



Confidence talks

*WF talk: fitness, flaws and living life to the full
with TV star **Caroline Flack***



As one of the UK's most established presenters, Caroline Flack knows a thing or two about being in the limelight. From *The X Factor* to *Love Island*, she's worked our screens for over 10 years – and has had her non-presenting life splashed across tabloids for nearly the same amount of time. Now 37, Caroline is a woman who knows what she wants – and, more importantly, what is good for her. As she works the camera at our WF photoshoot, singing and dancing in between takes, she oozes confidences. So what's her secret?

Fitness and flaws

'I'm confident in different ways,' Caroline says. We talk as she gets her hair curled – her stylist crafting the tousled waves that have become her signature look. Caroline's no-nonsense attitude is immediately apparent – the term thick-skinned has never been more apt. 'There will always be things you're insecure about, that's just being human isn't it?' Whether it's the recent changes to her diet and lifestyle, or simply a matter of becoming older and wiser, Caroline appears relaxed and comfortable. 'It's good to have flaws, it's learning to love your flaws,' she continues. Is this something she's conquered?

'Yeah, I think so,' she answers. 'There's a lot of things you can't change about yourself so there's no point moaning about it. I mean, I've got a really non-symmetrical face but I can't change it – well, I probably could actually!' Caroline's infectious, husky laugh serves as a constant reminder that she never takes herself too seriously.

The last year has seen a huge shift in Caroline's lifestyle, resulting in the starlet being in the best shape of her life – something she attributes to her personal trainer Sarah Lindsay, as well as a largely dairy and sugar-free diet, and a healthy dose of balance. What prompted the change? Despite dancing her way through



childhood and her teens, once Caroline left stage school and entered the world of television, exercise took a backseat. 'I wasn't looking or feeling my best,' Caroline admits. 'I knew I needed to do something.' But, like so many of us, it took Caroline a few false starts to find her feet. 'I never really enjoyed cardio,' she says. 'I kept having these trainers who were like "and now you've got to jump up and down five times!" and I'm like "well I don't want to do that!" So then I'd always quit.' Cue Sarah, the super-toned ex-Olympian PT who acts as much as Caroline's friend and mentor as her PT. 'My friend introduced Sarah to me,' says Caroline. 'She said, "I've met this girl who is going to change your life" – and she did.'

Caroline's biggest revelation was that exercise could be enjoyable – and it didn't have to always involve cardio. 'Sarah taught me how to really enjoy exercise,' Caroline says. 'It was just something different about the way she trained that I really liked. The whole process of

being at the gym, getting a coffee, having a chat and a gossip – it becomes routine.' Caroline and Sarah largely focus on weight training in their sessions. 'Upper-body

sugar soft drink Zeo. 'Last year I gave up sugar for 12 weeks – it was such an eye opener! It gave me more energy, I didn't feel bloated – I'd highly recommend it.

“There will always be things you're insecure about, that's just being human isn't it?”

weight training is my favourite because I always used to hate my arms, that was the one part of my body that I disliked yet probably the part I exposed the most,' Caroline explains. 'I thought it was just age, it was just what was happening, and then Sarah said to me "you hate your arms? I'm going to make them your favourite part of your body!" Did she succeed? 'Yeah, I do like my arms now,' Caroline says.

Going sugar free

Alongside a dairy-free diet, Caroline's on her way to kicking sugar completely with the help of no-added-

I found what worked for me. I really believe it's all about balance – it's fine to have a cheat day. While I've never really been a fan of soft drinks, I recently discovered the new Zeo no-added-sugar range. It's just spring water, botanicals, a little bit of fruit juice and natural stevia. It's great if you fancy something a little fruitier than water but still want to avoid sugar – my fave is the Cranberry & Raspberry flavour. I call it my cheat on water!

