Wildfitness Long Transformation Course Kenya

Wildfitness uses outdoor, natural surroundings to get you fit so you feel as far from an urban gym as you possibly can, all based at a wondrous private house on the Watamu coast.

The intensive, three-and-a-half-week holiday is the one to go for if you want to transform your body — you'll swim in the sea, run in the surrounding countryside, play hunter-gatherer games on the beach and take training sessions in a coconut grove. The next course runs February 1-25. **Details** From £5,808pp for 24 nights, including a private room, all meals, activities, four massages, two personal training sessions and transfers from Malindi airport (00254 725 143393, wildfitness.com)

2 Fast Diet at Constance Le Prince Maurice Mauritius

What better place to get the hang of the intermittent fasting proposed by the bestselling *The Fast Diet* than at a cossetting tropical hotel? Co-author Mimi Spencer has devised a "Kick-start the Fast Diet" pack for guests at Constance Le Prince Maurice with nutritious and tasty menus. You can also have treatments at the Sisley spa, specially chosen to help your digestion; sunrise and sunset yoga; Pilates classes and optional sessions with fitness guru Isabelle Lamant. **Details** From £2,073pp per week, half board in a junior suite, including return flights with Air Mauritius and transfers with Audley Travel (01993 838250, hiddenbeaches.co.uk)



3 Vita Health Weight Loss Programme at Verdura Sicily

Rocco Forte's serene seaside resort boasts a serious spa with grown-up health programmes overseen by Dr Nyjon Eccles, a leading integrated medicine physician. There's a results-driven course for holistic weight loss, for which they'll test your urine, blood and saliva before you arrive. Tasty meals are devised by nutritionist Amelia Freer and cooked with passion by Fulvio Pierangelini, and there's a fantastic range of outdoor hydrotherapy pools you'll find it hard to get out of. **Details** From €2,700pp (£2,260pp) for seven nights on an all-inclusive weight-loss programme, plus from €470 per room per night (0039 0925 998001, verduraresort.com) ▶

22 Travel

4 Kamalaya Fusion Fitness Holiday Thailand

Lose weight at one of the world's best holistic spas, set beside a private lagoon at the quiet end of Koh Samui. A Fusion Fitness holiday helps you to improve strength, flexibility and balance, as well as reach your ideal weight, with a healthy diet and physical activities and treatments to tone your body and boost your metabolism. Choose from Muay Thai boxing, TRX suspension training, yoga, meditation or ayurveda. **Details** From £2,595pp for seven nights, full board, including Fusion Fitness activities, flights and transfers with Health and Fitness Travel (020-3397 8891, healthandfitnesstravel.com)

5 in:spa various locations

In:spa weeks in Spain, France and Morocco combine deliciously light detox food and supportive personal trainers to ensure short and long-term weight loss. Blissful yoga and massage sessions ensure you return home re-energised. The most popular venue is an exotic villa in Marrakesh; the next retreat runs from January 30 to February 6. **Details** From £1,895pp for seven nights in Marrakesh, including meals, fitness, yoga, hiking, two massages plus airport transfers (0845 4580723, inspa.co.uk)

6 Grayshott Health Regime Surrey

With slow, sensible weight loss on a mainly paleo diet (steak, smoked salmon and Parma ham), expect stern rather than sybaritic treatments

— castor oil liver packs and abdominal massage — plus lectures and lots of consultations.

Details From £1,495 for seven nights, full board, and inclusive of consultations and six prescribed treatments (01428 602020, grayshottspa.com)



Get fit

7 The Fitness Renaissance Siena, Italy

This is an intensive break run by the Welsh personal trainer Drew Perrott at Villa di Geggiano, an elegant 18th-century summer villa in the foothills of Siena. Expect a powerful mix of running, circuits, boxing, core work, weights and immune-boosting dips in a "cool pool", all softened by holistic treatments with Drew's mother, Christine Perrott, and the healthy side of Italian cuisine.

Details From £1,900pp per week, including all meals, activities and four treatments (07976 619374, drewperrott.co.uk)

8 Wilderness SUP Retreats Baia Formosa, Brazil

On these stand-up paddleboarding (SUP) weeks at an upmarket *pousada*, you can do yoga at sunrise, go paddling through mangroves and learn the art of getting fit through capoeira. There are fresh juices, organic spa treatments and plenty of hammock time, too. Similar

retreats are offered in Costa Rica, Montenegro and Scotland. The next trip to Brazil is January 11-18.

