



The beautiful villa where the retreat takes place



A platform overlooking Benirras beach



SALUTE THE SUN: Guests can practice their skills by the villa's pool; classes take place on the spacious terrace (above left) each day

The GREAT ESCAPE

Db. Advayamati gives us the lowdown on his recent yoga retreat in Ibiza, and we review three top breaks taking place this year

The rigid tree breaks in the wind, the flexible tree bends in the wind' (Lao Tzu, Chapter 76 of *Tao Te Ching*) – I remember being inspired by this saying many years ago and it certainly remains appropriate on many different levels; mentally, as well as physically. For some, yoga is a way of relaxing, while others use it to stay fit and flexible. Hindus and slightly more serious yoga practitioners, meanwhile, view it as a means of achieving freedom, release and even enlightenment. Many people believe it's changed their lives and cite it as a very important part of their personal and spiritual development. Whatever your intention, it's definitely very good for you. By working on the body, you do the same with your mind and spirit, and vice versa, meaning it is also a great means of integration.

I've done numerous types of it over the years, but for various reasons have never regularly attended a class, or had my own teacher, but generally done my own routine, which I've developed. This has invariably meant I've stuck to doing the things I've liked doing and felt comfortable with. I've also struggled with a long-term lower back injury for many years, which has been aggravated by yoga classes in the past. Nonetheless, I felt it was time for some intensive input, and what better way to refresh my routine than by combining it with a holiday in the Sun? Ibiza Yoga seemed to have my name on it!

Ibiza Yoga has offered a combination of yoga and accommodation since 2001, and claims three quarters of its guests make return visits. There are two villas, separated by a road, and yoga is done at both on the outdoor terraces,

overlooking breathtaking views of the hills, trees or sea – although, the area is still recovering from losing many of the trees and pagodas due to forest fires in 2010.

The accommodation is basic, but clean and comfortable, and guests can choose from either a shared room in the house or what's known as a 'pagoda': a beautiful, but simple wooden shack. One of the nice things about Ibiza is the climate; it's hot, but there's often a nice, cooling breeze.

Ibiza Yoga offers courses for different levels, from beginners to mixed classes, and I chose to attend the former ones for astanga, which is known for its flowing movement through the asanas and is perhaps more vigorous than some of the other styles, such as hatha. Fortunately, the teachers were sensitive to the various levels of competence and seemed to know when to encourage and push us.



I must admit, I did feel a little resistant to the idea of doing yoga for three hours; normally, I find my attention begins to wander after about 30 minutes! But I decided to adopt a positive attitude and tried my best to be present to the experience. From previous retreats, I know I tend to get the most out of them when I fully engage with everything, and do so with a beginner's mind.

So, on a beautiful sunny morning on the veranda, our first class started with a question about what we thought yoga was, why we wanted to do the course and what we hoped to get from it, as well as the usual queries about whether there were any particular injuries or conditions we were working with. There were about 12 of us in total, many of whom had done some classes in the past and were interested in getting some more input. There were also some beginners, and I was rather comforted by the fact that, although I was the oldest taking part, I certainly wasn't the least flexible!

There were people from all over the world on the retreat, as well as many from the UK too, and a general sense of friendliness and cooperation. I also really liked the high standard of vegetarian food we were given.

Yoga helps develop overall strength, stamina, circulation and fitness. Most people were seeking to overcome stress, increase their flexibility and relax, and were definitely in the right place for

doing so. Yoga, like any meaningful bodywork, will help energy flow and overcome any blockages that may have a physical cause, but will often also have emotional or mental ones as well. As such, we were warned that a number of difficult feelings could arise, but were told it was perfectly normal for that to happen and was part of the release process.

Another important part of the release was the fact that Benirras beach was just five minutes away – a beautiful place with a choice of three beach cafes or restaurants to dine in during the evening, while watching the amazing Ibiza sunset.

I had a wonderful time; my lower back felt stronger than it had for years and Ibiza Yoga completely reinvigorated my practice, which I now do regularly, feeling more integrated and balanced. I found the standard of the teaching to be very high and would like to join the other 75 per cent and make a return visit.

Ibiza yoga re-opens on March 31st for its spring/summer schedule, which will run on the same weekly basis (Saturday to Saturday), with some new teachers/names added to its list. Prices include accommodation, half board and yoga. Pagoda Garden has also undergone some great changes, with lots of new trees and plants added to the area. For more information, visit ibizayoga.com

Spiritual recharge



STRAIGHT UP: The Ibiza Yoga retreats cater for people of all abilities, and appeal to individuals of all ages and backgrounds. Check their schedule for one to suit you

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