



THE BOOT CAMP DIARIES

*They made us CRY and they made us hurt,
but they also made us thinner, fitter and
healthier. These are the HARDCORE detoxes*

1. Yoga detox

Absolute Sanctuary Tambol, Thailand
BOOT CAMPEE: Stacey Duguid,
executive fashion editor

FITNESS LEVEL: Zero.

I don't 'do' the gym. I've been a member of one for five years and have probably used the shower more than the treadmill. I would say that I am pretty unfit, and in my 35th year everything has decided to head south. A month of fashion shows (carb-heavy meals, caffeine-fuelled days and no exercise) has left me tired and almost 7lbs heavier. A friend recommends Absolute Sanctuary to kick-start a healthier lifestyle and lose those extra pounds, so off I go.

DAY ONE: I haven't slept for 24 hours, but I've arrived in paradise, so am not as grumpy as I should be. It's hot, very hot, and I've just left a freezing cold London.

Thirty minutes after arriving, I'm told it's time for my Wellness consultation.

I'm sitting in a small hot room, with a doctor holding a piece of pH paper that I've just peed on. Apparently the perfect pH state for the body is alkaline, and mine is acid: not good. He informs me that 'bread, coffee, alcohol and stress all cause an acid pH state in the body, resulting in depleted bone density, calcium deposits and—in extreme cases—death.' I suddenly regret consuming all three on the plane. As for stress, I live in London, so go figure.

After a weigh-in, there's a general health questionnaire asking the usual things about goals, mental stability and what I've done to prepare for the detox. I announce, with pride, that I've been off alcohol for three weeks. He doesn't react—clearly having no idea what an achievement it is not to drink for three out of four weeks of fashion shows.

I explain my goals are to lose 7lbs in seven days and he gives me three detox plan options: the Ultimate Cleanse (no food, just juices), the Living Food Detox (nothing that's cooked) or the Vegetarian Plan (as it sounds). As I'm a vegetarian anyway, that wouldn't feel like much of a detox, so

I choose the Ultimate Cleanse. No pain, no gain, right?

I'm given an itinerary with set times to have the detox drinks and a colonic each day. I collapse by the infinity pool for the rest of the afternoon, and that night I sleep like a log.

DAY TWO: I have the mother of all headaches. I've got my face pressed against the cool wall in my bedroom in an attempt to alleviate it and stay off the Nurofen. I make my way to my first yoga class (they call it 'Flow' here), and there's also pranayama (breathing control) and meditation, depending on the day. But I couldn't meditate now, unless I could transcendently float to Starbucks, that is.

I'm checked in for a 10am colonic. The

point is to remove toxins and clear the way for a healthier digestive system. The nurse whips out a plastic tube. 'Excuse me, please,' she says—her signal that it is about to go in. She then turns on some warm water, and 30 minutes later out pops what feels like my entire inner organs. Then she massages my stomach. Afterwards, I feel 50lbs lighter and more alarmed than I've ever been in my life.

I have to consume three detox drinks per day, and we're not talking Innocent smoothies. These contain psyllium husk, a form of fibre that provides bulk, bentonite



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clay and a powerful detoxifying agent that absorbs toxins in the intestines. Together they are supposed to drag toxins and waste out of the gut. I've got a bag of vitamins, minerals and enzymes, too. Back to the infinity pool for a dip.

At lunchtime I order my 'alkalising' broth in the Love Kitchen, the restaurant where all guests eat and socialise. Absolute Sanctuary is also a yoga teacher-training school, and those students are not on a juice fast; they are eating vegetarian delights. I vow not come here at meal times again.

The spa itself is all Morocco-meets-modern. The bathrooms are brightly tiled and the beds are huge. Each room has windows opening onto a private balcony.

DAY THREE: A cold sore has appeared on my lip and my tongue is coated in white fur. My mood is borderline basket case. I skip yoga and feel miserable. I have an awful headache, which hurts so much that all I can do is lie by the pool and cry. I detest the colonic and the detox juices aren't going down well, either. The Wellness consultant suggests I have some EFT (Emotional Freedom Technique), which stimulates the body's meridian points to ease headaches and stress.

I had a messy break-up eight months ago and suddenly some deep-seated anger surfaces. I spend the rest of the day in bed crying. Sleep is fitful. I wake up starving at 4am.

DAY FOUR: Feel mildly better. Have downloaded a vibrational healing program on my laptop as directed by the Wellness

dude. Sit in front of my Mac and imagine my eyes are like those swirling cartoon ones. Have a pedicure before bed; a sign I'm on the mend, surely?

DAY FIVE: The headaches are easing off, but I just got my period so that may explain my emotional state. No colonics allowed on the first day of my period, so I go to the gentle detox yoga class, which helps.

DAY SIX: The headache has dwindled to a mild thump, so with newfound energy I opt for hot-box yoga in the afternoon. I am amazed at what my body can do.

