

BEAUTY

The regime is ideal for those wishing to detox, destress or simply find their smile again. The emphasis is on fun, and if you can't do without your morning coffee, you are allowed the odd indulgence. Once you have experienced the magical combination of Brazilian welcome and natural revitalisation, you'll be busy planning your return. *FM Visit Sitiodolobo.com.br.*
From \$1,950 for a week

FREE TO BE RETREAT AT CHARLTON HOUSE Somerset

A now familiar part of the country-hotel experience is the opportunity to relax in a spa that boasts therapeutic treatments, but Monty and Roger Saul wanted to offer more at Charlton House. So once a month they hold three-day workshops for small groups to look into aspects of wellbeing, exercise, complementary medicine and diet. They have carefully recruited experts with huge experience in their fields (a real plus, in today's climate of too much information) to direct "intensive" sessions, lectures, exercise classes and one-to-one consultations – but have included plenty of

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time for spa treatments, delicious food and relaxation as well. The workshop I attended concentrated on Pilates, but there was also an introduction to iridology, naturopathy and allergy testing. The subjects of some of the other workshops include acupuncture, Tui Na, the Alexander Technique and reflexology. But if it's all too much like hard work, you can always have a deep-tissue massage, go for a long walk or just chill. *KP Visit Charltonhouse.com.*
From £980 per person per workshop

Charlton House



Miraval Resort

MIRAVAL RESORT Arizona

Rarely do you visit a resort where everything pleases you, but at Miraval the entire experience was thoroughly enjoyable. Granted, the resort offers a very specific experience, but if you're looking for physical challenges, healthy meals and spiritual knowledge, this desert haven promises quality through and through. The resort was designed to support positive life changes (whether you are extremely fit and in need of a challenge, or are someone wanting hands-on guidance to jump-start a healthy lifestyle) without forcing you to adhere to a regimented programme. No-one will yell at you to work harder or eat less, but somehow Miraval's

environment inspires self-improvement on many levels. With countless daily exercise classes and outdoor adventures to choose from (I tried 12 in just three days), nutrition and health seminars, inspirational guest speakers and guided meditation to try, you can easily be busy from dawn till dusk. But if you'd rather have a leisurely workout in the gym, enjoy the delicious buffet meals and indulge in

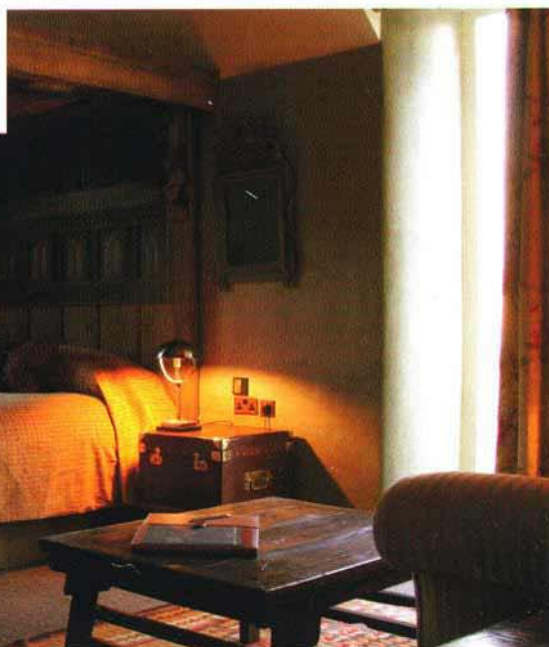
the spa treatments that are included in your daily rate, that's OK too. Either way, you are sure to find your time at Miraval highly motivating and spiritually uplifting. *CA Visit Miravalresort.com.*
From £260 per person per night

THE BARN RURAL RETREAT Devon

When I arrived, everyone was waving hello... Welcome to the community of lovingkindness. The Barn is a place to escape from the hectic world by working the land and participating in Buddhist meditation. Everyone is given daily tasks (which range from planting crops to chopping wood and ringing Zen chimes) and each guest takes their turn preparing meals for the rest of the group. It's all a bit hardcore – no tumble-dried towels – but the air is fresh and the food wonderfully home-grown. With total happiness I baked bread, took long walks along the river, practised yoga, attended lectures, chanted with Mahashi, the charismatic former monk, and experienced days of total silence. This retreat is all about living in the moment and letting go of all pretensions, and offers you blissful time out without the hassle of airports and jetlag. *KK Visit Sharpham-trust.org.*
From £140 a week

