

THE COMPLETE
RETREAT

By “Lisa JEAN”

Gaucin
SPAIN

THE COMPLETE RETREAT, GAUCIN, SPAIN

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There are times when the stress of work or our personal lives gets too much, and we just want to 'stop the world and get off'. Due to a variety of stressful circumstances, I recently felt my mental acuity slowing and my body shutting down. I took short holidays, which only made returning more painful; I tried meditation, but couldn't concentrate; I tried not to be self-indulgent, but ended up in tears and in my doctor's office. Then I met Lisa Jeans, a 38-year-old naturopath and kinesiologist who lured me into joining her at the Complete Retreat in Spain the following week. The retreat takes place in a whitewashed villa in the hills of Gaucin. This location is so stunningly beautiful that even if you weren't drinking yards of fresh juices, taking strenuous mountain hikes and following the best and gentlest of yoga instructors (Wendy Wardell) in classes by the landscaped pool, the views alone, over undulating hills, would be a balm to the soul. Groups of 10 come for one- or two-week courses – some to lose weight, some to get healthy, some to detox and some, like me, to take stock and reflect.

Jeans is an inspiring teacher – she charged us all with a desire to improve ourselves. Guests set off at dawn on a two-hour 'Kylie' walk – which, as the name suggests, does some fantastic things for your bum. The Complete Retreat offers an intensive programme, following the principles of the Florida-based Hippocrates Health Institute, a leading exponent of 'living' food nutrition and enzyme therapy. Its premise is that a standard diet, high in acid-forming foods such as sugar, dairy, alcohol, caffeine, wheat and meat, upsets the body's acid/alkali balance and leads to many common complaints, from arthritis to mood swings or worse. Chef Henry Cumming re-educates your palate completely, serving salads and juices that are low in glucose and high in plant protein. Not only are these incredibly tasty, but they also help to stabilise your blood-sugar levels, leaving you looking utterly radiant by the time the week's retreat is over. But as with all detoxifying treatments, there is the 'three-day dip', during which the caffeine and sugar withdrawal kicks in, and you experience headaches, nausea, irritation, tears and a strong desire to fly home early. Jeans and her team expertly cosset visitors with a lot of TLC (and some fabulous massages). It helps to remember that everyone is going through this together – and Jeans has even made 'silent' badges, to be worn if you don't want to make the effort of talking. It's just what I needed when my legs were aching from the hikes, my head was pounding from lack of caffeine, and it was almost too much effort to pull on my tracksuit bottoms. But the low does pass, and then come the rewards: you've lost seven pounds, your skin is like it hasn't been since you were 16, your eyes are incredibly bright, and you have a completely new sense of serenity and wellbeing. You'll leave armed with vitamins, juices and the knowledge required to reinvent yourself at home. This is not a spa that leaves you without back-up; the Complete Retreat offers you a new way of life (and a few new friends, too). I can't wait to go back. **Contact** The Complete Retreat, Gaucin, Spain (07941214750; www.thecompleteretreat.com) **Rates** Seven nights, from £1,750 a person full board, including all treatments and activities (except massages).