She's also toying with the idea of vegetarianism: 'I think I need to do it slowly rather than going cold turkey,' she says. 'I've got some nice big

vegetarian recipes and am trying to find things that still give me that food fix because I love food, when I eat I want it to taste good.' And one thing's for sure, Caroline's love affair with fitness certainly doesn't seem to be stalling. 'Find something you enjoy,' she advises, drawing on her own experience. 'Because you don't want it to be a slog, if you enjoy it and make it part of your lifestyle then it's easier – that's what I've done. I've never lasted this long with anything – this has been longer than any relationship I've had!' she laughs.

Her balance plan

While her health kick started with an intense 12-week programme, these days Caroline works out a little differently. Aiming for three workouts a week, she enjoys weight training, yoga and, more recently, spinning. 'Do you know why it's good?' she asks. 'You can't leave! It's good for me to have that, for them to lock me in and say "right, you're going to have to exercise



and you can't stop!" She knows what she likes and what she doesn't – "I don't like anything that makes my boobs go up and down!" – and she's learnt how to fit her workouts around her work and social commitments. "Now I work out to keep it, to maintain it, and keep a balance. I think it's really important to have balance and have fun."

And this is what we love about Caroline – she represents the real woman. She doesn't pretend to work out every day, survive on kale juice and shun a party over the gym. Even during her transformation programme last year, she refused to let it get in the way of the Brit Awards. "I said to Sarah in the middle of it, there's one night, it's the Brits, and I'm going to be able to drink – I'm having a night off!" Caroline recalls. Rather than cutting things out completely, Caroline opts for swaps. "I pick my vices wisely now," she says. "For example, if I go to a party, I'll get a vodka lime and soda rather than wine; I'll pick dark chocolate instead of milk chocolate;

edamame pasta instead of pasta pasta. I make healthy choices – I've found my good swaps."

I'm curvy and strong

Have there been any hard times? Caroline's sunny outlook and determined refusal to let anything get her down could have you fooled. She admits the constant scrutiny and picking-apart used to affect her. "I think when it first happens it's quite normal for anyone to feel like that, it's not a nice thing to experience," she admits. "But you can't take it to heart, it's a tiny part of a very big world." But as social media grows, negativity, abuse and trolls are only a mouse click away. Does Caroline believe a body-shaming culture exists? "I think sometimes people say a comment and don't realise they're body shaming," she says. "I don't think people are body-shamers, maybe just body-judgers. People will say throw-away comments. But then you do sort of get used to it – it comes with the territory."

Should it, though? "Yeah, you put yourself out there," she shrugs. There goes that thick skin again.

Indeed, with a job like Caroline's, the pressure to look good is always going to be there. "Of course you want to look a certain way," she says. "I'm not going to turn up in my pyjamas and unbrushed hair, am I? There's definitely pressure to look nice, but it's like going to a party, you want to look your best, don't you?" Age and experience, Caroline says, are the key to dealing with it sensibly. "Getting older isn't always a bad thing!" she laughs.

"Do you know what I'm enjoying?" she asks towards the end of the interview. "Curves. I used to hate my boobs and now I like them. I used to want to be thin, but now I'm curvy and strong."

Caroline is Ambassador for no-added-sugar soft drink Zeo. Check out her tips on cutting down on sugar at drinkzeo.com. Follow the conversation on #CheatOnWater 🍷

Did you know?

5 quick facts about Caroline

When she was on *Strictly Come Dancing*, Caroline was training every day for eight hours.

Caroline's favourite cheat day meal is spaghetti Bolognese.

Instagram isn't real life. "I certainly don't look like my Instagram pictures in real life. You don't take an Instagram when you're getting up in the morning and going for a wee – no one wants to see that!"

Caroline still speaks to ex-*Strictly* partner Pasha. "He text me this morning actually!"

She can't blag. "I can't do it! Never been able to blag my way into a club or blag a free meal – if I'm lying, you can see it in my face."



