

THAI PAD

Beatrice Aidin had spent years resisting the pull of pilates, but a life-changing visit to Koh Samui saw her become a 'reformed' character... get it? (Reformer pilates? No? Oh, forget it)

If I was going to detox, I was going to make myself toxic first. So, during the fortnight before my trip to Thailand, I drank like a fish, watched my white-wine belly grow and went for just one cursory swim. I even scoffed a kebab. Which is how I arrived one morning at Absolute Sanctuary in Koh Samui exhausted and as bloated as Elvis – all cheerfully confirmed during my evening health consultation with Dr William Engelhardt, the resident physician and naturopath.

I was in the right place. The new five-day Pilates Reformer Bootcamp has the first reformers on Koh Samui, an instructor, Michael Kru, who has taught around the world, plus a vegan detox diet, oodles of Thai treatments and daily (gulp) colonics.

It was going to be hardcore and my schedule showed it. Part of the theory at Absolute is that in order to relax you

need to be kept busy; there are yoga and pilates classes throughout the day and an abundance of treatments – body scrubs, wraps, infrared saunas, plus a massage each day.

It was hard to fit it all in, but I swiftly got into a routine, wandering down from my room and starting the day at the poolside bar with a Liver Flush drink – orange, ginger, lemon, garlic, olive oil and cayenne pepper (surprisingly nice), and a glug of 'Good Green Stuff', a mysterious blend of, well, green stuff that I knocked back like tequila (surprisingly foul). Then I was ready for my morning colonic.

The last one I had was about 10 years ago and I'd somehow forgotten that a colonic irrigation – clue is in the name – is extremely invasive. The nurse briskly hooked me up and I lay tensed, crablike, in a hospital gown. Water was going one way but nothing was coming out. A mirror was set up so this Narcissus could see what on earth was up there. A lot of wind, I was told, and when my stomach was massaged that's when the action started. It wasn't my dream treatment, but by day five I was so relaxed I fell asleep.

After a breakfast of tropical fruit it was time for pilates. I've always been an inverted snob about pilates, because the women who do it are so bloody smug. Now I see why: it works. We started on the Reformer, a machine that I suspected I'd be falling off within minutes – I didn't. The exercises were deceptively gentle looking but hard, and I enjoyed it so much that I upped the once-a-day classes to two, much to Michael's surprise – he recognised a slacker.

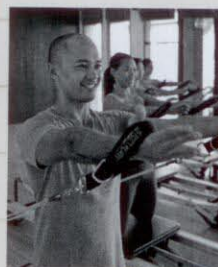
After an initial one-to-one I took classes with the other guests – mainly women, the odd gent, all smart professionals with a smattering of Antipodean expats here for a few days from Hong Kong or Singapore. A middle-aged woman with a much younger man set tongues wagging one evening over the quinoa (he turned out to be her son.) It was fine to eat alone with a book or join a table for tofu pad thai in the Love Kitchen. The food was organic and fresh as anything, and I don't know how but I didn't get hungry (apart

from one night when I broke into my emergency Walkers crisps, but the less said about that the better).

The treatments were second to none: the Thai stretch massage, for example, was 60 minutes of muscle-melting (good pain and, despite a lifetime of insomnia, I was knocked out that night and missed the 7.30am beach walk the next day.

And, boy, did it all work. After just five days I had developed muscles in my arms, had a newly defined waist and had lost 5lb. And my newfound love of pilates? Let's just say that I was smug as anything. □

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FROM TOP, INSTRUCTOR MICHAEL KRÜ ON A REFORMER; A ROOM AT ABSOLUTE SANCTUARY KOH SAMUI; THE POOL. FAR LEFT, BEATRICE ON THE BEACH



A middle-aged woman with a much younger man set tongues wagging over the quinoa

