



FREE Children's 8-page comic

Plus how to design your own strip See centre pages

Weekend

No calorie counting

No low-fat foods

Don't go hungry

Limit aerobic exercise

Escape the diet trap

A doctor's radical guide to weight loss

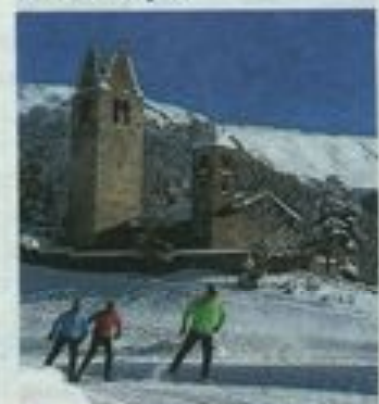


Travel Spa special

Starts page 17



20 life-changing holidays



The best spa and ski breaks



We check in to the 'sleep spa'

Travel

On page 31
 'I wouldn't say that people see her very favourably around here'
 Grantham, birthplace of the Iron Lady

Time to change 20 great breaks for your body and soul

From meditation and yoga to fitness and wild hikes, **Caroline Sylger Jones** reveals the best retreats, resorts and boot camps

Reshape your body

1 The Body! Holiday LeSport, St Lucia, Caribbean

I felt muscles I didn't know existed after a week at this fun, unpretentious beachside resort. I tried a breathless range of sea swimming, mountain biking, paddle boarding, Zumba, a spot of ping-pong and Ashtanga-inspired yoga. Excellent meditation sessions with Ezra, early morning t'ai chi and some hammock time ensured that I got a little rest, too — my favourite place was sitting in the Jacuzzi at sunset looking out to sea.

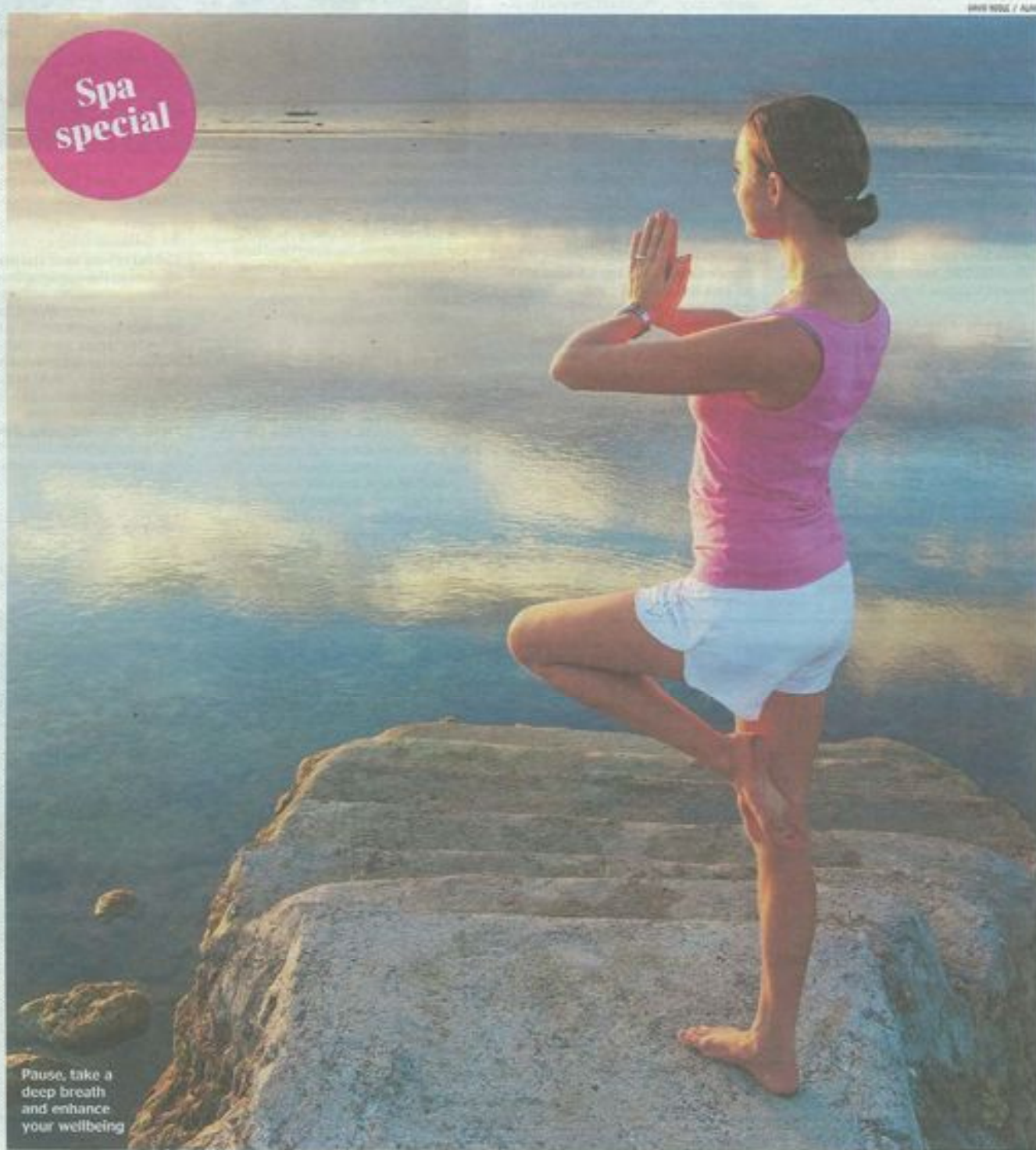
There is decent live music to dance to at the Clubhouse most nights, and a spa on a hill that offers treatments on the hour. If you're serious about change, some life-coaching sessions and a body stats session will help you on your way. Details Kaoni offers five nights from £1,850pp, including flights (01306 747008, kaoni.co.uk). Get two extra nights free if you book by April 30 (quote CL0046)