Details From £1,350pp per week, all-inclusive (0131-208 1154, wildernessup.co/retreats)

9 Soul and Surf Kerala, India

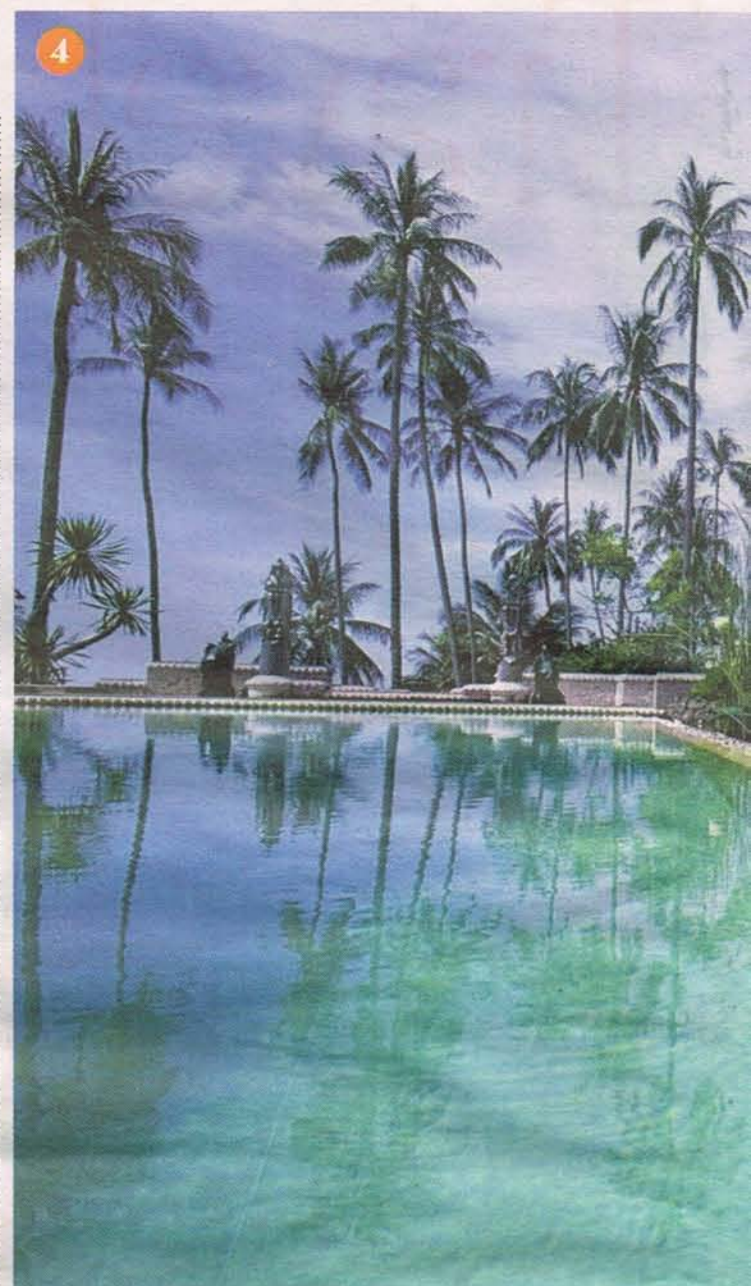
You'll work out without even realising it at this laid-back clifftop hotel. Josh leads guided surf safaris, while sunset vinyasa flow yoga sessions with Lucy take place on a rooftop overlooking the Arabian Sea. The vibe is sociable, and the Soul Food Café serves masala dosas, Thai noodle salads and wood-fired pizza.

Details From £189pp per week, B&B; daily yoga and surf lessons are from £130pp per week (soulandsurf.com)

10 Flipper Camp at Anassa Cyprus

The Anassa resort in western Cyprus is modelled on a traditional Cypriot village with its own stretch of beach, a huge spa and an array of fitness and sports activities. The five-day Flipper Camp allows you to choose from a wide range of watersports, to which you add sessions of aqua yoga and aqua gym, and top off with some excellent thalassotherapy treatments. Teenagers will love it.