PICTURES: DARRYL BIRD; HAIR: MEDIA SCULLER; STYLING: CHOPPED TAIL; SET: LILLIAN OLLIE; SHIRTS: ERL; SHIRT/STREET.COM

WF meets

Lucy Mecklenburgh

We chat to the star who swapped reality TV for fitness fame

It's been four years since she left *The Only Way Is Essex*, but Lucy Mecklenburgh has had anything but free time. Now 25, along with running her dress shop Lucy's Boutique, the entrepreneur has been busy building a fitness empire. Her online fitness platform, *Results With Lucy* (resultswithlucy.com), continues to provide us with awesome training plans, while her soon-to-be four-year collaboration with Ellese now culminates in her very own line. What made the starlet swap Essex drama for the fit life? WF finds out.

Unlike other celebs well-known for undergoing a body makeover, Lucy's transformation was subtle. The now fitness guru has always been into sport. 'I absolutely loved sports at school,' she says during our interview at the WF photoshoot, 'I did a lot of dancing and I was in the netball team.' But eventually, it wasn't all just netball meets, and naturally, Lucy started to enjoy her youth outside of sports. 'As we all do, I discovered a social life,

college, my first job,' she explains, 'and I just didn't do anything.' While for most this might've ended up in a larger waistline or tighter jeans, for Lucy – who agrees she probably is, to an extent, naturally slim – time away from the gym manifested itself in cellulite and feeling 'yuck'. Lucy's renewed interest in exercise and diet didn't go unnoticed. Three weeks into regular training sessions with local PT Cecilia (now Lucy's best friend and business partner at *Results With Lucy*), something had shifted. 'I literally just fell in love,' she says. 'My body changed like that, my mind changed even more. She changed my diet around – I was never eating breakfast before – and I just had so much energy, my skin was glowing and I just woke up happy I guess.'

What were her secrets? The same training she swears by today, Lucy reckons it's HIIT – like her full-body workout across the next few pages – that holds the key to a fitter, stronger and healthier you. She admits it's a love/hate relationship. 'It's my favourite and least favourite because it's horrendous but it's amazing,'

she says. But, for someone as busy as Lucy, its effectiveness is hard to dismiss. 'I love short bursts of effort as it gets the pain over quickly,' she says. 'If I'm busy, I can fit this circuit into my day easily, and I can do it at home or in my hotel if I'm away. There really is no excuse not to do it. What I would say about HIIT is, if you work hard enough you only need to do 15 minutes. I hate doing things like running, I just find it really dull.'

Her faithful following (of which there are now a cool 1.1 million on Instagram) were quick to demand her secrets, too, and so followed *Results With Lucy* back in 2013 – one of the first of its kind in the online training arena. Growing from a humble 30 videos in the beginning, the service now offers seven programmes, 500 videos and 500 recipes. 'I think the thing to do being in the public eye was the fitness DVD, which don't get me wrong, is a fantastic kickstart,' explains Lucy. 'But for me, it's about keeping people motivated, making it a lifestyle change, not just a quick January fix.' Did they expect it to be so successful? 'No, I don't think we knew what to expect at all



really,' Lucy laughs. 'We just thought we'll do it, and see what happens. People had been asking me for help on social media. They had similar goals to me – not girls that wanted to lose five stone but girls that just felt a bit yuck. They were like "I've got cellulite" or "I'm really untoned", "I feel really unhealthy" or "I don't know where to start" – same as me. So I was like, how can I bring what I do to everyone? So I just filmed 30 of my favourite HIIT sessions – all different fitness levels – and I put them online and it sort of went from there.' More recently, *Results With Lucy* is addressing the mindset side of fitness, tapping into the disconnect between a happy body and a happy mind.

'Someone can lose two stone and they can be drinking green juice every morning and feeling better, but they still look in the mirror and they see something else, they still don't like themselves,' Lucy says. 'I think it's then working on confidence, self-confidence, and mindset.' What does it feel like to own such a worthwhile business empire? 'It is the most rewarding thing in the world,' she gushes.

