



## SLIM IN STYLE

by Natalie Langford

If you think a place where you can drop a dress size in a week and return home with a clear mind and better eating habits sounds too good to be true, then read on!



In theory, the success to losing weight is an easy one. We should exercise to burn off more calories than we consume, and tada... you'll be greeted by a svelte goddess when you stand before that mirror. In practice however, most of us know this can seem an almost impossible task.

That's where NuBeginnings comes in. It's classed as the world's first boutique boot camp with a difference – as well as helping you lose weight it also detoxes the mind and soul, and gives you all the information you'll need for a healthy, happy relationship with food and exercise, all in the most peaceful of surroundings. Sound good? Oh it is. But it also involves a great deal of hard work and determination.

NuBeginnings is based in Ilfracombe in the heart of the Devonshire countryside; only three hours by train from the Midlands. I had an undisturbed, relaxing journey and arrived at Tiverton Parkway station to be greeted by Frank, one of the owners, hiking guides and masseurs (multi-talented indeed). This would be the time you would meet the other guests, but as some people chose to drive and others were arriving that evening it was just little old me.

I much appreciated that Frank had his chauffeur cap on that day and we spent a pleasant journey chatting about what my stay would involve, which was a great opportunity to ease my nerves and the scenery was awe-inspiring (but more about that later!) This personalised service is key to what makes NuBeginnings tick. The optimum group size is around six and this allows for individualised programmes targeted at your own fitness level, plus it also allows the group to bond much more easily.



When you pull up to Westwell Hall, where NuBeginnings is based, it's easy to forget that the business was only opened in February of this year. The Grade II listed mansion house has been immaculately refurbished and the décor is contemporary yet complimentary to the archaic features.

Frank's partner and co-owner Victoria Willis met me on arrival; she is a superb example of the NuBeginnings lifestyle having lost almost seven stone since beginning the programme last November. One of her best characteristics is how much she genuinely cares about her guests and how passionate she is about helping people break old bad habits with food and exercise. A qualified hypnotherapist and certified practitioner, her wealth of knowledge on nutrition, well-being and meditation is immense.

Once I'd been shown my room I was blown-away by the stylish décor and plush accessories; a gold satin bedcover and rich plum wallpaper combined with glorious big cushions and velvety carpet finished the room to perfection, plus there was a large window seat with the most stunning views of the surrounding hills and sea. A nosey in the bathroom introduced me to a large



bath and power shower with luxurious Elemis and Rhodes to Heaven products in abundance.

The first evening consisted of introductions and the dreaded fitness assessment and weigh-in (one-on-one with a personal trainer so really not that bad). There were five other ladies on the week that I stayed and with such small groups it's easy to bond quickly. Throughout the week I witnessed so much supportiveness and encouragement from each member and it is this team mentality that made my stay so much more enjoyable.

One of the ladies had already been on the programme for a week and had lost over half a stone, whilst I was told that last week also saw a gentleman losing 11 pounds and another lady losing 10 and a half pounds. If you read the website you'll see that average weigh-loss is seven pounds in one week, but from reading the guestbook I saw figures much higher and besides, the programme is more about detoxing and changing your lifestyle to keep the weight off for good.

The idea is to try as many different activities as possible, including things you may not do in your everyday life. Classes such as belly dancing, Pilates, funky dance, Yoga, cheerleading and Qigong provide a taster in the hope that you'll enjoy them so much you'll want to take at least one up when you get home. Outdoor activities such as hiking, cycling and training sessions on the beach (making



the most of the location) are all aimed at increasing your fitness and getting you to enjoy the fresh Devonshire air.

Throughout my stay I took part in all these activities, particularly struggling with the full-day hike and early morning beach training session (running on sand is hard work!) But all guests are given three full body deep tissue massages to ease away aches and pains, as well as two hypnotherapy sessions to target individual relationships with food.

## HEALTH & BEAUTY



Admittedly I was a bit skeptical before my hypnotherapy session, but the whole hour with Pete passed in a blur and I emerged feeling incredibly light and happy (and I no longer have the urge to pile my plate full of pasta!) Similarly, my massage from Sharon was one of the best I've ever had; she knew exactly what she was doing and managed to ease all of my knots and aches.

Each evening there is the opportunity to try your hand at something new, with talks on mindful eating, posture, crystal therapy, cooking demonstrations and group acupuncture. The fact that the whole itinerary and meals are planned out to the very last detail is a real weight off your shoulders (pardon the pun). Each evening we went to bed around 9pm, early I know, but we had 7.30am wake-up calls and jam-packed days so I always went to bed thoroughly exhausted. In fact, I think I was asleep before my body had time to sink into the heavenly memory foam mattress.



The food deserves at least a paragraph to itself. All ingredients are organic and locally sourced, prepared by head chef Scott to an incredibly high standard. Whoever would've thought low-fat food could be so delicious! Each day we tucked into a cornucopia of divine dishes, such as salmon with leafy greens, tuna steak with bok choy and king prawns in a miso broth and honey-mustard chicken with roasted vegetables.

The breakfasts were inspired too – warm banana porridge with nuts and seeds as well as homemade hearty muffins containing banana and

sultanas. The fact all the ingredients used are organic improves the flavour no end. Victoria and Frank even have their own organic fruit and vegetable patches to the side of the building, although unfortunately it was too early to reap any crops (bar one stray strawberry!)

I was especially interested in the Polycystic Ovary Syndrome (PCOS) information and advice offered from Victoria during the week. Having being diagnosed with the condition three years ago I was told that the best way to manage the symptoms was through a healthy diet and lifestyle. Victoria actually offers specialised PCOS weeks throughout the year, addressing lifestyle issues alongside a carefully prepared programme of diet, exercise, workshops and therapies. As well as this, NuBeginnings offers an exclusive Bride-To-Be package, which is also open to couples who both want to lose weight, tone up and de-stress before their big day.

So did I drop a dress size in one week? Well, I actually lost just over seven pounds in four days! More importantly, three weeks on and I'm still sticking to the Low-GL diet and regular exercise, without finding it a chore at all. Victoria offers the option to call all her guests every Sunday for two months after your stay. You can opt out of this of course, but I find it gives me the added motivation and support needed to continue eating healthily. Overall, my stay at NuBeginnings was a life-changing experience and I'd recommend it to anyone who really wants to make a lifestyle change for the better. □



For more information or to make a reservation contact NuBeginnings, Westwell Hall, Torrs Park, Ilfracombe, Devon EX34 8AZ. Telephone 01271 862792, email [info@nubeginnings.co.uk](mailto:info@nubeginnings.co.uk) or visit [www.nubeginnings.co.uk](http://www.nubeginnings.co.uk)