

GETAWAY

SANJEETA BAINS hits a rejuvenation retreat on the Devon coast that promises to help you shed pounds and leave you feeling fabulous

DETOX retreats by their nature are about rapid weight loss – drastically restricting your calorie intake for a short amount of time.

It doesn't sound like the ideal holiday getaway!

So I was intrigued to hear about the recently opened Slimmeria retreat in North Devon, described as a "weight loss and rejuvenation stay".

Owned by TV weight-loss expert Galia Granger, the retreat aims – as the name suggests – to help guests slim down, but with an added bonus of feeling like they're on holiday.

That means combining a vegan diet with lots of walking in the fresh Devon air, with relaxation spa time thrown in too.

An hour's bus ride from Barnstaple station, Ilfracombe is a very pretty coastal town renowned for its scenic walks.

Home for the next six days was Merlin Court, a beautiful listed hilltop gothic-style former hotel. Setting a retreat here is a smart move.

Merlin Court boasts boutique accommodation and terraces from which to enjoy the sea breeze and picture-postcard views.

Galia also runs a established Slimmeria retreat in East Sussex.

Emmerdale star Lisa Riley stayed there back in 2015 and lost a stone in a week. The programme is credited for helping Lisa kickstart healthier lifestyle changes, which has led her to losing – and keeping off – an incredible seven stones.

The retreat in Ilfracombe is similar but this detox programme is more about respite and rejuvenation, thanks to its fabulous location.

With the National Trust coastal path in one direction and the Tarka Trail in the other, and only a 10-minute walk from the harbour, Merlin Court is an ideal base for exploring Ilfracombe.

The main draw for most tourists at a seaside resort, of course, are the little tea rooms, fish and chips, fudge and ice cream shops.

These foods were strictly off limits but I was happy enough to savour my environment, not least because



Hilly Ilfracombe where the walks reward you with stunning views



Slimmeria spa

the vegan dishes served at Slimmeria were surprisingly filling.

After fruit juice for breakfast, we ate specialist vegan dishes for lunch and dinner, which included carbs.

As well as lots of veg, we dined on brown rice, buckwheat and pearl barley, so I never felt hungry during my Slimmeria stay.

However, I have to admit that on the fourth day of clean vegan eating,

I went to bed dreaming about meat, pasta, roast potatoes and cheese!

During one of my invigorating daily morning walks, Galia explained she carefully creates the Slimmeria menu to ensure we have enough energy for all the walking up and down hills. If not, she always carries "magic raisins" to keep us going.

There was only one morning on the hilly South West Coast Path walk

when I asked for a raisin, but the breathtaking view of Ilfracombe below proved an even better treat.

Our days at Slimmeria were very well structured.

After the two-hour morning walks each day, we unwound with a gentle hour of pilates and yoga. Other classes throughout the day included general fitness, mindfulness, belly dancing and self-defence.

In the afternoons, Galia encourages guests to go on their own walks around the town but there's also the option to curl up in the lounge with a good book. Afternoon spa treatments are also on offer, including Indian head massage, facials, reflexology and lymphatic drainage.

One afternoon, we made the 20-minute drive to Woolacombe Beach, officially an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

We walked along the three-mile stretch of golden sand, enjoyed a fruit picnic that our cook at Merlin Court had provided for us, then walked the three miles back to the car park.

As I had enjoyed the week so much and had not felt hungry, despite all the walking, I didn't expect to lose much weight. But on the final day at weigh-in, I was delighted to discover I had lost nine pounds.

Many of the others in our group also recorded impressive weight losses.

As we said our goodbyes, we all agreed that this weight-loss retreat felt like a proper seaside holiday – an escape from the day-to-day grind.

Since returning home, I've found my Slimmeria experience has given me the impetus to do all I can to keep on the wellness track.

It's a break from the routine that will remain with me.



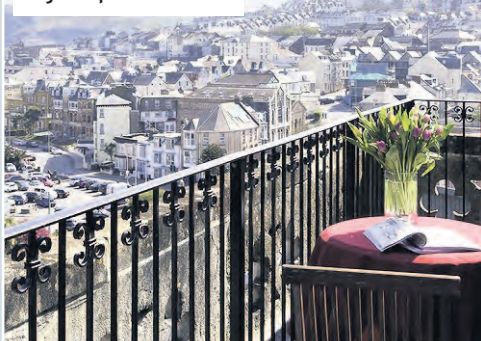
NEED TO KNOW

■ SANJEETA BAINS stayed at Slimmeria's Merlin Court near Ilfracombe.

■ THE cost of a six-day Weight Loss & Rejuvenation Retreat, staying in a twin bed en-suite starts from £1,100 per person, including breakfast, lunch and dinner, three daily classes, a daily morning walk with Galia and one complimentary spa treatment.

■ GALIA also runs a Slimmeria retreat in Hye House, East Sussex. Set in the idyllic countryside, it has a vineyard and outdoor pool. The retreat runs all year round and prices start from £695 for seven nights. See slimmeria.com

The hotel's balcony is a great place to relax



SLIMMERIA DAILY SCHEDULE

■ 7.30AM: Wake up – a bell is rung so you don't lie in!

■ 8AM: Lemon tonic.

■ 8.15AM: Briefing.

■ 8.30AM: Walk.

■ 10.30AM: Breakfast.

■ 11AM: Fitness (circuit and strength training).

■ 12PM: Yoga or pilates.

■ 1PM: Lunch.

■ 3PM: Herbal tea.

■ 4PM: Spa treatments and another afternoon walk of your choosing.

■ 6.30PM: Dinner.

■ 7.15PM: Evening class – dance, self-defence, mindfulness, etc.

■ 9PM: Bed.

SATURDAYextra

02.11.19

KENDALL CALLING

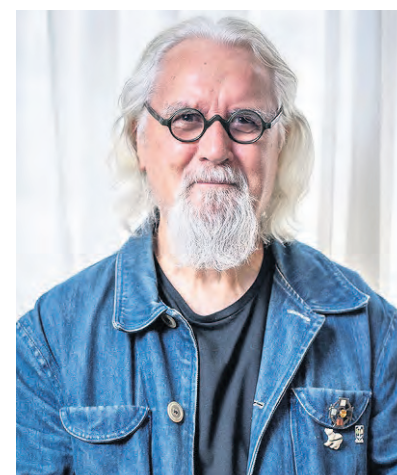
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