2 Wildfitness, Kenya

Designed by the all-round athlete Tara Wood and based at her gorgeous home on a pristine stretch of the Watamu coast, this fantastic fitness holiday helped me to remember how good sport used to make me feel. Sprint up sand dunes, swim across creeks and jog through sweet-smelling eucalyptus forests. You can go from three days to three and a half weeks. For quicker fixes, try a Wild Weekend on the Isle of Wight. Details Nine days in Kenya cost from £2,250pp (020-3286 4886, wildfitness.com)

3 Inspa Intense, France & Spain

The Inspa team are very good at getting results, and the "Intense" versions of their holidays are the ones to opt for if you want dramatic change to your ▶



Pause, take a deep breath and enhance your wellbeing

18 Travel

4 weight or fitness. Stay at a castle in Provence or a converted 18th-century monastery in Spain and experience the effects of hikes, fitness training, nutrition consultations, massage and yoga. Details Seven nights cost from £2,195pp, with £250 off the January 12-19 Intense in Spain (0845 4580723, inspa.co.uk)

4 HighLives Wellness Holidays, South America

The founder of this little company — Bibiana Garside — is originally from La Paz in Bolivia and offers tailor-made fitness packages to the city to enable you to benefit, as she did, from the weight-loss associated with living at high altitude. If you'd like to get out into the wild, she also offers wellbeing holiday extensions to the Puyuhuapi Lodge and Spa in Chile, down the Peruvian Amazon and to the Papallacta thermal springs in Ecuador. Details Seven days' B&B costs from £700pp (020-8696 9097, highlives.co.uk)

Change the way you think

5 Journeys for Change, India

These trips are designed to give you a different perspective on how you and your workplace can have a more positive impact on the world. Tailored around visits to India's most inspiring social entrepreneurs, they help you to get new ideas, make valuable connections and come up with solutions where none seemed possible. You'll stay in heritage hotels, some of which have spas. Details Nine days cost £2,900pp. (020-7060 1880, journeysforchange.org). The next trip runs from November 30.

