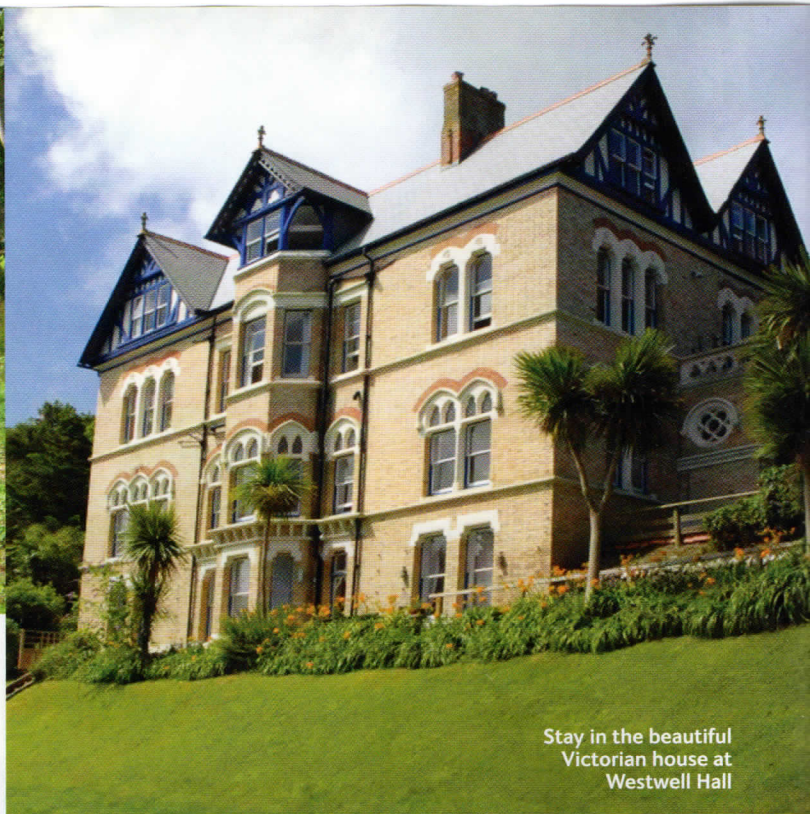


Jo walks a Shetland pony along the woodland trail



Stay in the beautiful Victorian house at Westwell Hall

Off to boot camp

Military-style discipline is out – this is a weight-loss holiday that focuses on realistic goals and long-term results

Boot camp holidays are the latest breaks for anyone wanting to lose weight quickly. Many promise weight-loss of around 5kg in one week, but the methods used to achieve it can vary widely. Twice-daily colonics and carrot juice meals don't sound like much fun to me. I wanted to try somewhere I knew I'd stick with for seven days and not want to leave after only two!

In the end, I found NuBeginnings; a Devon-based boot camp created by Victoria Wills, who tried boot camps all over the world in her own bid to lose weight, and designed NuBeginnings to offer the opposite of all the bad experiences she'd endured.

Military-style discipline, bullying tactics and juice diets are a thing of the past. In their place are four hours of exercise a day, three nutritionally-balanced meals (plus two snacks!) and a supportive, caring atmosphere. Importantly, the focus isn't on the weight loss you achieve while you're there, but more on equipping you with the tools needed to continue to lose weight once you've left. Ideas learnt from lectures on subjects such as mindful

eating are put into practice during your stay, and one-to-one hypnotherapy and Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP) sessions address the bad habits and underlying emotional issues that could be sabotaging your efforts to lose weight.

NuBeginnings is a 'boutique boot camp', with luxurious bedrooms and heavenly deep-tissue massages at the end of each day to reward your hard work and help you relax ahead of the next day's challenges.

On arrival, I was weighed in, measured and given a heart monitor to wear for the

rest of the week's activities. Next, it was time for a fitness test to calculate the upper and lower limits of my training zone, which I'd need to work within. After meeting the rest of the guests (no more than eight each week), and having dinner (my favourite was the Cajun chicken with mango salsa, served with green beans and sweet potato), Wills explained the rules – no alcohol, caffeine, sugar, processed food or make-up. And then it was off to bed for an early night ahead of the tough first day.

