

NO PAIN, NO GAIN

Always struggling to maintain your weight, regain your health or shift those stubborn pounds? The extreme detox retreat Slimmeria could be just the kick-up-the-backside that you never knew you needed

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As someone who has always thrived from eating fresh, healthy foods and by practicing fitness and movement in many forms, I'm not going to lie when I say that I honestly thought the Slimmeria Retreat would be like a walk in the park for me; it was the hubby I was concerned for. However, nothing could have prepared me for the journey of pushing through physical and mental limitations and the transformative self-exploration that occurred during our stay.

As a mum of two I have worked hard to regain my health after pregnancy, labour and breast-feeding took its toll on my body. Not that I regret how my body has changed; yes, losing the weight I gained during pregnancy was key for my mental and physical health, but the fact that my body has changed is nothing but a lovely reminder of how much my body has achieved and how grateful I am for it and everything it does for me.

I routinely enjoy exercise and practice yoga (when I can fit it around the children) and I love eating fruits and vegetables and lean proteins. Most people who know me would be likely to say that I'm fairly disciplined when it comes to food, and certainly in terms of eating in moderation. However, I'm no saint and like most people, my weaknesses are the usual suspects – essentially



The accomodation is truly luxurious

'With astounding results across the board for upwards of 5,000 guests – the average weight loss being around 12 pounds for a seven day stay – it's no wonder that the customer base is extremely loyal, with around a 60% return rate per stay'



The gym space

all of the things that were unsurprisingly restricted for the retreat; freshly baked bread, dark chocolate, Sauvignon Blanc and the odd Indian takeaway. Oddly, however, it was good old English Breakfast tea that I was really nervous about giving up. Turns out, I needn't have worried about the tea, or the chocolate or the wine, because the hunger kicked it almost immediately.

I might eat healthily and work out, but I don't starve myself and in hindsight, perhaps that is something I should have expected from the promises on the tin. Slimmeria state; "We will starve you – with our amazing and unique detox fasting diet. We will exhaust you – with walks in the rain and mud followed by fitness classes. We will stretch you to your limits with our yoga classes [...] And what will you do? You will say thank you and pay us for the privilege."

I don't think I read this before we signed up but it certainly reflects the humour and firm ethos of the creator and director, Galia Grainger.

After arriving in England from Russia, some 30 years ago, Galia found that her new sugar-rich diet of highly processed and starchy foods led to a four stone weight gain. Galia channelled her energy into researching diets and eventually reverted back to her Russian grandmother's detox and fasting diet. Through trial and error, Galia developed



The beautiful exterior



Ilfracombe

an alternative raw, vegetarian detox fasting diet, inspired by her Russian roots. She lost four stone and started offering the programme to the public at the first retreat location in East Sussex, in 2010. For the past few years, Galia has been renovating a beautiful gothic mansion in Ilfracombe and recently opened it up to the public as the second Slimmeria retreat.

With astounding results across the board for upwards of 5,000 guests – the average weight loss being around 12 pounds for a seven day stay – it's no wonder that the customer base is extremely loyal, with around a 60% return rate per stay. Slimmeria has also hosted a number of celebrities and models and featured on various television shows including ITV's Lorraine and Channel Four's Extreme Diet Hotels. Slimmeria has also appeared in countless publications; from The Sun to Grazia, Woman and Home, Mail Online and more.

Galia is known for her straight-talking, no nonsense attitude; she is passionate about tackling what she calls 'globesity' by facilitating others to get back to a more primitive way of life, which includes lots of physical exercise out in nature, fresh air for a mind-body-soul connection, healthy, natural foods and intermittent fasting.

Whilst Galia certainly put us all through our paces - and she did indeed crack the whip - she

is no ordinary drill sergeant, in the sense that she is sensitive to the needs of her guests and she is committed to the program on a personal level; she takes part in the group walks and talks openly about her experiences in an inspiring and knowledgeable way. Her approach is extremely dynamic and innovative, for instance, whilst Galia certainly means business when it comes to detoxing and fitness, she knows how to infuse the program with a healthy dose of fun and good humour.

During our stay, a typical day included the following; we started the day with hot lemon water, followed by a two hour group walk along the stunning coastal path of Ilfracombe. Upon our return, we enjoyed a small vegetable juice of carrot, lemon and ginger for breakfast. Following breakfast, we all gathered together for an hour of circuit training, followed by an hour of outdoor yoga. Lunch consisted of a small plate of raw vegetables with a sprinkling of seeds. The afternoon included a gentle thirty minute massage, a small slice of watermelon and herbal tea as 'afternoon tea', followed by another two hour walk (this time unaccompanied) in and around Ilfracombe. Dinner was steamed vegetables with a small portion of brown rice, followed by mint tea. Finally, we took part in a 'dancercise' class, after which we collapsed in a heap on our bed.

It was intense and I found that the hardest part was not resisting temptations to indulge in local seaside treats or the lack of tea or chocolate or wine, but rather the extreme hunger from consuming such a low calorie diet and also the physical and mental exhaustion. I certainly realised that I was able to push myself beyond what I thought was originally possible, but it also enabled me to look at some of my lifestyle habits that were potentially causing me more stress. For instance, I felt that I greatly benefitted from the alcohol detox as well as the outdoor walks in nature. I'm not sure I'll be restricting my diet to that extreme level again, but I certainly learnt the value of detoxing to rebalance my system and returning to a more natural state. I was able to reflect upon a number of personal challenges and triumphs during my stay and I can wholeheartedly say the experience was absolutely life-changing in a number of ways.

Whilst I had no weight as such to lose, the process has intrigued me as to how my health could improve simply by occasionally practicing intermittent fasting, consuming less alcohol and exercising more outdoors. I feel that someone with weight to lose or a specific health goal, would benefit significantly from the Slimmeria Retreat. ♦ **Prices start from £745 per person for 6 nights, slimmeria.com**

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