

slim chance

How committed are you to detoxing this spring? Sam Bilton finds out how serious slimmers do it in East Sussex

I arrive on a day when the guests are 'hangry'. That's a combination of hungry and angry explains Galia Grainger, owner of the Slimmeria Retreat near Battle. It's Tuesday and the guests are 48 hours into their week-long detox – this is the point when they are at their lowest, both in terms of morale and energy levels.

'People need to prepare themselves for the programme before their arrival. If they don't and their regular diet is high in sugars, processed food, caffeine and alcohol they may feel light-headed, experience headaches or feel generally weak until the body accepts the natural goodness and sugars in the diet we provide,' explains Galia.

This week's residents are a mix of sizes, ages and nationalities – one man has travelled from Saudi Arabia on the recommendation of a friend. There are a few wistful whispers about cravings for chips and chocolate but everyone seems happy with lunch. Today it's a cucumber and radish salad prettily arranged and doused in a pungent garlicky dressing. One of the ladies touches my arm, with a twinkle in her eye.

'Today we're also having quinoa,' she says with unconcealed excitement as she hands me a small (and I do mean small) bowl of beige grains. This meal is my first taste of the detox and weight-loss programme at Slimmeria. It's based around a raw vegetarian diet, designed to cleanse and eliminate toxins that have built up as a result of bad habits.

The regime consists of 400 calories a day. Breakfast is typically a fresh juice, lunch is usually a salad and dinner could be a vegetable broth. On the upside they also serve afternoon tea although it's fresh fruit in place of the scones and a fruity tea instead of the Earl Grey. In the event that



Above: Relax while you diet, in the luxurious surroundings of this Grade II-listed Georgian mansion

your energy levels are really flagging Galia will give you a magic raisin (singular). If it sounds extreme, it is. But it achieves extreme results, with many people losing up to 12lbs on a seven-day retreat.

Included in the package is a low-impact exercise programme, delivered by professional instructors, and come rain or shine the day begins with a 90-minute pre-breakfast hike. It's raining the morning I do the walk but it's invigorating and just what I need to shoo away the toxic headache I have developed after 48 hours without caffeine.

The rest of the day is filled with exercise classes, yoga and dance classes in the evening. Or you could opt for a spa treatment – some, such as the Indian head massage, are included in the package. More importantly it does take your mind off your hunger and aching muscles. I was amazed at how much weight I lost in just over 24 hours (3lbs since you ask) and I've barely touched a caffeinated drink since. Clearly you couldn't maintain the 400-calorie regime for a prolonged period but the messages about healthy eating and regular exercise make sense.

There are several accommodation packages available, from comfortable standard rooms with shared bathrooms to deluxe rooms with en-suites. Prices for weekend retreats start at £535 per person and include accommodation, all meals, exercise classes and some treatments. ■

www.slimmeria.com

Slimmeria would like to offer Sussex Style readers an extra complimentary spa treatment if booked by 28th February. Simply quote Sussex Style at the time of booking. Retreats can be taken before or after 28th February, subject to availability.