Details From £682pp for five days based on four participating, including all activities, two lunches and half a day of spa treatments; double rooms from £265 per night, B&B (0035 726 888000, anassa.com.cy)



11 The Body Retreat various locations

Whether you choose detox, weight-loss, fitness or de-stress on these friendly women-only retreats in the UK and southern Spain, you'll lose weight through sensible eating, smart exercise and clever psychology. The aim is to kick-start habits you continue at home.

Details From £1,050 for six nights, including all meals and activities, plus one massage; weekends from £495 (020-3701 1603, thebodyretreat.co.uk)

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PARADISE LODGES OF BELIZE

Indulge in one of film-director Francis Ford Coppola's stylish lodges, the perfect base to see Belize's coral reefs and lush rainforest. Explore jungle-clad ancient Mayan ruins and blissful Caribbean isles, then kick back by your private pool to the sound of waterfalls, wildlife or waves breaking on a palm-fringed beach.



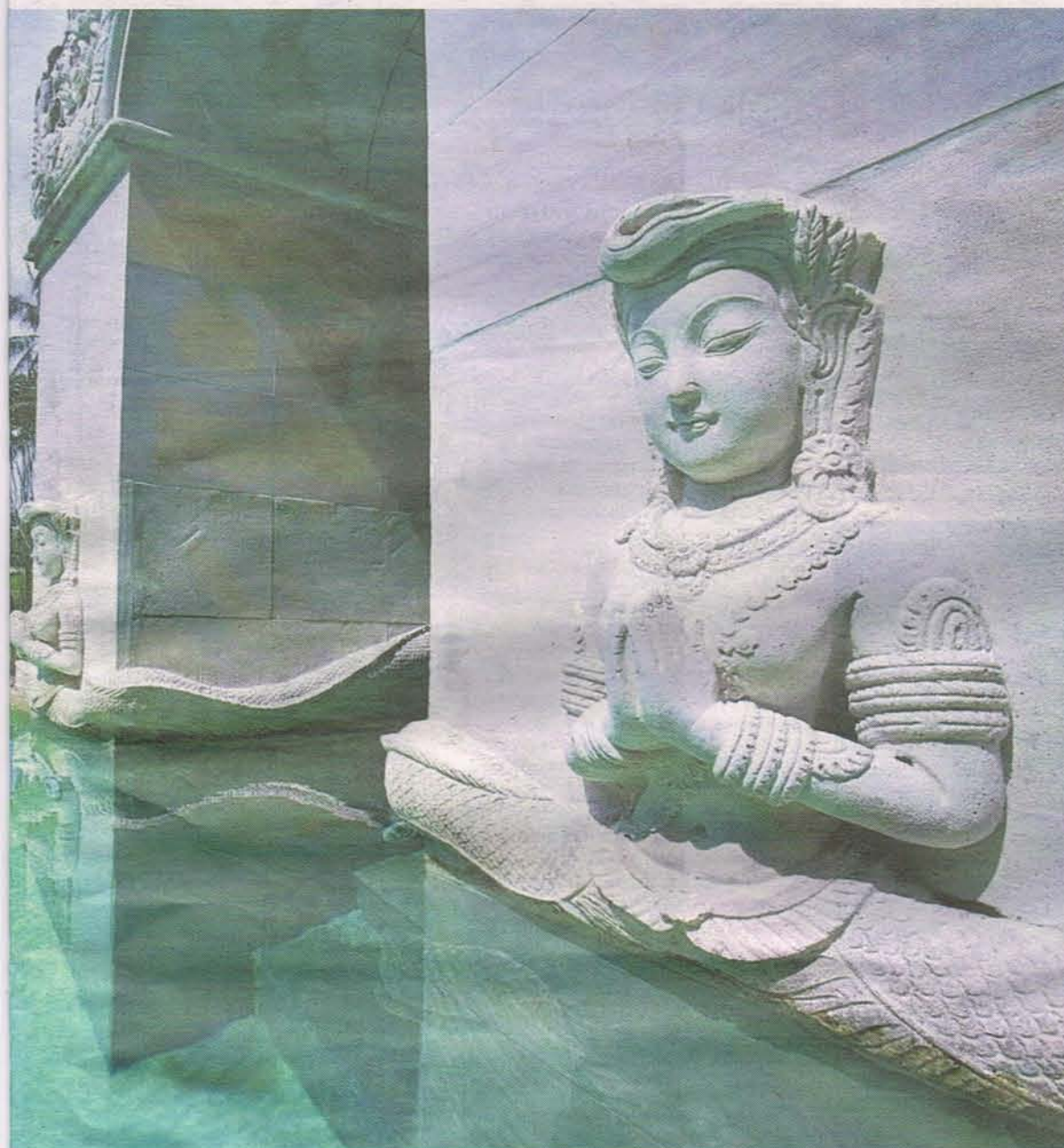
CHARM OF COLONIAL CARTAGENA, COLOMBIA

Unwind in one of the most graceful and atmospheric cities in the world. With its honey-stoned colonial architecture and cobbled alleyways flanked by flower-filled balconies, creative shops and Caribbean-fusion restaurants, Cartagena's old walled city is a delight to explore on foot.



VINEYARDS OF CHILE & ARGENTINA

Stroll through sun-kissed vineyards with the snow capped Andes as the backdrop, taste award-winning wines, enjoy gourmet cuisine and be pampered from head-to-toe in the spa; just some of the experiences awaiting you in some of South America's finest wineries.



12 38° North at The Scarlet Cornwall

The talented team from 38° North in Ibiza are on UK shores from January to April, then again in November — join them for three, four or five-day Optimal Fitness breaks at the Scarlet spa hotel, set on a Cornish beach. Get fit with beach circuits, yoga, hiking on the moors, coastal runs, mountain biking and surf sessions, then kick back in the spa.

Details From £1,259pp for three nights, including all meals, fitness activities and use of spa (0034 971 338093, thirtyeightdegreesnorth.com)

Yoga in the sun

13 Silver Island Yoga Greece