A typical day starts at 7.45am with a gentle 45-minute exercise class, such as Pilates or yoga, designed to kick-start your metabolism. Breakfast follows, after which the serious exercise begins. One day we set off on a four-hour trek around tough, but beautiful, coastal paths; on another, we



The variety of activities keeps you motivated and ups the fun factor



The indoor gym at NuBeginnings has stunning coastal views



Sprung memory foam mattresses help ease any aches or pains

walked to the top of a steep hill and went straight into a circuit training class with medicine balls and resistance bands, led by qualified personal trainers. Gym classes, a workout on the beach, and a fantastic trip to a farm where we took alpacas, donkeys and ponies out for a two-hour walk, really added variety and increased the fun factor. Each day was tough, and all of us were pushed to the limit within the safety of our training zones. But knowing once we got home, we'd be treated to a massage, gourmet-style meal and free time to relax in the sauna helped us keep going.

I didn't need to be weighed and re-measured on the last day to know my stay had been a success – I was visibly much slimmer. But the fact is I lost an amazing 4kg, including 8cm from my waist and 5cm from my hips. I expected to put some of this back on when I got home, but I didn't, and have gone on to lose a further 2kg. I think this is largely due to the complete re-education of how I think about food and listen to my body to know when I'm full. Also, I'm in no doubt the hypnotherapy sessions boosted my motivation. My week at NuBeginnings was one of the toughest of my life, but it was also one of the most enlightening, exciting and rewarding ones.

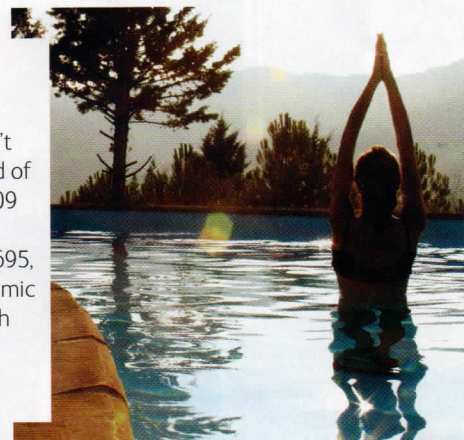
■ A week's stay at NuBeginnings costs £1,695 per person, based on sharing a twin room, or £1,995 for single occupancy (exc VAT). Prices include accommodation, all meals, full exercise programme, fitness assessment, three deep-tissue full body massages, two hypnotherapy sessions, one NLP session, and regular follow-up phone calls from staff once you get home. For more information, visit www.nubeginnings.co.uk or call 01271 862792.

Travelnotes

The latest news, trends and products

Breath of life

Fancy a more holistic holiday this year? You can't beat The Hill That Breathes, in Italy, for its blend of life-changing courses, fresh air and fun. The 2009 programme is packed with inspiring options – learn Zen wisdom from the Barefoot Doctor (£695, June 4–11); stretch out with Dina Cohen's Dynamic Flow yoga (£645, June 11–18) or let it all go with one of The Hill's famous F**k it weeks (£645, throughout the summer). For more details, visit www.thehillthatbreathes.com.



HAPPY SNAPPER

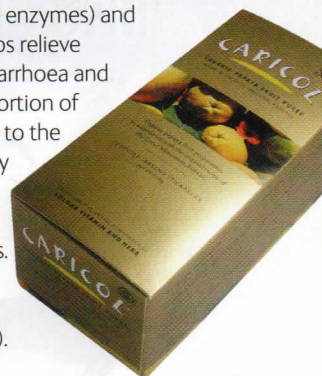


Learn to take the perfect snaps on a photography holiday. Eye Photographic Workshops runs holidays in a range of inspiring locations, from the Scottish

Highlands to the Kenyan island of Lamu and the Colorado mountains. You'll learn all key aspects of photography, from scene selection and how to develop your 'eye', to editing finished material. Visit www.eyephotographicworkshops.com. Prices start at £885.

New product

Does travelling play havoc with your digestion? Next time, pop a few sachets of Caricol in your hand luggage. A traditional Buddhist remedy, the mix of papaya pulp (full of digestive enzymes) and lemon juice helps relieve constipation, diarrhoea and indigestion. A portion of the profits goes to the Lotus Monastery in Hawaii, from where the recipe originates. (£14.99 for 20, www.solgar-vitamins.co.uk).



BEST PLACE FOR... PREGNANCY PAMPERING



WORDS: Mary Comber

Luxury pamper palace, Thalassa Boutique Hotel and Spa, in Coral Bay, Cyprus, has launched an exclusive spa menu for mothers-to-be, including the first body wrap that can be performed on pregnant women, by organic beauty company Sodashi. The Mother-To-Be massage releases back and shoulder tension. The treatment menu got the thumbs up from fertility guru Zita West during a recent stay. Sovereign Holidays offers seven nights at Thalassa Boutique Hotel & Spa from £605 per person; visit www.sovereign.com.