Another firm cornerstone of *Results With Lucy* is nutrition, with Lucy promoting a lifestyle that is as much about eating well as it is about exercising. 'Most things can be cured through food,' she says. 'My friends moan to me about bad skin or

not feeling great and I'm like well what are you eating? I think that's where you've got to start and I think that people forget how important food is. Healthy food is so accessible now and there are so many amazing cookbooks for healthy food that it doesn't have to be boring.' What does her own diet look like? 'Really, really balanced. I indulge at the weekends, but in the week I'm pretty good.' Perhaps that's what resonates the most about Lucy – she's refreshingly normal. When she says indulge, she means a full, cheesy, garlic bread; a big bowl of pasta and a tiramisu (Lucy's love of Italian food is no secret), not a cube of

then at the weekend I'll relax a bit. Like tonight I'm going out with my friends so I'll probably have a few glasses of wine and I'll probably have some chips on the side [with dinner]. You've got to keep yourself sane!'

These days, Lucy continues to train regularly. Her week is made up of two one-hour HIIT sessions (interval training with 45 seconds on, 20 seconds off using a mixture of weights and plyometrics), usually started with or finished off with skipping, a Pilates class and a barre class. 'I like the way you feel after a workout, it just makes you feel good and puts you in a positive frame of mind for the day,' she says.

"I love short bursts of effort as it gets the pain over quickly. If I'm busy, I can fit this circuit into my day easily, and I can do it at home or in my hotel. There really is no excuse not to do it"

chocolate, like some celebs would claim. Of course, her week is typically healthy. 'Most mornings it's usually eggs with smoked salmon on rye, for lunch either a juice or a salad and then in the evening I like Thai green curry with quinoa,' she says. But, like the rest of us, her weekends are still punctuated by drinks with friends and meals out. 'I'm quite strict in the week, but

She also likes to keep things fresh. 'I try out different things all the time,' she explains. 'I do a lot with the resistance band at the moment, it's amazing and the cheapest piece of equipment you can buy!' As for barre – another recent addition to Lucy's fitness routine – it's feeling the burn that has her hooked. 'It's the only thing you can genuinely feel,' she says. 'I tried it for the first time in Miami a few years ago and I was shaking so uncontrollably, the teacher was like "are you alright?" and I was like "I swear I'm fit really!"'

With such an enviable figure and relatable outlook, it's not hard to see why Lucy Mecklenburgh is the #WomenCrushWednesday for so many girls – she's certainly ours this month! Want to work out like the star? Try her full-body HIIT workout.

Lucy's words of wisdom:

Make one change at a time: 'Don't overwhelm yourself, be realistic and make one change at a time. Your first change might be eat breakfast, and then a better breakfast. The second change might be reduce how much alcohol you have, and the third change might be walk to work instead of getting the train to work. Just little things, otherwise you're going to end up being miserable and going straight back to how you were before.'

Plan your workouts:

'Don't plan a month before, plan it a week or a few days before. If you've got a really busy day, everyone can fit in a 15-minute HIIT session in the morning. Get it out the way, don't think "oh, I'll do it tonight" because you won't.'

Set goals: 'I always work by a short-term and a long-term goal. A short-term goal might be a holiday or a wedding – I think it's good to have something there because then you've got something to work towards. My long-term goal is always health – I think that people forget that a lot of the time and it's just always about weight loss and how you look but I think you've only got one body, you need to look after it.'

Fast talk

Favourite gym song?
Work, Rihanna.

Most used emoji?
The monkey covering its eyes.

Favourite place in the world?
I don't think I've been

there yet!

Most effective workout move?
The burpee – full body!

Handbag essential?
Powder – I hate a shiny face.



“Not only will you leave this class with a full-body workout firmly under your belt, you’ll have really pushed yourself”

Strength at Ministry Does Fitness

Gym culture gets a gritty overhaul in this non-stop session at Ministry Does Fitness

CLASS
ON
TRIAL

WHAT IS IT?