This 60-acre, privately owned yoga island has just two whitewashed, blue-shuttered houses, an open-air yoga shala with views of the Aegean, a couple of cute, pebbly beaches and more than 2,500 olive trees. Week-long yoga holidays from April to October, taught by expert visiting teachers, are open to beginners as well as experienced yogis.

Details From £1,100pp, sharing a twin room with shared bathroom for six nights' full board, including yoga (silverislandyoga.com)

14 Yoga Rocks Crete

This tranquil retreat on Crete's unspoilt south coast has breathtaking sea views and is within walking distance of several beaches. The hosts, Helen and Phil, choose their yoga teachers for their sparkle, integrity and experience, and the varied May-to-October schedule is as likely to include ashtanga and

kundalini as scaravelli and jivamukti. Beginners are welcome.

Details From £675pp per week, all-inclusive (yogaholidaysgreece.com)

15 Suleyman's Garden Turkey

The new little sister to popular Huzur Vadisi is a family-run working farm with simple accommodation in chalets set amid crops — with yoga weeks from May to October. Do your meditation, breathwork and asanas in a field of red peppers, gazing over the Mediterranean, and eat meals cooked with produce from the farm. Treatments are also available.

Details From £655pp per week, including yoga, accommodation and food (huzurvadisi.com)

16 Destination Yoga Zening, Cyprus

Destination Yoga has selected Zening as a new venue this year and recruited London's much-loved Laura Gate-Eastley and Zoe Knott, among others, to guide its week-long holidays. Do yoga in a dedicated pavilion or on shaded decks with panoramic sea views. There are pools and a spa to enjoy. The next retreat is May 10-17.

Details From £795pp for seven nights, including all meals, yoga tuition and transfers (0845 4580723, destinationyoga.co.uk)

17 La Rosa dei 4 Venti Italy

"The Rose of the Four Winds" is a family-run retreat in the Itria Valley of Puglia, whose yoga room has a vaulted ceiling and underfloor heating. The programme features teachers from all

over the world; the next runs April 11-18 with Angela Croce. **Details** Prices vary, with bookings through the individual yoga teachers (larosadei4venti.org)

18 Shanti Som Spain

This boutique, Balinese-style hotel offers healthy food and yoga classes all year round. Mourad and Natalie teach a blend of yoga styles from kundalini to ashtanga for all levels and combine a physical practice with meditation.