6 Skyros, Greece

These alternative summer holidays inspired Jimmy Carr to give up his job with Shell and get into comedy. Those looking for lasting change should book a Life Choices Programme at the Skyros Centre, set on a hillside at the edge of the main town on the island. The eight-day courses are taught by tutors including Dina Glouberman, Skyros co-founder; the psychotherapist Kate Daniels, who runs "Walk Tall and Feel Fabulous"; and Skyros facilitator Ari Badaines, whose course focuses on relationships. Details A week's programme costs from £795pp (01983-867644, skyros.com)



7 Lead Like a River, Morocco

What are you really hungry for? These guided eight-day journeys use creative activities, storytelling, trekking and time alone to deepen your self-awareness and help you to answer that big question. They are aimed at those who want to unleash their creativity or make a greater contribution to the world around them. You'll be based at the Berber-run Kasbah du Toubkal, with staggering views over the High Atlas mountains. Midweek there's a three-day trek to a remote lodge with time out alone for reflection. Details Eight days cost £2,900pp (020-7785 7255, leadlikeariver.com)

8 The Big Stretch, Spain & Portugal

In the past year this life-coaching holiday has led people to change careers, extricate themselves from negative relationships and move countries. When I attended a few years ago it helped me to get back to my creative writing. Based in a remote but comfortable location in Spain (and soon Portugal, too), the week blends psychology with time outdoors and creative exercises to help people to pinpoint their values, overcome obstacles and identify a new vision for the future. Details From £2,100pp per week (0845 4308621, thebigstretch.com)

Change the way you feel

9 Makhad Trust Sinai Desert Retreat, Egypt

The Sinai desert is a calming place to get a fresh perspective on things. The Makhad Trust is running week-long journeys there, led by the Anglican priest Peter



Owen Jones. The journeys give people the opportunity to connect with their spiritual selves, whatever their beliefs. You'll eat light, nourishing meals around camp fires, sleep out under the stars, camel trek across the desert and have the chance to undertake an optional solitary retreat. Details Seven nights cost £850pp (01764-679730, makhad.org)

10 Gaia House, Devon

Meditation is one of the best cures for worry and anxiety, and Gaia House, a Buddhist retreat, is one of the most peaceful places to learn it in the UK. It's set in a former convent in countryside near Newton Abbot; expert tutors offer meditation days, weekend retreats and week-long stays teaching Vipassana, or insight meditation. It's a simple place but has a serene meditation hall, clean and calmly decorated bedrooms, healthy vegetarian food and plenty of space. Be prepared to help out with chores such as

gardening, cleaning or preparing meals. Details From £26pp for a day retreat (01626 333613, gaiahouse.co.uk)

11 Kusun Study Tour, Ghana

Get out of your head and into your rhythm on this inspiring four-week trip in a fishing community in the village of Nungua and learn West African drumming, dance and song for four hours a day, five days a week. Such an intense experience has led to a serious change of heart for many — they've moved country, left a spouse, jacked in jobs, or become teachers and performers. Details Four weeks cost about £2,500pp excluding flights and drum (00 61 411 247 571, ghanadrumschool.com). The trip takes 16 people.

12 Esalen Institute, Big Sur, California

Esalen pioneered the experiential workshop in the 1960s and hosts more



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than 400 alternative education and personal growth courses a year, covering every aspect of mind, body and spirit. The location has a transformative effect: the 27-acre estate has breathtaking views across dramatic coastline and a backdrop of mountains and natural hot springs. **Details** Five-day workshops cost from \$1,155pp (£745) in a shared room (001 831 667 3000, esalen.org)

Change your lifestyle

13 MoT for Body, Mind and Spirit, Ibiza Retreats

The Neuro Linguistic Programming (NLP) coaching skills of founder Larah Davis and the yoga teaching of Susie Howell are the reason to book one of these holidays. Based at a private rustic finca or at the peaceful Atzaro hotel, they will hold your hand through any kind of change that you want to make, whether it's to give up drinking, eat more healthily or follow a dream. **Details** from £995pp for a four-night stay (00 34 670 248 292, ibizareretreats.com)

