

Daily yoga, wheatgrass shots and no food for a week - the A-list love it, but could you survive extreme detox?

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Last updated at 12:25 PM on 08th February 2010

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Kate Moss does it, and countless celebrities swear by their favourite retreats - but is extreme detox just for the A-list?

Detox retreats certainly don't sound much fun: restricted diets, bootcamp workouts and colonic irrigation are certainly not high on my list for holiday fun - but celebrities including Kate Moss, Elizabeth Hurley and Sarah Ferguson swear by them.

The results appear to speak for themselves, and for those with the money and the inclination, it seems a favourite, surgery-free shortcut to getting red carpet ready.

But can it really be that easy to get an A-list body? After failing miserably at my own January detox - my efforts at being teetotal lasted all of eight days - I decided to try it out.

I'm not one for spending my free time in the rain and cold though. No, if I was going to suffer, I'd be doing it somewhere sunny - and nowhere sounded more inviting than The Beach House in Goa.



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Extreme detox: Could you survive beyond the morning wheatgrass shot

A 'wellness retreat' set on a stunning stretch of coastline, it promised to rid my body of toxins using a combination of medical and holistic therapies in addition to ayurveda - an ancient Indian healing system.

I know little about toxins, but, I figured, if I can chill out and lose a few pounds in the process, I'll be very happy.

And happy I was, when, on arrival after an overnight flight, I was shown to a vast two-floor suite, and served a healthy breakfast of fresh tropical fruits and a smoothie before a jet-lag recovery massage.

Blissfully relaxed, I met my fellow detoxers that evening for an early dinner - a selection of delicious salads with sprouts, nuts and pomegranate seeds. If this is detoxing, I thought, sign me up!

Little did I know it would be my last proper meal for the next four days.

The following morning, each of us met with on-site ayurvedic doctor in turn, who took our vital stats and blood samples.

Then, after hot water and lemon was delivered to my room, we met for yoga together on the terrace.



Idyllic: The Beach House is set on a stunning stretch of Goa coastline

So far, so good. For someone who swears by a decent breakfast first thing, I was only feeling a little hungry, and optimistic about the week ahead.

Kate, the retreat manager, led the session, talking us through the simple poses as the sun rose over the beach in front.

After our warm-up we were finally ready for breakfast - and a taste of things to come. First up was a wheatgrass shot, which, for anyone who has not had the pleasure of trying it, tastes like soil. This was followed by a fresh fruit smoothie mixed with psyllium husks, a fibre supplement that would help fill us up, and bentonite clay to remove toxins.

In addition, we were dosed up with a large number of supplements, from sea mineral and probiotic pills, to liver support and 'parasite cleansing' shots that tasted almost as bad as the wheatgrass.

But I was left little time to complain about the strict new regime before I was whisked off for the first of my two daily beauty treatments. Yes, two. Daily.



Sun salutation: Kate led the group through a dawn yoga session each morning

This was pampering like I had never encountered before - treatments from hot stone massages to facials with home-made organic products - over the course of my stay I was massaged, buffed and polished to within an inch of my life.

In fact, I was so busy being pampered, there was almost not enough time to enjoy the beach, where I could have happily have spent all day, every day. A 20-minute stroll up to Colva, the local town, was considered 'exercise', as was jumping the waves in the sea.

Sunbathing and watching crabs scurry across the sand didn't qualify so much, but it was a perfectly pleasant way to pass the time.

But I make it sound like this was plain sailing though - and the truth is far from it.

Though we were left little chance to feel hungry, (we had four juices a day, plus two bowls of broth - you'd be surprised how much your stomach shrinks) I badly missed the way mealtimes broke up the day, and the lack of calories and substance to the diet left me feeling irritable and lacking in energy.

We were warned by the team - which counted a nutritionist, the aforementioned ayurvedic doctor, and even a hypnotherapist - that we could expect to feel emotional due to all the toxins being expelled from our bodies.

Sceptical about such an extreme reaction, I was stunned when, on day three, I burst into tears in the middle of a facial. More confused than anything else, Kate reassured me that it was totally normal, and later I would hear that some of my fellow detoxers had experienced similar moods.

By day four, however, I had turned a corner, and was bouncing with energy - perhaps due to all the early nights, but probably because I knew it was almost over.

Needless to say, the 'breaking the fast breakfast' was worth waiting for. It was just a plate of fresh fruit and a smoothie, but it felt like a banquet.

I also found that I had lost three kilos - almost half a stone - an amazing amount for just four days detoxing. My 'body age' - established from some high-tech-looking scales, had dropped from 38 to 31 (though I'm only 28), which I was told was mostly related to weight in my case.

I was also told that my body was more alkaline than it had been previously - a very good thing in ayurvedic terms as 'disease cannot exist in an alkaline environment'.

I was warned to keep my diet very simple for a couple of days after the detox, and was sent off to the airport with a bag full of fresh and dried fruit and nuts to eat on my journey home.

When I returned almost everybody said I was glowing - and not just from my suntan.

'You look so skinny!' the fashion girls exclaimed, while another immediately demanded the website in order that she could book her own detox break.

My male friends, who are less observant, but complimentary nonetheless, told me I looked 'hot'. Rare praise.

I may not look like a bona fide A-lister - I haven't had enough Botox for a start - and I certainly couldn't maintain the regime in my day-to-day life (I should note that it isn't recommended), but there is no denying that this detox has transformed me inside and out.

And if this is how A-list feels, then Hollywood here I come.

Total Body Rebalance Retreat at The Beach House costs from £1050 for 7 days. For more information and bookings, visit www.thebeachhousegoa.com or tel.

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Flights from London Heathrow to Goa via Mumbai with Kingfisher start at £560 return inclusive of all taxes and fees; www.flykingfisher.com



Pampered: A fellow detoxer enjoys one of the twice-daily massages