Details From £1,299pp for a six-night yoga programme, including full board, eight group yoga classes and airport transfers with The Healthy Holiday Company (0845 4580723, thehealthyholidaycompany.com)

Learn to meditate

19 Wilderness Minds Wales

Created by Welshman Sholto Radford, a certified mountain leader and a researcher at the Centre for Mindfulness Research and Practice (CMRP) at Bangor University, Wilderness Minds offers a gentle introduction to mindfulness. Courses are in natural outdoor settings in Snowdonia National Park, and include wild camping, "glamping" retreats and residential courses at Trigonos retreat centre.

Details From £190pp for a two-night, three-day wild camping weekend, including food and equipment



(01248 521621, wildernessminds.co.uk)

20 Serenity Retreat UK & Greece

Zen Buddhist meditation teacher

Kim Bennett is a warm, down-to-earth woman with an infectious sense of humour. Her

Serenity Retreat, on the Greek island of Lefkada and at a UK country house, is great for solo travellers interested in spirituality, personal growth or relaxation.

Details From £379pp per week in Greece, including accommodation, transfers from most flights, a welcome lunch, guided meditations and walks (01698 542787, serenityretreat.co.uk)

21 London Buddhist Centre Introductory Weekend Retreats Suffolk

These introductory weekends are ideal for anyone who wants to learn to meditate in a kindly and safe commune-like environment. You are taught Mindfulness of Breathing and the Metta Bhavana ("Cultivation of Loving Kindness"). Retreats usually take place at Vajrasana, the London Buddhist Centre's retreat centre in Suffolk, but between May and September they will be held at a nearby venue while the centre is renovated. The next runs February 14-16.

Details From £150pp on an all-inclusive basis for a weekend (0845 4584716, lbc.org.uk/retreat.asp) ▶



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24 Travel

22 Freely Given Retreats
Devon

This new charity offers meditation retreats to newcomers and dedicated meditators alike in keeping with the Buddhist practice of "dana", or giving, so you pay only what you can afford. Retreats teach insight meditation, or mindfulness, and are held mainly in silence at High Heathercombe in Dartmoor National Park. The next retreat, How To Make a Life, by Ken Jones, runs May 25-31.

Details There is a suggested donation of at least £150pp per week (freelygivenretreats.org)



Heal with ayurveda

23 Four Seasons Landaa
Giraavaru, Maldives

This tiny, jungle-clad, luxury holiday island offers medically accredited 14 or 21-day panchakarma retreats overseen by Dr Peeyush Kumar. You'll be pounded and poulticed with herbalised oils in open-air rooms pitched around an ayurvedic garden, then you will be able to chill out, swim in your lap pool, or lie in your hammock.

Details From £6,908pp for seven days in a Beach Bungalow room on an all-inclusive Ayurveda Retreat Package, including transfers (fourseasons.com/maldiveslg)

24 Kalari Kovilakom
Kerala, India

At this upmarket ashram in a maharajah's palace with spacious, herb-filled grounds, let experts lead you through a programme of daily ayurvedic oil massages, supported by yoga and meditation classes. Programmes run for two weeks or more to ensure the ayurveda has time to achieve its effect. Choose anti-stress, panchakarma (detox), slimming or anti-ageing.

Details From £5,512pp for a 14-day anti-stress programme, including full board, treatments, classes, pyjamas and airport transfers (cghearth.com/kalari)

25 SwaSwara
Karnataka, India

SwaSwara is a sanctuary where you can get back in touch with yourself through ayurveda mixed with yoga, art classes and naturopathy. The setting is exquisite, next to a beach shaped like the symbol Om.

Details From £1,203pp for a seven-night wellness holiday, single occupancy, all-inclusive (08386 257132, swaswara.com)

26 Schloss Pichlarn
Austria

If you want to experience good ayurveda in a cool, calm, decidedly Western way, this welcoming hotel in an old castle will hit the spot. Surrounded by miles of superb hiking country, it offers ayurveda treatments under the supervision of German doctor Hans Schäffler. The abhyanga (soothing and balancing), vishesh (stimulating and toning) and udvartana (a metabolism-boosting scrub massage) are all superb.