The day Ministry of Sound decided to venture into the wellness world was a good day for everyone. Setting up camp in the arches of a disused railway in Elephant & Castle, the gym brought with it one of London's loudest sound systems (naturally), its own fully-licensed bar (we expected no less), and a refreshing no BS approach to getting fit – Ministry Does Fitness: The Arches, is a gym we can get on board with. We found ourselves in Tuesday's Strength class – a 45-minute circuit-based HIIT session that will leave you with sweat dripping into your eyes and feeling a little bit sick. The circuit involves seven stations – sprints, bicep curl and press, TRX squats and press-ups, heavy prowler push and ab roller, tricep dips and box jumps, slam tuck jumps and throws, and heavy kettlebell swings. Killer.

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS?

Strength is all about smashing personal goals, whether that's reaching for the heavier weight you've always been scared of or pushing for that last rep even though you've only got two seconds left on the clock. Not only will you leave this class with

a full-body workout firmly under your belt, you'll feel thoroughly satisfied that you've really pushed yourself. This isn't any old HIIT circuit either. Ministry of Fitness' eclectic soundtrack of house, electronic and club anthems, combined with UV lights and constant encouragement from pocket rocket trainer Laura (@bicepsandbronzer) mean this class oozes motivation.

HOW HARD IS IT?

It's hard. But HIIT sessions are meant to be. If you don't finish the class wondering whether you can stand or not, you probably haven't done it right. Luckily, everyone's in the same boat – there's a real camaraderie to the class – and you're spurred on by the killer tunes played at club volume throughout. Beats were, in fact, so infectious I accidentally let out a little dance during one (short) water break, so it's not all hard work. Top tip: try not to start on the treadmill station – it will destroy you.

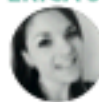
WHERE IS IT?

Ministry Does Fitness: The Arches, London. Classes start from £10. To book, visit ministrydoesfitness.com/packages

DO IT YOURSELF

Create seven stations: sprints, bicep curls and shoulder presses, TRX squats and press-ups, heavy prowler push and ab rollouts, tricep dips and box jumps, slam tuck jumps and throws with a medicine ball, and heavy kettlebell swings. After a thorough warm-up, perform 30 seconds of the moves in each station with 10 seconds' rest in between. Do a total of six sets at each station (alternating between moves if there are two), then rest for a minute and move on to the next station. Make sure you keep a fast pace, weights heavy and the intensity high. Once you're done, cool down with a stretch.

ERICA'S VERDICT



This was one of my favourite classes in a long time. It takes fitness right back to basics, and focuses on pushing yourself, enjoying the workout, and having a cocktail after (of course!) ☺

The trainer takeover

Last year saw the humble sneaker out-do its glitzy counterpart – and we all heaved a sigh of relief



Last year saw the rise of the 'sneakerhead' and they have been buying trainers faster than they are coming out

You may remember the sartorial shockwaves that rocked the fashion world in February last year when Victoria Beckham famously stepped out in – gasp! – flat shoes, claiming she could no longer wear her trademark heels. Branded a 'fashion fallout' and the 'end of an era', her ensuing flat footwear choices garnered great interest (spoiler: Adidas' Stan Smiths came up trumps). Fast forward a year and the move from the fashion designer doesn't seem quite so radical after all. They may have once been our

shoe of choice, but high heels seem to have been toppled by their rather unassuming sporty cousin.

A sartorial shift

Recent research from leading market intelligence agency Mintel found that last year 37 per cent of UK women opted for trainers, compared with 33 per cent choosing heels – making 2016 the first year that women bought more sneakers than heeled shoes. Once a practical pick for sports and the gym, trainers have since become a wardrobe staple – and not just for millennials. Driving the trainer trend, in fact, are women aged 35 to

44, almost half of whom bought trainers last year.

'Not since the '90s have trainers enjoyed such high status in our wardrobes,' comments Aja Wallis, fashion editor at online fashion store endource.com. 'Last year we sold nearly five times as many trainers as heels.' And it's not the only retailer observing a shift. Adam Brown, digital content and social media executive at product comparison site footy.com, agrees it too has noticed a much higher than average search volume for women's trainers of late. 'Last year saw the rise of the "sneakerhead" and they have been buying trainers faster than they are

coming out,' he says. 'A high volume of our traffic has been looking for trainers that you could consider fashionable as well as functional, moving away from more traditional trainers people were buying a few years ago.'

