



The stunning gardens of Lifehouse Spa & Hotel have been listed by English Heritage

SPA OF THE MONTH

FITNESS FROLICS

RWL Results Retreat, Lifehouse Spa & Hotel

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There's plenty of time to chill out after your workouts

Going away for a weekend-long fitness retreat might seem counter-intuitive when you're feeling exhausted from a tough week at work, but it's one of the best tonics around to refresh a frazzled body and mind – especially when relaxation time is deemed as important as working out. And that's where Results Wellness Livestyle (RWL) Results Retreats come in. Hosted by reality TV star-turned-fitness guru Lucy Mecklenburgh and her personal trainer Cecilia Harris – the

co-founders of online fitness and nutrition community RWL – the retreats are held at locations around the UK, including the Lifehouse Spa & Hotel in Thorpe-Le-Soken, Essex (lighthouse.co.uk), a contemporary award-winning spa in 12 acres of gardens listed by English Heritage. After checking in at 2pm on a Friday, I settle into my beautiful ground-floor garden room, complete with tranquil views of the lake and access to a private patio. Sipping coffee outside, I'm relieved to read on the itinerary there's plenty of space between workouts for some me-time.

DANCING QUEEN

Arriving at the fitness studio for the first workout at 3.30pm, 'Dance Fit with Caroline', my fellow #rwlfitgies and I are given a rousing welcome by Cecilia and a 31 week-pregnant Lucy, before spending the next 60 minutes doing entertaining dance aerobics to upbeat tunes such as N-Trance's *Set You Free* and Tina Turner's *River Deep, Mountain High*. Lucy inspires us all by wiggling around and keeping up with the fittest. Covered in sweat and feeling elated, I declare I've just had the best Friday night out in months (even though it's only 4.30pm in the afternoon). I then enjoy a shower and quiet time, before dinner.

NUTRITION CHATS

There are two menu options for those doing the retreat: vegan, or dairy- and wheat-free. I plump for the latter, enjoying a starter of aubergine parmigiana, followed by stone bass with spaghetti and veg. Around 30 of us, covering all ages and fitness levels, sit at big dining tables, with Cecilia and Lucy taking a table each and mingling with everyone – no airs or graces here; just laughs, good conversation and heart-to-hearts. The most striking thing is how friendly the mixed bunch is, but then RWL is famed for its supportive community. Next, it's the Nutrition Q&A – an informal but educational session where RWL nutritionist Rhiannon Lambert clears up some healthy-eating myths. We're all done by 9.30pm, and while some head to the bar (there are no hardcore rules about alcohol), I go to bed in readiness for the next day.

FUN CLASSES

After an 8am breakfast of avocado, poached eggs and roasted tomatoes on sourdough, I grab a Classic Spa Manicure, £45, at the OPI Nail Suite before the first workout at 10.30am. I've been looking forward to 'Drum & Bass with Sarah' since seeing videos of instructor Sarah Bockhart online. I've never had such fun in a class, so when I hear she's recorded a series of online workouts for RWL, I sign up to the programme (prices from £9.99 per month).

After a delicious chicken salad, I wander through the beautiful grounds before heading to an hour-long 'Lift Like A Pro' class at 2pm, led by the motivation queen herself, Cecilia. I definitely feel the burn as we squat, push, press and crunch our way through the exercises, so I'm glad for the change of pace during the 'Yoga with Marcella' class at 4.30pm. I keep the zen feeling going by spending a few hours in the spa's steam rooms, hot tub and indoor pool before dinner at 7pm – another yummy meal of veg lasagne topped off by avocado and dark chocolate mousse for dessert. The evening Mindset Seminar with a life coach explores why women tend to think negatively and discusses the power of positive self-talk. I head to bed feeling calm and happy.

SPA TREATS

On Sunday morning, if truth be told, I sleep through my alarm, missing both breakfast



Lucy and Cecilia believe in you doing what's right for your body



Jo with Lucy, who co-hosts the retreat

CECILIA'S MOTIVATION ADVICE

'Your brain doesn't know the difference between forming a new good habit or a new bad habit, and tries to get you to do what you've always done. But when you force yourself into discomfort, you'll start seeing results and building the confidence to push yourself further.'

and the 30-minute HIIT training class led by Cecilia at 10.30am, but I hear both were excellent. Naturally, I feel guilty, but when I seek out Cecilia and Lucy to apologise, they couldn't be kinder. 'We're not a bootcamp!' says Cecilia. 'We're not going to scream at you if you miss a class.' Lucy agrees, adding, 'You need to do what's right for your body. I didn't do the class either, so don't beat yourself up. Rest is just as important.'

After a buffet lunch (with cake!), it's time to check out, but we can use all the facilities, including the spa, until 3pm. So, with Lucy's words ringing in my ears, I treat myself to a relaxing Clarins Hot Stone Massage (£80 for 55 minutes), and leave feeling re-energised and ready to face the world again.

While I probably left the retreat a few pounds lighter, and definitely less bloated (raising questions over whether I should try a wheat- and dairy-free diet), that's not what the focus is on. My best bits included meeting some truly lovely women whom I'm still in contact with; having one of the most awesome 'girly weekends' I've had in years; and rediscovering my love for dance workouts, which I've kept up to bring more fun and consistency to my exercise routine. Mission 'reset' accomplished!

The next RWL Results Retreats take place at Lifehouse Spa, Essex, on April 3-5 and July 24-26, from £499 for a sharing twin room; resultswellnesslifestyle.com.