

LATES 'N' BREAKS

SALE TIME: Cosmos is celebrating its 50th birthday with discounts on summer holidays of up to 50% and deposits of just £50pp. Free child places are available. There are one-parent family offers and no single supplements at some properties. Visit cosmos.co.uk or call 0844 573 4261.

TENERIFE: Fly from Birmingham on January 11 for a week at the two-diamond Laguna Park II, from £179pp self-catering. See monarch.co.uk or call 0871 423 8642.

FLORIDA: Stay at the Clarion Inn Lake Buena Vista in Orlando, close to Walt Disney World Resort, from £495 for a week room-only. Includes flights from Gatwick on January 28 and car hire. See jetsave.com

GO FOR IT

Edited by **ELLA BUCHAN**

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COSTA RICA: Pay from £619 for a week, all-inclusive, at the three-T Occidental Allegro Papagayo, including flights from Gatwick on January 11. See thomson.co.uk or call 0871 231 5595 for details.

HONG KONG: Spend three nights at the three-star Metropark Hotel in Kowloon for £681 on room only, with flights from Heathrow on February 16. See thomascooksignature.com or call 0844 879 8014.

SHAPING UP FOR 2011



PEACE WORK: The Hub, left, and the famous Goan sunset, below



THE boy's grin spread from ear to ear as he snapped one of our skipping ropes into action.

"Look! look!" he cried, as his giggling friends mimicked our yoga poses.

It was some light relief from the "warrior" position we'd eased our aching limbs into...again.

We were on Sernabatim Beach, Goa, winding up an exercise class during a "weight management" week at The Beach House Retreat.

Already - and trimmer.

A few days earlier we'd been met at the airport and taken deep into the Indian jungle.

From the moment the gates of The Beach House opened, calm and serenity took hold.

We were greeted in the sunny courtyard dotted with vibrant pink and yellow flowers - and handed coconut shells brimming with sweet juice.

The retreat comprises a main house overlooking the beach and a cluster

Indian retreat the place to Goa to take weight off your mind

by **GEORGIA PETTIPHER**

of split-level studio apartments in the grounds.

Decorated in neutral tones, each apartment has a living area and large bathroom downstairs while a dark wooden staircase leads to a bedroom and washroom.

Floor-to-ceiling picture windows next to huge four-poster beds give views over the tropical gardens.

The mini-bars are brimming too - with bottles of mineral water.

A series of thatched huts form the spa area, surrounding a central water fountain.

At the main house, known as the Hub, friendly staff members are on hand to see to every need (other than pizza delivery, of course) and there's a lounge area with sumptuous sofas.

Infinity pools may be all the rage but Sernabatim has an infinity beach. Its sands stretch further than the eye can see. Every morning,

fishermen haul in huge nets and drag their catch on to the beach.

Families gather from Colva (the nearest village) to paddle in the warm water and watch the breathtaking sunsets.

It is "the" place to be for the local community. Even farmers stick to the beach, herding cows across the sand.

It was best to walk briskly past the beach bars offering two-for-one cocktails, though a regular supply of virtuous drinks are provided at the retreat.

At the sweeping breakfast bar in the Hub, tall glasses of all kinds of liquid concoctions were lined up for our delectation.

Solid food is kept to a minimum and in the evenings you choose your juices and smoothies for the next day - beetroot, orange, carrot or sweet pineapple.

Dark green wheatgrass or super-food drinks were served in shot

glasses - I knocked them back with both nostrils firmly clenched.

We were also given potent vitamin supplements and psyllium husks - a natural source of fibre, which expands in the belly and helps to clean the digestive tract.

The main "meal" of the day was a vegetarian lunch such as rainbow salad (shredded beetroot, cabbage and beans shaped into a rainbow).

On day three we had a more filling roasted vegetable and chickpea salad, which sparked near hysteria among our group.

Roast turkey dinners, mince pies and booze may still be fresh in the memory but at The Beach House, tofu, pea soup, pomegranate and mung beans start to look like the future.

Our personal schedules were set a day in advance too. The more time filled, the less opportunity to focus on rumbling stomachs.

The Beach House's bespoke body

and mind healing makes it all about you, you, you.

In one day I had a session with the programme's nutritionist, where my weaknesses were identified (chocolate and booze) and healthier alternatives worked out.

I also had an Ayurvedic full body massage and a hypnotherapy session.

We were encouraged to de-junk our lives - and a few tears were shed in the process.

If we had ever doubted the point of it all, it was put into context by the retreat's owner, Ajit Patel.

In a former life as a stressed-out pharmacist, he was reduced to such a debilitating physical condition that his colon had to be removed. If anyone has learned the importance of a healthy body and mind, it's Ajit.

Suddenly, our daily self-administered enemas didn't seem such a hardship. In fact, by the end of the week my housemates had

become enema junkies. An "interesting" account (legend has it even Lego and worms have been "passed") was met with whooping and high-fiving.

A number of the group even took their enema kits (plastic jug and rubber tube) home with them.

A day trip to a beach market took us back into the real world. People, dust, motorbikes, honking horns, haggling with market traders and converting currency all seemed a bit much after being wrapped in cotton wool at Sernabatim Beach.

