

# THE RACE TO GET HEALTHY: READY, SET, GOA!

In search of beauty, solace and detoxification, **Laura Coughlin** heads to the pristine shores of Goa to find out whether a concoction of sunshine, healthy meals, therapy and enemas can really turn back time and help you lose weight.



Vacations are normally a wonderful excuse to let yourself go. There's no deadline, no early morning meeting, no need to rush out of bed. You can feast on the delicious cuisines of whatever country you are visiting; drink tipplers only found in that particular corner of the world; and you can normally do all of this without the feeling of guilt, because it's your holiday, and anything goes.

So what happens if you choose a vacation that requires the absolute opposite; where you cannot let yourself go, but rather need to reel yourself in? What if evening dinners were not seafood platters but green pea broth in a cup the size of a fist? What if, at 8am, instead of being tucked up in bed, it was sun salutations beside the sea? If you switched the usual Pina Colada for a lunchtime coffee enema?

I headed to the Sanda Wellness luxurious Beach House in Goa for a new weight management retreat ([www.thebeachhousegoa.com](http://www.thebeachhousegoa.com)). What followed was a life-changing mix of hilarity, misery, exhaustion and enlightenment, all in the space of one working week.

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## Day 1

Landing at dawn after a short flight from Sharjah, we were welcomed at the tiny Goan Airport and taken to the resort. Even that early in the morning, Goa carried a heady mix of buzzing island life; cars and scooters whizzed about on the roads delivering supplies and groceries, while cows walked idly alongside, slowing the traffic.

The wellness retreat is set on the beautiful, secluded stretch of Sernabatim Beach. It's about a 30 minute drive from the airport and affiliated with the Bay Watch resort next door, but has its own entrance, facilities and beach access, making the centre feel very private and secluded.

There are 10 private, two-storey chalets, each minimally and beautifully decorated. The first floor boasts a bathroom and a large four



poster bed. On the ground floor, there is a cosy living area complete with TV and mini bar. 'Not too bad at all,' I thought. Upon closer inspection, however, these little luxuries were quite deceptive. The TV was unplugged. The room service menu only included two options: fruit or muesli. And, though you could say the mini-bar was well-stocked, it was in fact full to the brim with bottled mineral water. This was going to be a very different holiday indeed.

With a mouthful of muesli, I headed to The Beach House centre to meet the other guests and nutritionists. Regime is the natural order of the day at The Beach House and everyone begins their proverbial health kick in the same way – a 360° screening process. This is a full (and brutally honest) weigh-in covering bone density, body mass index, visceral fat content, subcutaneous fat

content and the all-important biological age gauge. I admit, living the life of an expat for over five years can have its pitfalls, most of which are visible around my tummy and thigh region, yet despite my love for food, I pride myself on staying active while living in the UAE. However, while my BMI remained in the 'normal' zone, my biological age was 17 years older than my actual age, shocking me to my fatty core. While trying to digest what irreparable damage I have caused myself, the positively glowing staff at The Beach House – who appear to be the epitome of healthy and happy living – ensured that we got fully acquainted with the Sanda Wellness philosophy. 'It's not just about eating right' said one team member, 'this is about ensuring the three wellness chakras – physiological, physical and psychological – are well balanced.'

To balance our physiological element, the experts made sure we consumed the right supplements throughout the week. Spirulina husk and other digesting aids accompanied every smoothie and meal to help rid the body of bad toxins. The physical element was taken care of each morning at 08:00 with an hour of yoga by the beach, followed later in the day by a rotating fitness session which included Tai Chi, a beach run and circuit training.

The psychological element was probably the most surprising and enlightening component; in layman's terms, it was therapy. During each therapy or hypnotherapy session, a qualified therapist delved deep into our psyche to unearth any harbouring issues we may have had that resulted in bad eating habits. My initial scepticism faded instantly as I found myself balling like a baby, lying flat out on the couch, narrating my life story.

While the attempt to balance my chakras was clearly going to take up a considerable amount of my time, I could still indulge in a spa treatment each afternoon and enjoy a spot of sun bathing, reading and napping. Each evening we were given our own personal agenda card for the following day's itinerary which included routine sessions such as a 60 minute fitness session, evening educational talks and set mealtimes. Most dauntingly, self-administered colonics were to be a daily activity too.



