

**Main image:** Sue on an early morning walk; **above:** the ivy-clad L'Albereta in northern Italy; **below:** the Espace Chenot Health Wellness SPA



# Me, myself and I



Women are good at putting others first, but w&h Editorial Director **SUE JAMES** tries going solo on a detox break in Italy

**A** few months ago, I decided to spend some time on me. I wanted to lose a bit of weight, feel fitter, recharge my batteries and generally be pampered.

To do it properly I knew I needed expert advice. I wanted to go somewhere beautiful, which wasn't in the UK, but not too far away. I also wanted to go on my own so I'd really get some "me" time.

I booked a detox break at the Espace Chenot Health Wellness SPA at L'Albereta, near Lake Iseo in Lombardy. A five-star hotel known for being a luxurious place to escape.

My husband simply smiled when I said I was going to Italy, famous for all the foods I love, to detox. I knew what he was thinking – I'd never be able to do it!

**THE COST:** Healing Holidays (020 7843 3585, [healingholidays.co.uk](http://healingholidays.co.uk)) offers a 3-night fitness detox programme at L'Albereta for £2,039 for a single traveller, staying in a Classic Double room, including flights, transfers, a full board bio-light diet and fitness programme.

delicious  
to food



I was a little apprehensive about being entirely alone (and hungry!). Would I get bored, lonely or feel guilty?

I pushed those thoughts out of my mind and it was the best decision I ever made. I was met at Milan airport for the hour's drive to L'Albereta, an ivy-clad villa in the vine-lined hills of Franciacorta.

A delightful young man checked me in and started to show me around. First to the fine dining restaurant LeoneFelice (gourmet food on a detox, I thought – excellent!), then to the VistaLago bistro for a glass of something sparkling (even better...), but then I told him I was here for a three-night fitness detox programme and I was whisked off to the spa. Damn.

Fortunately, the award-winning Espace Chenot Health Wellness SPA is a place of "absolute wellbeing". Separated into two levels, it has medical rooms, therapy rooms, five styles of hydromassage, a sauna and Turkish bath and aromatherapy facilities, plus a stunning pool and gym.

They have a team of over 30 highly qualified doctors, therapists, dietitians, osteopaths and beauticians to tell you exactly what to do – just what I wanted!

My programme started with a consultation to collate all my vital stats and yes, a weigh in – the moment of truth.

This was followed by a one-to-one with a nutritionist, who explained how the Chenot healthy eating principles work. Much of it is about getting portion sizes right. On my detox – a bio-light diet – I discovered barley coffee and apple vinegar-infused water. Lunch and dinner (such as hot asparagus soup, aubergines au gratin and quinoa with cranberries and coconut sauce) were delicious. And I never felt hungry!

I had Phyto-Mud Therapy daily (my body was wrapped in clay to detoxify and eliminate stress), followed by a Hydro-Jet Treatment (a bath with jets to improve skin tone and your metabolic rate).

I was amazed that within 24 hours I lost 3lb. Fast track weight loss and I was enjoying myself – what a result!

I discovered more about my body, too. I needed to learn how to breathe better and deeper – and after three

days of personal training and hill walking, it did improve dramatically.

I tried yoga, Pilates and in the gym I discovered the Reformer – a piece of equipment that does all the work for you. My new best friend!

So did I get lonely or bored? No. I took tea on the veranda or on the balcony in my room, soaking up the views. I snoozed, I chilled out and read my backlog of books – I loved it. Yes, it's expensive, but sometimes it really is worth investing in you.

After four days, I came back fitter, lighter and with new-found balance. The only thing I'd do differently next time is go for longer. **w&h**

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