

# SEWING HOLIDAYS

From strangers with a common passion to lifelong friends, each sewing retreat is an unforgettable adventure

Written by Michelle Rowley

A group picture on the last day, leaving as friends

Sewing retreats also include enjoyable lunches out together

My phone pinged again with the familiar sound of another WhatsApp message landing in the group chat. Sure enough, it was another friendly and excited message filled with hearts, sunshine, drinks and smiley emojis. "Can't wait to see you all tomorrow!" The 'Spain 24' WhatsApp group consisted of 15 members, most of which had never met before. The two group admins were friends Deb Day, owner and founder of Deb Day Sewing Room in Birmingham, and Brenda Killigrew, Director of Inkberrow Design Centre in Worcestershire. Deb and Brenda, "with nearly eighty years of sewing experience between them," had not only set up the group, but also more excitingly the five-night sewing retreat in Spain we were all eagerly awaiting.

## GROUP CHAT BONDING

Messages had been coming in thick and fast over the last week and it began to feel like a group of friends before we'd even met. The formation of the group had certainly helped to

alleviate any feelings of doubt about the trip, and it didn't feel so much like I was flying out to meet and spend five days with a group of strangers. With every passing day of people sharing project plans, packing developments and the current (warm) temperature in our destination, the excitement for the trip grew. When Deb and Brenda, having arrived two days ahead of the group, began sending through photos of blue skies, a set up sewing room and a beachfront breakfast area I was more than ready to join them.

## AND WE'RE OFF!

As the rest of us were catching the same flight to Murcia from Birmingham International, we'd joked on the group chat about identifying each other at the airport with tape measures round our necks. Reality was that we'd all packed these

Sewing together also means helping each other

in our suitcases, so we'd have to find another way. "I'm the short person in a black and white jacket standing outside WHSmith," I messaged. Within 5 minutes, I'd met my first new sewing buddy, Mandy. Gradually we all started to find each other and as the flight was announced as delayed for an hour, we got to know each other as we waited to board. By the time I boarded the plane, I knew I was in for a great few days ahead. When we emerged through the arrivals gate at Murcia to be met by a smiling Deb and Brenda, bedecked in tape measures, I felt completely at ease.

After our transfer to Hotel La Encarnación, situated right on the beach overlooking the Mar Menor in Los Alcázares, South East Spain, we had time for an alfresco welcome dinner. I went to bed happy and excited for a full day of sewing the following day.

## SHARING SKILLS

After breakfast by the sea, we hit the sewing room at 10:00am with all our pre-prepped projects and much excitement. Deb and Brenda were on hand to help with any sewing queries and constantly came around to check that everyone was happy and making progress. I was very grateful for

Brenda's extensive experience as she advised me on how to handle the slippery satin jacquard I was working with. Although I've been sewing for well over ten years, my sewing knowledge pales in comparison to Brenda's.

## SEWING HEAVEN

Over the next four days the sewing room was a joyous place filled with supportive claps and cheers as we shared tools, advice, project progress and our completed garments. The biggest applause went to Marjorie for sewing her first ever garment under the excellent tuition of Deb and Brenda. It felt like being on The Great British Sewing Bee but without any competitive element, cameras or time limits. It also felt indulgent, as in my everyday life there is never the time to sit and dedicate a full day to sewing. "It was amazing to sew without the distractions of the chores that you are aware of at home. It means you relax and enjoy it more," says Mandy Hart, a retreat member.

## UNIQUE EXPERIENCE

For me the highlight was getting to sew as part of a diverse group of people of different

Inside the sewing room, everyone is focused on their own project

Being by the beach, it would be rude not to go for a swim too



The relaxed environment of the sewing room allowed for some chatting, like here with Michelle and Humera



Faith and Eve came to the retreat together



Pam deeply focused, working on an upcycling project



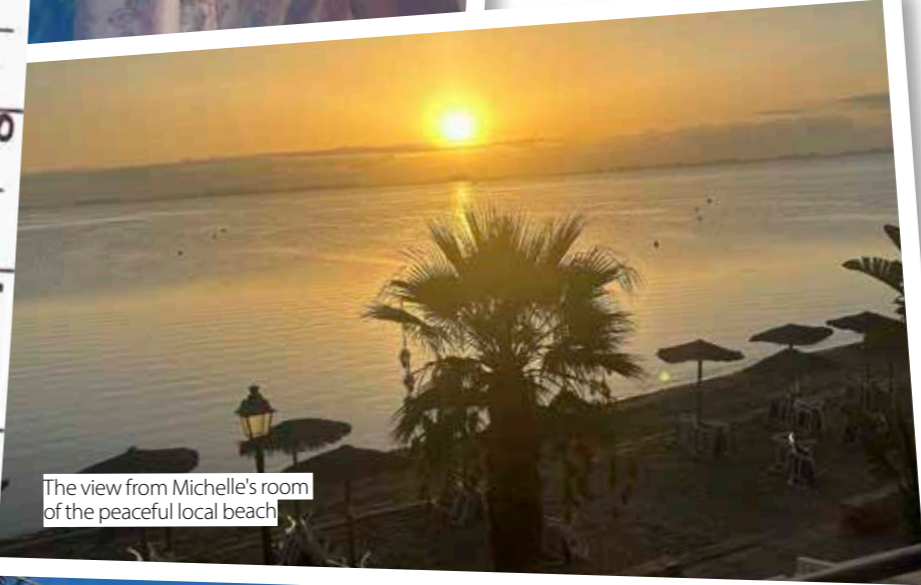
Raminder teaching and helping with Asian dressmaking