Details From £787pp for a four-night stay, including B&B, ayurveda treatments and access to all the facilities with Wellbeing Escapes (020-7644 6111, wellbeingescapes.com)

27 The Clover Mill
Worcestershire

This boutique ayurvedic haven is set in a restored 17th-century water mill in Malvern. As part of your personally tailored programme you can enjoy daily yoga classes, authentic ayurvedic treatments and revitalising home-cooked organic meals,



Change your life

28 The Farm at San
Benito Philippines

For a longer healthy holiday, the Farm is a magical health retreat with a seriously good medical team and holistic spa. Come for general detoxing and de-stressing: food is organic and vegan, and the therapists treat from the heart. There are dedicated programmes for people with cancer, obesity and diabetes, while those seeking to break a habit can book the 21-night Life Changing Holiday. Children are welcome.

Details From £2,059pp, sharing a double room for a six-night, seven-day Healing Retreat, including all meals, treatments and medical services (thefarmat sanbenito.com)

29 Jane
Kersel retreats
Spain

The experienced yoga teacher and wellbeing expert Jane Kersel now runs retreats on a private estate in

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Sydney from £826*

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Fare shown is return Economy from London Heathrow via Dubai. Selected departure dates apply. Offer ends 31 January 2014 unless sold out before. Limited availability.

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Andalucía. Programmes draw on yoga and massage, but also involve deeper therapy such as live blood analysis, energy healing and voice dialogue. **Details** From £2,500pp for six nights, seven days, including accommodation, all meals, yoga and energetics coaching (07771 906006, janekersel.com)

30 Clinique La Prairie Switzerland

The rich and famous come here from all over the world for discreet health overhauls. The approach is pragmatic — high-tech combined with holistic treatments (including psychotherapy) — and the results are impressive. Everything is bespoke, from fitness sessions through diet to massage. It may be exclusive but it's not remotely stuffy. **Details** From £5,040pp for six nights, full board, spa days from £580pp (laprairie.ch)

31 Kripalu Centre for Yoga & Health Massachusetts, USA

Set in the rolling "Berkshires", this inspirational not-for-profit organisation offers more than 800 programmes year-round for anyone wanting to change or improve some aspect of themselves or their lives. Programmes for holistic health, personal growth and spirituality are grounded in yoga, but also draw on other healing traditions and recent developments in medicine, health science and psychology. Book in for body work, energy work, ayurvedic treatments and lifestyle consultations. **Details** From £101pp per night in a dorm room (kripalu.org)

32 Be The Change Journey India

This retreat is designed to help you make a positive difference through your career. You will visit pioneers in social impact organisations, and have intensive career coaching with expert coach Rosie Walford. The next retreat is from January 24 to February 1. **Details** From £3,150pp for seven nights, eight days, including accommodation, food, internal travel, activities and study materials (020-7060 1880, bethechangejourney.org)

33 Yeotox at Yeotown Devon

Known for its coastal hikes, core fitness sessions and yoga-inspired stretching, the Yeotox also includes goal-setting sessions to help you make life changes. **Details** From £1,780pp for four nights, including all activities, meals, massages and transfers to and from Tiverton train station (01271 343803, yeotown.com)

34 SHA Wellness Clinic El Albir, Alicante, Spain

This clinic has a celebrity following, with Naomi Campbell and Kylie among the many names to drop by. Some programmes are designed to help give up smoking, but there are also courses for weight loss and reducing stress. Doctors, personal trainers and nutritionists are on call to help out. Diets are based on microbiotic principles, with an emphasis on cereal grains such as brown rice and oats, as well as beans and vegetables. The clinic has slickly designed suites with either mountain or sea views. **Details** From around £3,110pp for seven



nights' full board, with flights and a seven-day anti-stress programme (020-7491 7171, www.selectcollection.co.uk)

Quirky but good

35 ILA Retreats at Yoo Cotswolds

These restorative retreats run by Denise Leicester, the founder of ethical beauty brand ILA, are designed to rebalance the nervous system. They include morning writing sessions, cycling, Nordic walking, yoga, meditation, treatments, singing and chanting. Denise's husband plays the sitar and Denise sings Sanskrit mantras after dinner. The next starts on April 27. **Details** From £1,250pp for three nights, four days, all-inclusive (01367 250066, thelakesbyyoo.com)

36 Bloom Inner Artist Retreat Majorca

This is one of the many interesting wellbeing retreats at entrepreneur Lynne Franks' home in Deia, Majorca, part of a 17th-century monastery with mountain and sea views. The break is run by artists



Frances Baxter and Mariana Alzamora and is designed to help you develop your inner artist. You'll have sessions in drawing and painting, and coaching with Lynne to help you to lead a more creative life. The next retreat is from March 30 to April 4.