14 The Spa Resorts, Koh Samui, Thailand

I gave up smoking at this health retreat in the late 1990s with the help of a hypnotherapist, a reiki master and a full-on detox. I loved the hippy, relaxed feel of the place and have seen friends give up drinking, lose weight and get over a traumatic end to a relationship. Stay in simple wooden bungalows on the beach or on the hillside of a tropical forest. **Details** From 7,900 Thai baht (about £160pp) for a 3½-day cleansing fast (00 66 77 230 855, thesparesorts.net)

15 Vicki Edgson Retreats, UK & Europe

Nutritionist Vicki Edgson launched her retreats in 2011 to help people to reclaim their "vital energy" for a full and healthy life. Learn how to manage your weight, deal with food issues or reconnect with what makes you feel alive. Retreats run in Surrey and twice a year in Ibiza. **Details** From £1,208pp for a week on Ibiza (020-8442 1364, electricbloom.co.uk)

16 Wellbeing Escapes at The Scarlet, Cornwall

This eco-friendly beachside hotel offers four-day escapes to help you to de-stress, sleep better or remember what makes you feel good. Expect hot tubs on the cliffs, ayurveda-inspired rituals, coastal walks and sessions with therapists and teachers. **Details** Three nights from £790pp (01637 861800, scarlethotel.co.uk)

Heal yourself

17 Obsidian Retreat, Spain

This health retreat on the Costa Blanca is for those who want to feel better, including diabetes, heart disease and cancer sufferers looking to boost their wellbeing. Expect a vegan, raw-food diet, yoga, hypnotherapy and meditation. **Details** Seven nights from €500pp in a shared room (0843 2079616, healthretreatspain.com)

18 Health Retreat Parkhotel Igls, Austria

Set in an elevated position 5km south of Innsbruck, Parkhotel Igls offers medically

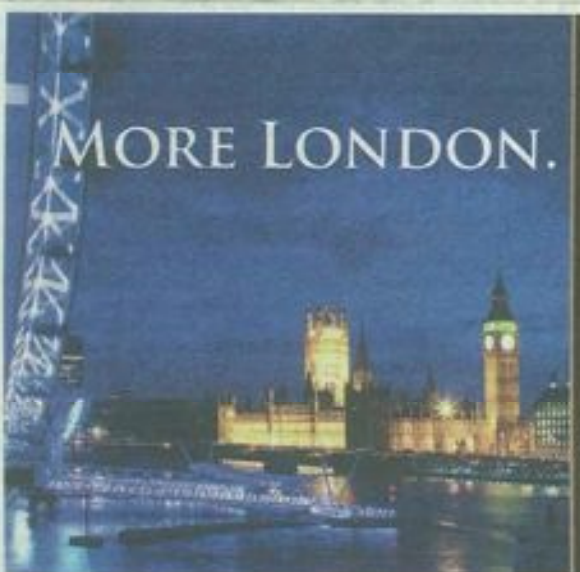
supervised programmes based on Mayr medicine, where nutrition, exercise and treatments focus on the health of the gut. The most successful are for those who are stressed, want to lose weight or detox, or are having problems sleeping. **Details** Seven nights from £1,499pp (0845 4580723, thehealthyholidaycompany.com)

19 Soukya, near Bangalore, India

Ayurveda is one of the most powerful systems of health I've found for generating lasting change, and Soukya is one of the best places to undertake it in India. Set in 30 acres of gardens, people come for help with diabetes, arthritis, hypertension and post-op rehabilitation, as well as to detox and lose weight. **Details** From £164 per room per night including dietary advice and herbal teas but not meals (i-escape.com/soukya.php)

20 Jiva Healing, UK, Europe and Goa

Jiva Healing runs its juice fasts and healthy-eating breaks so well that it fills each of them by word of mouth alone. Detox, de-stress and get healthy with nutritionist Rebecca Andrist in southwest Turkey, Goa or Andalusia, or with yoga teacher and chef Melissa Kendall at her eco-friendly home in Wiltshire. **Details** From £475pp for a week in India in a shared room (00 44 7786 363 553, jivahealing.com) Caroline Spöger Jones is Queen of Retreats (queenofretreats.com) All holidays include meals and set activities but not flights, unless otherwise stated.



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