## Day 2

As I zoned in on the crashing waves, cawing crows and whistling breeze, I felt enlightened and inspired.

My door bell shripped at 07:00 sharp and I stumbled downstairs to find that my pre-retreat breakfast of coffee and sugar had been replaced with hot water and lime, accompanied by two herbal supplements. I threw on my joggers and headed to the patio for yoga. Without sounding cliché, there's really nothing like yoga by the sea, and we were encouraged to sit still and absorb the natural noises surrounding us. As I zoned in on the crashing waves, cawing crows and whistling breeze, I felt enlightened and inspired to do this more often. Luckily, every morning started this way.

A fruit smoothie and one wheatgrass shot counted for breakfast and, like everything, it was aimed at detoxifying and inducing

energy. Before we knew it, it was time for our first coffee enema and we headed to the privacy of our rooms with a pot of body temperature coffee in hand, to give it a whirl. We'd been given excellent instructions and, to my sheer delight and relief, it was not bad or difficult – in fact, it was quite fun. You could practically hear the euphoria sweep through The Beach House residence.

At 19:00 we all made our way back to The Beach House for dinner. There was a strong sense of community between the staff and guests, with everyone sitting together to eat. Dinner consisted of a cup of hot broth and, despite its excellent nutritional value, we all looked despairingly at our mini portions and spent the next hour talking about roast dinners and fry-ups.





## Days 4 & 5

I woke up completely alive and energetic on day four. I still felt pangs of hunger but the lethargy had subsided and I felt far better. By the time I headed for my spa treatment, my head was in the clouds and the delightful lymphatic draining massage sent me off into a blissful lull. The weather was glorious, the birds were my friends again and the tai chi session and garlic enema left me cleansed and refreshed.

On our last day, we headed for our final weigh-in and I was surprisingly nonchalant about it. The Beach House sessions had already made me feel better and I could literally sense the benefits without having to jump on the scales. As it turned out, I lost 2.5kg, a total of 9cm around my body, and I knocked a couple of years off my biological

age. Not bad at all for a five day timeframe. The big question is, have I managed to keep off the weight and have I continued to put into practice all the lessons I learned at The Beach House? Well, I'm eating far more sensibly than before, courtesy of a healthy plan created by The Beach House nutritionist, and I choose organic as and when I can. Natural supplements are my new best friend and I've kicked the coffee, sweeteners and fried food. It's been a month and I've lost another 2kg, albeit in a much more relaxed timeframe. The team at The Beach House created a foundation and helped me to cleanse my body of the lengthy build-up of toxins, while giving me the inspiration and knowledge about how to create a balanced diet. The rest, as they say, is up to me. ■

## Day 3

I was grumpy, very grumpy, and I had to literally pull myself out of my cosy bed and head to yoga. Sitting on the mosaic floor absorbing the environs was not doing it for me at all. The crashing waves were annoying, the breeze gave me chills and I wanted to shoot the crows. 'It's likely that midway through the detox, you're going to feel uneasy and you may want to cry or shout out,' explained the gentle natured Dr Assusy. She was not joking; I felt possessed. It seemed I wasn't the only one suffering and most guests appeared to be going through a change in character. By the time it came to the fitness session, I felt utterly drained and barely made it through the circuit training. The beach run just about finished me off and I was throwing up mung beans before the finish line.

### VIDEO DIARY

Check Out Laura's daily video diary from The Beach House at [www.liveworkexplore.com](http://www.liveworkexplore.com) or subscribe to *liveworkexplore's* YouTube channel at [www.youtube.com/explorerpublishing](http://www.youtube.com/explorerpublishing) for the latest vlogs.

### DETAILS

Daily flights from Sharjah to Goa cost approximately Dhs.1,050 return with Air Arabia ([www.airarabia.com](http://www.airarabia.com)). The Beach House Weight Loss Retreat packages start at Dhs.4,450 for seven days, excluding flights. For more information visit [www.thebeachhousegoa.com](http://www.thebeachhousegoa.com).