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**SUNDAY EXPRESS**

**Are you  
bikini ready?**

How to lose 9lbs  
in five days

# Under the sun

Stripes, florals, brights –  
anything goes this summer



# Slim chance

Boutique boot camps are the latest keep-fit fad – but do they work? Nine pounds in five days will do for me, says Louise Simester

**C**'mon everybody. What doesn't kill you makes you thinner!" There I was on day two of my detox, with a crashing headache and a freezing six-mile hike ahead of me. Wasn't this supposed to make me feel better? It didn't help that our first meal of the day was still hours away.

"If you don't keep up, someone else will drink your breakfast!" added Galia Grainger, the brain and indomitable energy behind Slimmeria, a boot camp and detox retreat near Battle in East Sussex.

As I trudged uphill, feeling faint and gasping for breath, the irony of the location wasn't lost on me. And what was Galia's answer to my plummeting energy levels? A single raisin.

Slimmeria is not for the faint-hearted. You may be surrounded by luxury – guests stay in a Georgian mansion complete with a pool and spa – but all creature comforts are renounced, like tea and coffee and the internet. Worse, the daily allowance here is a meagre 400 calories. Breakfast is fruit juice, while lunch and dinner are inventive but far-from-filling variations on raw and cooked veg, ranging from plates of coleslaw to tomatoes stuffed with cucumber. Galia's slogan says it all: "Forget the pizzeria – come to Slimmeria."

Well, it seems to work for her. Hailing from

Eastern Europe, Galia looks amazing for her indeterminate age. She is brimming with tough love and motivational mantras

("Getting older is inevitable, looking younger is optional!") and her influence made itself felt before we even set foot in the retreat. "You need to prepare your body by giving up alcohol and caffeine a week before your visit," she told us prior to arrival. "If you don't, you will suffer."

And so it came to pass.

I wasn't the only one struggling, but as the week went on a Blitz spirit sprang up in our plucky group of 10. Each one of us had a crisis day when we were longing to quit, but we got each other through it. Galia, too, was by our side every step of the way, with her packet of raisins and peppy promises. "You hate me now but by the end of the week you will love me!" she announced. And after a

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**Above: Slimmeria HQ, Hye House. Right: The course's guiding light Galia Grainger**



while, you do begin to believe her.

Every day at Slimmeria follows a strict rhythm: a 7am bell gets you up for hot water and lemon before a brisk hike. After "breakfast", it's one hour at the gym, or two if you're a teacher's pet (not guilty), then a little light yoga before lunch.

Afternoons are designated treatment time, and the spa proved a blessed relief. I booked in for a steam bath, a facial and a once-in-a-lifetime massage (being beaten with the branches of a birch tree is not an experience I'll be hurrying to repeat). Evenings are filled with talks (variations on the theme of "don't eat pies"), plus Zumba classes for those with any energy left.

Then it's lights out at 9.30pm – something we moaned about at first but soon looked forward to.

Somehow I made it to the end of my fifth and final day – the others managed a full week – and by then we were all quite emotional.

Perhaps it was just relief, but there was no doubt that everyone felt and looked good, with shiny hair and glowing complexions. But we'd come here to lose weight, and I was delighted to discover that I'd shed 9lbs, presumably not all of it in tears. And with each group member losing between 6 to 12 lbs, I wasn't the only success story.

So was it all worth it? There were times when I thought, "I can't believe I'm putting myself through this torture," and with stays starting at around £450 you've got to want to be here. But as a way to lose weight, fast, for that bikini-ready body, I couldn't recommend it highly enough. **S**

For more on Slimmeria, call 01424 830153 or see [www.slimmeria.com](http://www.slimmeria.com).