The rise of athleisure

Why have they endured? Trainers emerged back in the 1830s as a beach shoe but it was the late 20th century that saw them become a staple of fashion rather than function. Today, it's gym culture and a consequential athleisure era that has propelled the trainer to such dizzying heights. 'Around 2012, most



Fitness

Game changers

The latest version of Adidas' iconic UltraBOOST trainer maximises on its promise to create a shoe perfect for women. Drawing on new insights into the way women run, the UltraBOOST X features a distinctive Adaptive Arch, purposely sculpted midfoot and Primeknit upper, which adapt effortlessly to the changing shape of the foot as you run. BOOST technology is a given.

£129.95, adidas.com



Style it out

Senso take sports luxe to new levels with its Andy III shoe. With a leather upper, rubber sole and pop of silver chrome, they make light work of street style.

£150, senso.com.au



Go green

Ellesse's latest venture into green living has resulted in the Aida Womens Sports Shoe, a trainer designed by fitness fanatic Lucy Mecklenburgh and made from recycled polyethylene terephthalate – the same plastic used in water bottles.

£50, ellesse.co.uk



Stella style

Stella McCartney is known to be a game changer when it comes to sports luxe, and her latest PureBOOST X trainer with Adidas is no exception. A stretchy sock upper will hug your foot while a responsive, cushioned BOOST sole will return energy with every step.

£124.95, thesportsedit.com



Feet first

A dual-density outsole and specially engineered knit upper make the Vionic Flex Sierra comfortable and breathable.

£100, vionicshoes.co.uk



WORDS: LUCIA BASH. PICTURES: INSTANTOCK



Run the world

Asics has long held the cards for the best running technology, but the Gel Fit Yui up the style ante, too. Carefully constructed to enhance underfoot protection and maintaining structure and support, they're a no-brainer for runners.

£80, asics.co.uk



Ball of energy

Its most innovative running experience to date, Saucony's Freedom ISO trainer features the first full-length Everun Midsole to deliver more energy with every stride.

£140, saucony.co.uk



Every (nano) second counts

Reebok's latest Nano 7 is designed to thrive in the multi-functioning world of CrossFit. Nanoweave technology provides breathability and flexibility while a Powerlaunch toe box creates a strong foundation for improved power.

£89.95, reebok.co.uk



Ballet beautiful

As part of Puma's new Swan Pack collection in partnership with the New York City Ballet, the Puma Ignite XT is designed to adapt to any workout and encourages the freedom of self-expression while returning energy to the foot through an innovative Ignite foam.

£65, puma.co.uk



Sporting style

Lacoste oozes style, and its LT Spirit Elite trainers are no different. But with technical alien mesh reinforcements and man-made overlays, durability is also on the cards for this modern take on the classic tennis shoe.

£85, lacoste.co.uk

big-name designers jumped on the Olympics bandwagon and incorporated sports luxe pieces within their collections, namely Alexander Wang, Marc Jacobs and Victoria Beckham,' explains fashion presenter and celebrity stylist Naomi Isted. Indeed, July 2013 saw the first major spike in the levels of new sneakers on the UK womenswear's footwear market; the same season that saw Ashish put Reebok Classics on the catwalk and Moschino Cheap and Chic included trainers in its show. Cemented further the following year with a pair of glittering sneakers in the Chanel SS14 Paris show, trainers were appearing as effortlessly from Converse as they were from Jimmy Choo. 'With the likes of Phoebe Philo and Victoria Beckham taking their show bows in flats for quite some seasons, it's given the nod of confirmation that trainers are cool again,' states Abbie Tanner, London fashion blogger at abbie loves.com. 'Not only have they been a firm styling favourite on the catwalks – Karl Lagerfeld we're looking at you and your SS14 couture collection for Chanel – but the rise in fashion bloggers opting for fresh white kicks over a stiletto means trainers have become the new street-style uniform.'

