

Reader Retreat: Absolute Sanctuary, Koh Samui,  
Thailand ([absolutesanctuary.com](http://absolutesanctuary.com))

# Absolutely fabulous

Charlotte Dormon finds a delicious way to detox at  
Thailand's Absolute Sanctuary retreat

After battling through another cold winter and the stress of London life grinding me down, I decided it was time to recharge the body, relax the mind and book in some well-deserved 'me time'. And so I jetted off to Thailand's Absolute Sanctuary retreat on the blissful island of Koh Samui.

If you're a fan of yoga, sunshine, delicious healthy food, fresh fruit smoothies and incredible juices that can't do anything but whack a huge smile upon your face – then this is the place for you.

Being healthy has never been so easy - something you'll discover when you step into Absolute Sanctuary's Love Kitchen restaurant. I'm a real foodie and enjoy eating out, but also love to follow a healthy diet along the way - so I was more than impressed by the beautifully presented, incredibly nutritious and great-tasting food available at the retreat daily.

Even if you have a sweet tooth and can't imagine living without your favourite treats, you won't miss much when you can choose from the assortment of (almost guilt-free) homemade desserts. On the menu, choose from a delicious raw chocolate tart, banana and cashew vegan ice cream, yummy gluten-free carrot cake and delightful date brownies – all fit for any yoga detox queen.

## Vitality boost

And it's practically impossible to get bored with the huge range of dining options on the board. The all-inclusive yoga package menu in the restaurant is vast, with many exciting choices for breakfast, lunch and dinner. As well as your meals, you can also choose two

freshly made juices or smoothies each day, which I personally liked to enjoy whilst sunning myself by the pool.

Although I found most people at the retreat were on a strict detox, which included fasting and a specialist regime, I was already living with good health in the fast lane back in London (eating well, but guilty of too much stress and not enough sleep) and wanted lots of energy to swim, do plenty of yoga and do some sightseeing whilst I was there.

But if it's a cleanse of some sort you're after, these guys cater for all and there are experts on hand to take you through the process (including health checks and colonics).

During the week, I met a lot of people who'd arrived to cleanse, and as the days went by, I watched those same people change like butterflies in front of my eyes. Forty-year-old businessmen who arrived overweight, frazzled with stress and with tired, grey-looking skin, finished the week looking almost five years younger, with sparkly eyes, a slender frame, glowing with health and beaming with energy. Whether they'd been dragged by their wives or just come alone, they all said they felt a complete change and seemed happy to have been through the experience.

## Yoga matters

And then there's the yoga. Absolute Sanctuary is an ideal place for both beginners and those who have been practising for a long time, great if you want to improve your technique or try out different yoga styles.

There are at least four or five daily classes to accommodate all needs. I found all the teachers to be professional, friendly and approachable. They were very supportive and enjoyed sharing their experiences and insight from their teachings over the years, which I found both interesting and helpful towards my development over the week. As well as the morning meditation, I tried out almost all the classes, really enjoying the gentle flow and Yin yoga.

The jungle studio, where all the classes take place, has huge windows, so natural light can flood through, allowing you to appreciate and enjoy a beautiful view of palm trees and pretty flowers. If you're a city dweller like me, you'll be pleased to hear that only peace, quiet and tranquility surround this resort, which is enhanced by the soothing sounds of tropical birds and a gentle palm tree breeze. It certainly was a nice change and far easier to get myself through even the hardest of classes, than my usual no-view London studio.



### Beyond the mat

As well as the unlimited yoga offered in the package, you also get the luxury of a daily aroma or Thai stretch massage at the spa. This extra bit of pampering really allows your body to release even more tension and helps let go of any stress or worries you had when you arrived.

Although not included in the package, I did also have a reiki session with one of the practitioners. I was keen to try it and found it extremely relaxing and emotionally cleansing. If you are interested in other treatments or having other complementary therapies, the spa has a good selection, and can advise accordingly.

When you're not being pampered or practising your downward dog, you'll love nothing more than lying by (or in) the hotel's incredible infinity pool. It's a good size for swimming, so you can really get some lengths in to add to your fitness regime. No matter what time of day, I always managed to get a pool bed and was very happy to enjoy some 'me time' with a good book and a fresh green coconut juice by my side.

One thing I like about Absolute Sanctuary is there's no pretention

or arrogance attached to this retreat. Some yoga teachers and their pupils can assume a certain snobbery or competitiveness that is unattractive and can be uncomfortable to deal with, especially if you're a beginner. You will not find that here. In fact, you can feel totally comfortable wearing whatever you want, just being yourself, surrounded by friendly people and enjoying yourself without a care in the world.

### Health and wellbeing

I also love to learn new things and if understanding more about the health and wellbeing of your body is something you crave, then take advantage of the free daily lectures by the various health gurus that come and offer talks at the sanctuary.

Although the gym studio itself is quite small and only provides basic equipment, there is a daily fitness class with the retreat's personal trainer, so book in a one-to-one session if you're keen to have help with a good exercise routine. And if you want to feel the sand in your toes and enjoy a swim in the ocean, then make use of the complementary bus service down to the local beaches. This is Thailand, remember, so fabulous beaches come as standard.

That's assuming you'll want to leave this paradise island retreat at all. The sanctuary has Moroccan décor throughout and offers different standards of bedrooms, from basic to a suite. All rooms are quiet, clean and comfortable, providing good basic facilities and, more importantly, a good mattress with nice, plump pillows.

Housekeeping is provided each day - so you will always come back to a lovely tidy room, freshly made bed, enough clean towels and plenty of sweet-scented jasmine toiletries in your bathroom to help you unwind and relax into a great night's sleep.

*Health and Fitness Travel ([healthandfitnesstravel.com](http://healthandfitnesstravel.com)) offers seven nights from £1,650pp including return flights and transfers, unlimited yoga classes, one spa treatment per day and all meals. OM readers receive a free 30 minute welcome ritual massage and complementary upgrade to deluxe room for all bookings made by August 30, 2013.*