Details From £950pp per week, all-inclusive (bloomretreats.com)

37 Joie de Vivre Retreats at Yobaba Lounge France

These rejuvenating breaks are run by Gertrud Keazor, a former fencing athlete and massage therapist, in her château. With an unusual blend of yoga, meditation, treatments, nutritional consultations, mindful enjoyment of local wines and history, the retreats take no more than eight guests, so you can be sure of one-to-one attention. The next runs from March 15-19.

Details From £850pp for four nights in a shared room, all-inclusive (07834 963000, yobabalounge.com)

Just relax

38 Song Saa Cambodia

At this private island in the Koh Rong archipelago you can indulge in holistic rituals in beautiful villas or a wonderfully rustic outdoor seaside shala. There are Buddhist blessings with the local monks, kayak trips through the mangroves and delicious fusion food.

Details From £3,424pp for five nights, including full board, flights from London to Phnom Penh with Cathay Pacific, transfers and full retreat programme with Western & Oriental (020-7666 1234, westernoriental.com)

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Days 3 to 5
Embark on the vessel and cruise upstream. Visit Ngwe Nyein village and return downstream to Mingun. Tour of Mandalay including Mahamuni Pagoda and Shwe Nan daw Kyaung monastery. Explore ancient Ava and Amarapura.

Days 6 to 9
Visit the village of Yandabo, Pandaw school and Bagan temples. Ascend Tan-chi-taung mountain for sunrise over Bagan. Visit the teak monasteries at Sale and walk to Myat-thalon Pagoda.

Days 10 to 12
Visit the Minhla and Gwechaung forts, and Thayetmyo Frontier Post. Horse and cart countryside ride. Visit the archaeological site of Thiri-ya-kittiya.

Days 13 to 15 Rangoon to London
Disembark at Prom and transfer to Rangoon for an overnight stay. Visit Sule and Shwedagon pagodas, the reclining Buddha and Scott market. Overnight return flight.

Selected departures from London Heathrow between 29 July 2014 and 22 March 2015.

Price includes: Air travel, UK departure taxes, transfers, 12 nights' accommodation, breakfast daily in Mandalay and Rangoon, full board and drinks on cruise vessel, services of guides and local representatives.

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39 Cas Gasi Ibiza

This elegant, civilised and very private 12-room hotel has a cute little spa with a large hot tub. Wellbeing breaks with treatments, yoga and Pilates can be arranged with talented concierge company Ibiza Balance. Anika is an excellent osteopath and deep massage therapist, while shiatsu with Miriam De Santos is not to be missed.

Details From £267 per double room per night, treatments from £67 (casgasi.com)

40 Amanzoe Greece

This minimalist, sophisticated villa haven, set high up in the Peloponnese, has views out over the Aegean. There's a large swimming pool and a calming spa, where the watsu treatments are a house speciality. Alignment and movement retreats take place here twice a year.

Details From £790 per double room per night, staying in a pool pavilion (amanresorts.com)

41 Paradis Plage Morocco

If you love the surf vibe but have grown out of staying in surf-shack bunkhouses, this is for you. It attracts people who now like their creature comforts, a total lack of hassle and a safe place to deposit their kids while they hit the water. Expect good waves, yoga for all levels and a womb-like spa to remove the pains from a tough day offshore.

Details From £123 per double room per night, B&B; yoga classes £11, surf tuition £26, treatments from £22 for a 25-minute massage (paradisplage.com)

42 Gardens of Babylon Turkey

This family-friendly wellness resort outside Bodrum is set on a tranquil bay and has a private beach. The Muu spa's treatments include Balinese and ayurvedic massages, ozone therapy, hot seawater therapies and watsu. Come for tailored detox programmes or just to chill out. There's a kids' club for 4 to 12-year-olds and a separate children's outdoor pool.