(Un)happy feet

A shift in fashion, however, shouldn't be the only reason for women to hang up their heels. Podiatrist Trevor Prior maintains wearing heels on a regular basis can have a number of health implications, too. 'Heels completely alter the position and posture of the foot,' he explains. 'A common problem is tightness of the calf due to the heel and the position of the ankle. Constant pressure on the ball of the foot can damage the small joints and in some instances lead to hammer toe formation. Squeezing the toes into a tight toe box can also lead to toe deformity and cause corn/callus formation.'

It's easy to see the appeal of the trainer. Comfortable and practical, they're as at home on the foot of an Olympic athlete as they are on a City girl running for a bus. They transcend all spectrums of society – and they don't seem to be stalling. 'It's one of those rare trends where style and comfort collide,' says Aja. 'It's win-win! Feeling inspired? Treat yourself with our pick of SS17's freshest kicks...'



El Jadida,
Morocco



La Manga Club,
Spain

*Resident dunes
play host to
quad biking and
horse riding, or
you can head to
the state-of-art
yoga studio*

El Jadida, Morocco

'This is Morocco,' says our guide proudly, standing in a crowded food market in El Jadida, a walled port town and Unesco World Heritage Site an hour from Casablanca. There are carts and stalls heaving with flatbreads, preserved fruit, and herbs and spices, all of which you can purchase for about 20p each – El Jadida is worlds away from the over-priced markets of Marrakech. With a distinct Portuguese feel due to occupancy in the 16th century, lively souks and an impressive fort, this small town feels very much alive. Inside the Old Town walls, you'll find small shops selling leatherwork shoes and bags, painted crockery and homemade oils, while locals mill about the market and stroll the boulevards. It may be less picturesque, but El Jadida is refreshingly authentic.

The town, however, is yet to benefit from the European tourism that Marrakech enjoys, but the castle-like Mazagan Beach and Golf Resort just north from El Jadida is certainly trying to change that. With nearly 500 rooms and suites, an 18-hole golf course, a nightclub, the largest casino in North Africa and a centrepiece pool the size of a small country, it's safe to say the designers went big. Whether this is your style or not, the hotel is beautiful: all manicured courtyards, pretty water features and Moroccan tiles. A 7km private beach and resident dunes play host to

activities such as quad biking and horse riding, while surfboard hire is also available. If you're still not satisfied, head down to its state-of-the-art gym and yoga studio, find your inner Serena Williams on court or take a trip to the spa, where you'll find relaxation rooms with sweeping sea views and treatments set to the noise of the rolling surf.

When it comes to dining, Mazagan doesn't disappoint. Whether you're looking for traditional Moroccan fare, an evening of French indulgence or, indeed, anything in between, you'll find it in one of Mazagan's numerous restaurants. A delicious offering of tapas – including local olives, fresh calamari, sizzling prawns and a Moroccan take on potatoes bravas – can be found by the sea at Chiringuito, or try a delicious platter of barbecued meats and seafood at Beach Barbecue. Al Firma (the farm) – offers total immersion into authentic Moroccan dining with traditional Berber tents, snake charmers and belly dancers.

Morocco has long been synonymous with Marrakech, but times are changing and it's never been clearer that there is more to see of this beautiful country.

» **Rooms at Mazagan from £73 for a double on a B&B basis; mazaganbeachresort.com**

La Manga Club, Spain

You'd think a club whose clientele includes Andy Murray, Rafa Nadal and Johanna Konta would be a little stuffy for amateur players, let alone straight-up beginners. The sporting empire that is La Manga Club in Murcia, Spain is the official overseas winter training base for the Lawn Tennis Association and regular hosts of the Davis Cup. Yet it also offers a thriving tennis academy for casual and amateur players alike, welcoming anyone with a love of the game with open arms.