Raminder and Humera proud of their retreat makes



Mandy happily working on her project in the sewing room



The view from Michelle's room of the peaceful local beach



The whole group getting ready to showcase their makes on the beach at the end of the sewing holiday

## UK SEWING HOLIDAYS IN 2025

### Scotland

In the stunning Loch Lomond & The Trossachs National Park, Gartmore House is a beautiful 18th century property in which to enjoy an art, craft and activity holiday. They run five-night all-inclusive sewing breaks with tutor Gill McBride. [gartmorehouse.com](http://gartmorehouse.com)

### Peak District

Izzy and Sophie at Izzosewstudio will be running their popular two-and-three-night sewing retreats at Shrigley Hall Hotel and Spa. They bring expert fitting and pattern drafting experience to the sewing room, helping you refine the fit of your garments. [izzosewstudio.com](http://izzosewstudio.com)

### Lake District

Izzosewstudio also host two-night sewing retreats at The Inn on the Lake, Ullswater if you fancy some time in the beautiful Lake District. [izzosewstudio.com](http://izzosewstudio.com)

### Devon

Hip Hip Hooray Studio run three-night all-inclusive sewing retreats in the heart of the Devonshire countryside. The retreat includes home cooked meals and cake, cosy log fires, hours of uninterrupted sewing and mini workshops. [hiphiphooraystudio.co.uk](http://hiphiphooraystudio.co.uk)

### Heresfordshire

Enjoy two nights at the charming Old Court Hotel in Ross-on-Wye with Sewology. The retreat includes all meals, lots of sewing advice and workshops as well as a sociable sewing quiz with prizes on the final night! [sewology-bromyard.co.uk](http://sewology-bromyard.co.uk)

### Brighton

Sew a *The Maker's Atelier* classic Atelier Shirt at the Leonardo Royal Waterfront Hotel with tutors Claire Tyler and Frances Tobin over an intensive but fun three days by the sea front. [clairetylerretreats.com](http://clairetylerretreats.com)

## SEWING HOLIDAYS ABROAD IN 2025

### France

Enjoy five days of sewing in pretty South Western France with Size Me Sewing. You can choose your accommodation in the historic town Confolens from where you'll be picked up daily to head to the sewing studio. Lots of lovely French food guaranteed on this one! [sizemesewing.co.uk](http://sizemesewing.co.uk)

### Netherlands

Fancy sewing a Chanel inspired couture jacket in a bell tower in the city of Edam? (Yes!) Learn couture techniques, leave with a stunning jacket and enjoy time in nearby Amsterdam with The Dressmaker's Academy. [thedressmakersacademy.com](http://thedressmakersacademy.com)

### Spain

Deb Day Sewing room will be running the five-day retreat in Los Alcázares twice next year. For further details and to sign up for the waiting list visit [debdaysewingroom.com](http://debdaysewingroom.com)

### New York

The big one! Start saving now if you fancy a twelve-night sewing adventure. Spend four days sightseeing and fabric shopping in New York before embarking on the Queen Mary 2 for a seven-day cruise back to the UK. There's a sewing room set up on board for you to sew in every day, with Claire Tyler on hand to offer guidance. [clairetylerretreats.com](http://clairetylerretreats.com)

ages, sewing ability and cultural backgrounds. It was a rare opportunity for me to spend time watching Sikh women sew traditional dress and to learn not only about the sewing techniques but also the customs of Sikh weddings. I loved spending time with women from such varied cultural backgrounds and this was something that many of us appreciated. "Initially I was nervous about meeting new people at the retreat. But it was so lovely to meet everyone and see how well people from different backgrounds

"DIFFERENT CULTURES WERE BROUGHT TOGETHER BY THEIR PASSION FOR SEWING."

HARINDA KAILA

and cultures were brought together by their passion for sewing and became friends," said sewing retreat participant Harinda Kaila. Her thoughts are echoed by fellow participant Raminder Viridi: "We were a group of strangers brought together as friends by the love of sewing." Those friendships were formed not only in the sewing room but also over long lunches, relaxing evenings and two free afternoons to explore the local area.

### LASTING MEMORIES

The last day arrived all too quickly and as we gathered on the beach to proudly catwalk the results of our efforts over the last few days, Brenda shed tears at what had been achieved. Those tears were not for the sewing accomplishments (impressive as they were) but

at the realisation that they had created something special in bringing a group of strangers together who were leaving as friends. For anyone considering a sewing retreat, I urge you to go for it. Besides giving you the freedom to

sew at leisure, explore new places and gain sewing knowledge, you'll most likely also gain like-minded new friends whose paths you might otherwise never have crossed with. My still pinging WhatsApp group proves it.



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