Details From £595pp for seven nights, B&B, including return flights from London and transfers with The Healthy Holiday Company (0845 458 0723, thehealthyholidaycompany.com)

UK quick health fixes

43 The Orange Tree Yorkshire

Ideal for those who want to dip their toe into a more mindful lifestyle, this homely eight-bedroom guesthouse offers yoga and general relaxation weekends, and healthy B&B during the week. There's a sauna and a hot tub with



views of the North York Moors, and treatments with local therapists.

Details From £199pp for two nights in a shared room, including full board, two workshops and use of the sauna and hot tub; treatments from £22 (01751 417219, theorangetree.com)

44 Mummy and Little Me Retreat Leicestershire

Babywear specialists Mummy and Little Me now host weekend retreats for expectant mothers and their partner or a friend, to focus on birthing, breastfeeding and beyond, with workshops led by midwife Alison Brown and GP Runa Jansari. Venues will vary, but start on January 25 at Champneys Springs in Leicestershire.

Details From £425pp, all-inclusive; partners £99, extra nights £99 (01522 684153, mummyandlittleme.co.uk)

45 Eat Well, Live Well at Lucknam Park Wiltshire

The new Wellbeing House starts its retreats with two-day breaks run by nutritionist Katie Sheen and Lucknam's cookery school head chef, Hrishikesh Desai. There will be one-to-one nutrition sessions, group seminars, dietary advice and a cookery course — be sure to leave time to hang out in the outdoor hot tub and to have a treatment in the wood-and-glass spa. The first retreat is on January 20.

Details From £695pp, including one night full board, all teaching and use of the spa (01225 742777, lucknampark.co.uk)

46 Yoga retreats at Ockenden Manor Sussex

From next month, this gourmet hotel will offer a series of two-night yoga retreats featuring ILA treatments, Nordic walking and yoga classes with Sal

Jeffries, who integrates vinyasa flow with breathing, mindfulness and movement. There will be time to enjoy the spa, steam room and indoor-outdoor pool. The first retreat runs from February 4-6.

Details From £1,884 based on two people sharing for two nights, full board, five treatments and all yoga (01444 449191, hshotels.co.uk)

UK pamper breaks

47 The Pig Hampshire

Through the walled garden at this affordable gourmet hotel you'll find the Potting Shed, with a range of fabulous holistic treatments. Drink nettle and lemon tea and be soothed with reflexology, massage or a luxury facial with Bamford organic skincare products. If you hanker after spa facilities, you can buy day passes for the Limewood hotel near by.

Details Double rooms from £135, treatments from £50 for an Indian head massage, Limewood day passes £40 (0845 0779494, thepighotel.co.uk)

48 Congham Hall Norfolk

Fall in love with Norfolk's vast skies and empty blond beaches from this serene Georgian house, with its soothing modern interiors, vast herb garden and smart little spa. Swim or hot-tub as you watch sheep graze the old parkland, then splash out on a signature treatment: the Secret Garden Spa Experience combines exfoliation, head-to-toe massage and a hydrating facial with Elemental Herbology products. Great food includes local oysters.

Details From £125 per double per night, treatments from £40 (01485 600250, conghamhallhotel.co.uk)

49 Salcombe Harbour Hotel Devon

This chic and family-friendly 50-bedroom hotel now has a two-tiered

spa with a swimming pool, crystal steam room, sauna, hydro pool, gym, relaxation lounge and cabana beds. There are indulgent ESPA signature treatments using seaweed and sea salt, but it's the glorious views across the estuary and out to sea that will truly lift your heart.

Details From £215 per double room per night, B&B; treatments from £35 for a back, neck and shoulder massage (0844 8589187, salcombe-harbour-hotel.co.uk)

50 Seaham Hall Durham

With a seaside setting, unpretentious service and a newly spruced-up spa, Seaham Hall makes a great weekend bolt hole. The 20 all-suite rooms are large, and the huge Eastern-style Serenity spa has a brasserie with tasty fusion dishes, a crystal sauna and healing pools. Treatments are by Elemis and Darphin. Mountain bikes are free of charge for coastal bike rides, too.

Details From £199 per room, B&B; treatments from £45 for an Elemis Lime and Ginger Salt Glow (0191 5161400, seaham-hall.co.uk)

Caroline Sylger Jones is editor of queenofretreats.com

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