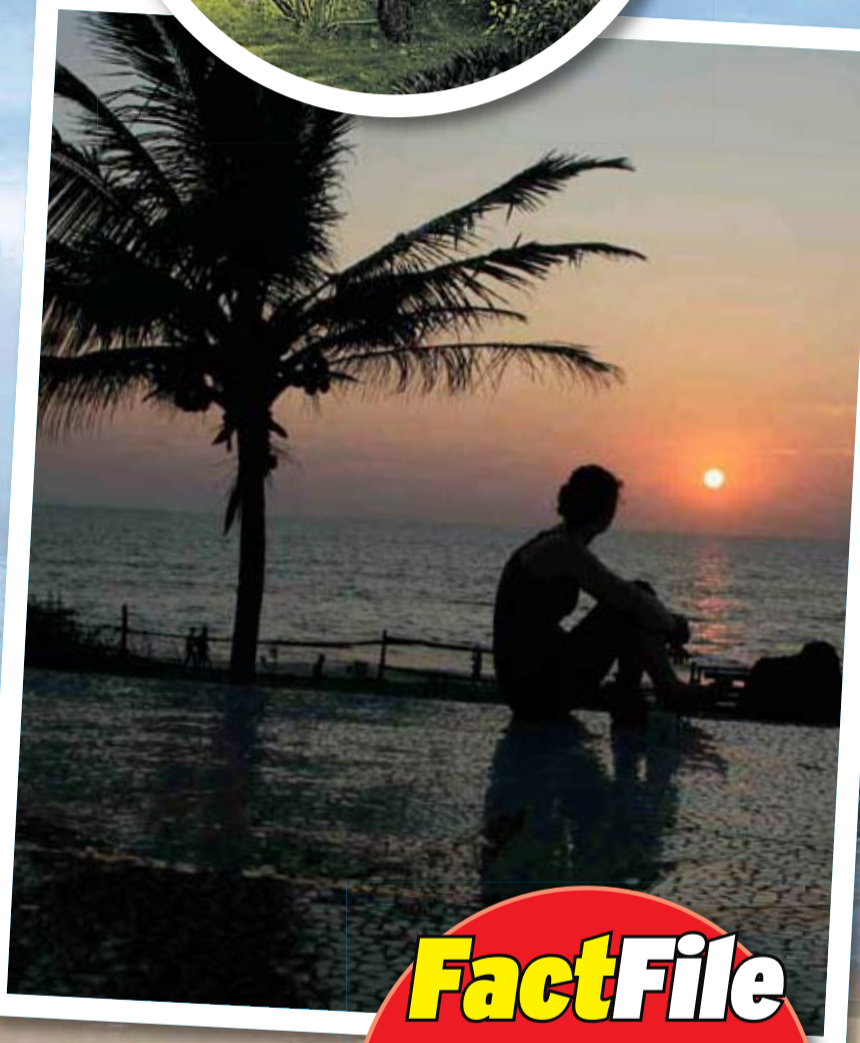
On the plus side, we all stocked up with Indian spices and jewellery at bargain prices and saw monkeys, giant reptiles and even a snake.

Back at the Hub on the last day we faced the final "reveal" - how much weight had we shifted? One of us (not me) had lost a whopping 12lb.

I lost 8lb, 14 centimetres from my waist - and a huge weight off my mind.



Pictures: **LEIGH MYTTON**



FactFile

■ AN all-inclusive stay at The Beach House in Goa costs from £770 per person for three days on the Weight Management package or £622 per person for two sharing. See thebeachhousegoa.com for more information.
 ■ Return flights with Monarch start at £200. See monarch.co.uk or call 0871 423 8642.

■ **TWO-WAY STRETCH:** Yoga on the beach and, far left, Georgia (left) and her pal Leigh take a more relaxed approach

Hall right as winter blues drift away...

FEELING rough after the Christmas excesses? Rather than wallowing in your hangover, pretend you're the Lord or Lady of the manor and head to Thoresby Hall.

As we arrived in the grounds on the edge of Sherwood Forest in Nottinghamshire, our first thought was how huge this place is.

You would have to walk for about 20 minutes just to get to the entrance gate, past the croquet lawn and woodland trails.

One of 13 Warner Leisure Hotels specialising in "adults only" breaks, the fact that it seems to be always full speaks volumes.

It also says a lot about how many people want to get away from kids every now and again - whether their own or everyone else's.

A break here is a bargain, starting at just £229 for four nights midweek - including breakfast,

by **ELLA BUCHAN**

evening meals, leisure facilities and most of the activities on offer.

The Ambassador rooms are the cheapest but they're still pretty luxurious - lovely big beds, en-suite bathrooms, plus all the facilities you'd expect like tea and coffee, ironing board, telly etc.

But the more you pay, the more you get. Stay in one of the classy Signature rooms and you get better

toiletries, LCD TV and digital radio. You can also dine in candlelit cellar restaurant Fenocchi's, a favourite with younger couples on romantic weekends.

We opted for total hibernation in one of the historic suites in the Old House. Right at the edge of the hotel, it felt like our own wing. There are bathrobes, luxury toiletries - and an incongruously modern Nespresso coffee machine. Otherwise it's about traditional

touches - four-poster bed, chaise longue and reproduction antiques.

In fact, the entire Old House felt like living in a different era.

In the Great Hall, older couples expertly swept their partners across the plush carpets while others sipped classic cocktails in front of the log fire.

You can work off all the food with free activities such as archery and dance lessons.

Or just retreat to the spa with its hydrotherapy pool, ice cave, steam room and sauna.

We had the rassoul, where you smother detoxifying muds on your face and body, relax and let the steam rinse it off, leaving smooth, glowing skin.

I followed that with an ESPA facial and as I drifted away, cocooned in the soothing scent of essential oils, my winter blues just drifted away.



GRADE ONE: The magnificent Thoresby Hall was built in 1875

FactFile ■ **THORESBY** Hall Hotel & Spa, in Nottinghamshire, is a Grade I listed mansion built in 1875. Four-night midweek breaks in January start at £229 and three-night weekend breaks start at £237. Prices are based on two people sharing an Ambassador room and include dinner, bed & breakfast. Visit warnerleisurehotels.co.uk or call 0800 1 388 399. Ella travelled by train with East Coast from London. Book online at eastcoast.co.uk