LA MANGA FITNESS RETREAT Spain

I'm eating seeds as I write this. Pumpkin seeds and Brazil nuts have taken the place of my usual afternoon Twix – a seismic dietary shift for me. But that's not all; I ran 5km in the gym before work today. What prompted all this? Enter Steve Halsall and his five-day Kick Start regime at Spain's La Manga resort. His approach to fitness encompasses mental >



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and physical wellbeing, so as well as a lot of cardiovascular exercise there's an emphasis on healthy eating. A typical day starts with a glass of hot water and lemon before a 40-minute beach run. Then a breakfast of fruit, granola, rice-bread toast and a delicious non-dairy fruit-and-nut smoothie. Before a lunch of coconut, chicken and squash curry with brown rice, you are expected to do something utterly exhausting like 15 circuits of an uphill sprint. Then it's downtime till late afternoon, when you hit the gym for more running, cycling, free weights and stomach crunches. By supper (steamed fish and vegetables), I was exhausted and longing for my bed. Steve realises that there's no point prescribing an unrealistic regime for everyday life, so at the end of the trip he will propose a routine that you can stick to easily back home. Four weeks later and, OK, I might have had the odd Twix, but I'm in the gym three times a week and loving it. *AC*
Visit Fitness12retreats.com.

psychological preparation. No time is wasted: wake-up call at 7am with hot lemon and ginger; outside jogging at 7.30am; four kickboxing sessions over the weekend; full-body massages and meditation sessions after dinner. As a result, not only do you feel like a Superwoman when you head back home but, more importantly, through mental coaching you are helped to renew your long-forgotten life goals – those so easily submerged by the strain of everyday life. I came out feeling both physically fit and emotionally strong – and quite cocky about the fact that I could break a board with my bare fist. *RR*
*Visit Te-wellbeing.com.
From £1,650 per person for a weekend*



Pennyhill Park

TE WELLBEING AT PENNYHILL PARK Surrey

Embarking on Té Wellbeing's Combat Retreat means no smoking, no drinking, no caffeine and rigorous kickboxing training for an entire weekend. Cengiz Dervis, the man behind this intense experience, takes a small group of people on an emotional and physical journey to help them surpass their physical limits and build strength of mind through focused combat training and

“We were asked to ‘prosecute’ and then ‘defend’ our parents. It was a huge emotional purge”

THE HOFFMAN PROCESS East Sussex

If you constantly repeat the same mistakes over and over again, then eight days of flushing out your personal issues with the Hoffman Process can transform the way you look at your life. It all takes place in a cosy retreat in Seaford that accommodates 24. Hoffman believed that we are all born a blank canvas and that it is nurture rather than nature that “fucks you up” (apologies to Philip Larkin). The key to the process is to identify the patterns of behaviour we adopt from our parents, and to acknowledge that we are the way we are because they are the way they are. Over the week, we were asked to “prosecute” and then “defend” our parents. The prosecution is an amazingly clever process that releases vast amounts of resentment and anger. It's a huge physical purge as well as an emotional cleanse. In contrast, the defence is about forgiveness and compassion. In addition to looking at the past, you are encouraged to envisage your life as you want it to be. You are taught the tools with which to engage with yourself intellectually, emotionally and spiritually, and to recognise the negative behaviours you are repeating and how to stop them. *LG*
*Visit Hoffmaninstitute.co.uk.
From £2,050 for eight days*

LA RINCONADA RANCH Argentina

It takes a long time to get to La Rinconada Ranch, in the Rivadavia valley of Patagonia, but it is worth it a hundred times. The owners, Kyle and Adam Canepa, bought the ranch 12 years ago and have been there ever since, building, farming, riding and teaching yoga. The studio, perched in the hills above the ranch, looking out to the snow-capped mountains, must be one of the most beautiful settings to practise yoga anywhere. But yoga is only the beginning at La Rinconada. There is a waterfall and both a natural and man-made swimming pool in the grounds, and nearby, in the Los Alerces National Park, you can swim, kayak, raft and fly-fish in the pristine river and lake. Or you can spend long afternoons lounging around in one of the hammocks that hang between the many plum and apple trees, as well as enjoy the skills of several massage therapists and a healer. Although the owners of the retreat are not interested in being fancy, their priorities are the right ones and their attention to detail is uncompromising. I can't think of anywhere I've had a better, more restful or more energising time. *DG*
*Visit Larinconadaranch.com.
From £1,050 per person for a week* ■