Most holiday-makers come for the week-long course comprising two hours of daily tennis, leaving plenty of free time to perfect your stroke further, bask in the sunshine by the pool, or get started on the sheer scope of other activities on offer. Whatever you do, one thing's for sure: your tennis will come on in leaps and bounds. Each session focuses on a particular area of tennis: tackling forehands, backhands,



El Jadida,
Morocco

Features

baseline play and volleys. The method of coaching offered at La Manga Club directly matches court situations. Expect fast, drill-based training with a fun (read: competitive) match to finish, bypassing the frustrating void between nailing something in practice only to fail to implement it in an actual game. Small group sessions mean my dodgy volley gets a serious overhaul – a weakness the coaches are quick to suss out.

Three times the size of Monaco, the gated resort doesn't only specialise in tennis. With three 18-hole golf courses, eight FIFA-standard-size football pitches, two rugby fields and facilities for cricket and triathlon practice, it's no surprise La Manga Club is one of the most popular training destinations for a number of high-profile teams and athletes. And a new high-performance centre providing a comprehensive health assessment is only expected to draw scores more.

Want to perfect your game? The key to tennis is great coaching and practice; the other is a week spent at La Manga Club.

» **Adult Academy Package** from about £670 for seven nights, lamangacub.com

Les Deux Alpes, France

If you thought European mountain resorts were purely winter destinations, think again. When we visit Les Deux Alpes, one of France's most popular winter destinations, it's mid-July on a sunny Wednesday morning. So far, there's been mountain biking, lake swimming, paragliding and a leisurely ski on the mountain's glacier. Who knew there is so much to do here in summer?

Apparently a few people, as the resort is certainly not quiet. The reason? Les Deux Alpes is home to the largest skiable glacier in Europe, offering snow-sure skiing all year round for those who just can't go the whole summer without it. You'll need to be up early, though. Lifts open at

7am and close at 12:30pm – by then the snow has turned to slush.

Les Deux Alpes, France



The choice isn't vast – there are only about 10 runs, mostly blues and reds – but most people are too busy relishing the marvel of summertime skiing to care.

But the fun doesn't end at the bottom of the slopes. Rather, it's only just getting under way, as Les Deux Alpes' summer programme offers a whole slew of activities to keep your inner adrenaline junkie satisfied. Mountain biking is popular with tourists and locals alike, making use of old skiing trails (all 91km of them) and swathes of vertical mountain greenery. Going with a guide for your first couple of outings is advised; the sport is not for the faint-hearted and it's important to nail the basics – like leaning back off your seat – before you try to negotiate the narrow trails. Equally, taking advantage of paragliding when the weather and scenery is so beautiful is a wise move, and makes for 20 minutes of serious fun as you swoop and glide over the resort.

For families, Les Deux Alpes is the perfect playground. The water flume, slides and inflatable pillow provide endless fun, while older siblings can enjoy a skate park, tobogganing, mini golf and free tennis courts. Alternatively, get involved with Women's Week, a scheme run by Les Deux Alpes in the summer which welcomes women of all ages. Running a number of women-only fitness classes, yoga and aromatherapy workshops, you can dip in and out as you choose. Don't miss the

weekly communal barbecue either, which sees the whole resort convene for good food, wine and company. There are, in fact, so many activities, it's not a question of what to do, but where to start.

» **From about £154 per night at Le Cortina in Les 2 Alpes**, les2alpes.com. Book via peakretreats.co.uk

F Zeen Retreat, Kefalonia, Greece

With stretches of unspoilt beaches, breathtaking mountain scenery and bucketloads of Greek charm – Kefalonia is a paradise waiting to be lapped up. Making the most of the mountainous terrain is Unique Kefalonia's F Zeen Retreat, a boutique hotel tucked into a hillside on the south of the island. With impressive views of Lourdias Bay, this adults-only retreat is a place of wonderful paradox. Upon arrival, the sea is so close you can almost taste it; climb the steps to a superior room (the views pay dividends) and you'll find yourself among the 20 acres of cypress, eucalyptus and pine forest that surround the hotel. With simple yet contemporary interiors of muted tones, pale wood and pops of blue, and leafy outdoor spaces dotted with Greek flora, it plays into the hands of those looking for relaxed luxury.

Tearing yourself away from the two sea-facing, freshwater pools is hard, but