DAY SEVEN: Up at 6am and go for a brisk walk, which feels so good that after the daily routines I hire a taxi around the island. Have a spring in my step and practically run up 500 steps to kiss Buddha.

DAY EIGHT: I'm leaving tomorrow, so I'm allowed to eat a light raw-food meal (beetroot and mango salad) in the Love Kitchen, but first I have to see the Wellness consultant to be weighed and get healthy-eating advice. I've lost 7lbs. I put on mascara and my colonic nurse says I look pretty. 'And

pretty on the inside, thanks to you,' I say. She looks blank – a lost-in-translation moment if ever there was one.

DAY NINE: I have a raw packed lunch for the plane, as I'm not allowed to eat anything cooked for four days, and no wheat, dairy or meat for several days after that. I continue to lose weight at home, and at work people ask if I've had surgery. My skin is clear, my eyes bright and my teeth really white. I feel the best I've ever felt. If life, finances and time permitted, I would do this detox every year.

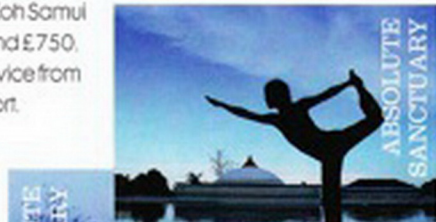
Absolute Sanctuary

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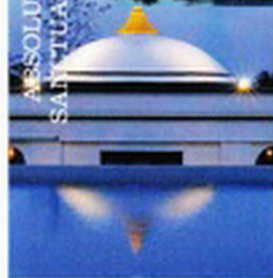
Enq|0845|1701747; lotusjourneys.com

The eight-night/seven-day detox from around £1,026, including fasting/detox menu, supplements, accommodation, treatments, consultations, transfers and daily yoga.

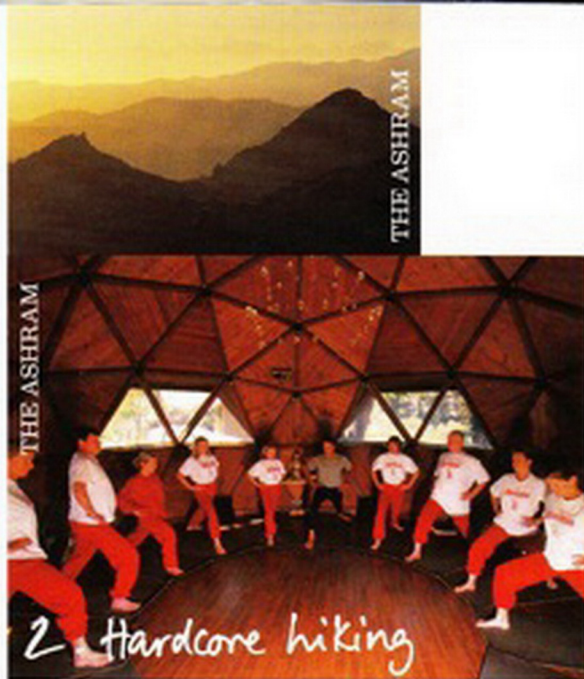
GETTING THERE Thai Airways (enq|thai airways.co.uk) fly to Bangkok, then Koh Samui daily from around £750. Free transfer service from Koh Samui airport.



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2 Hardcore hiking

THE ASHRAM

The Ashram, Santa Monica, LA

BOOT CAMPEE: Jenny Dickinson, acting deputy editor

FITNESS LEVEL: I can walk fast.

I have been a size 14 since I was 14. Now that I'm in my 30s, I think this is my last chance to change that. Trouble is, my will is weak. I think the short, sharp shock of a boot camp – with something to show for my efforts at the end of the week – could be the answer. As walking is the only exercise I feel comfortable with, The Ashram, with its hiking programme, sounds perfect.

DAY MINUS-ONE: My regime actually begins two weeks before the camp, as The Ashram advises abstaining from sugar, alcohol, caffeine and any other products that artificially activate your metabolism. I observe this faithfully, but when I'm upgraded to Virgin's Upper Class on the flight out, I can't resist a couple of glasses of champagne. I've proved I can go two weeks without, so I should be fine, right?

DAY ONE: I'm picked up from the airport hotel by Mark, an Ashram trainer, and we make a few stops to gather the rest of the 'inmates'. At The Ashram, a lodge-style house in the foothills of the Santa Monica mountains, we're shown our rooms – basic but comfortable – and introduced to Catharina Hedberg, or Cat. She's a co-founder of The Ashram and is a whirlwind of positive vibes and energy.

Next is the weigh-in/body measuring (now there's a life highlight, standing in your pants while a 26-year-old man is told to 'measure just on the nipple line').

Our first hike is a four-miler, so the trainers can judge our fitness. An hour and a half later, I feel as though I did pretty well, although I didn't join in with those ➤