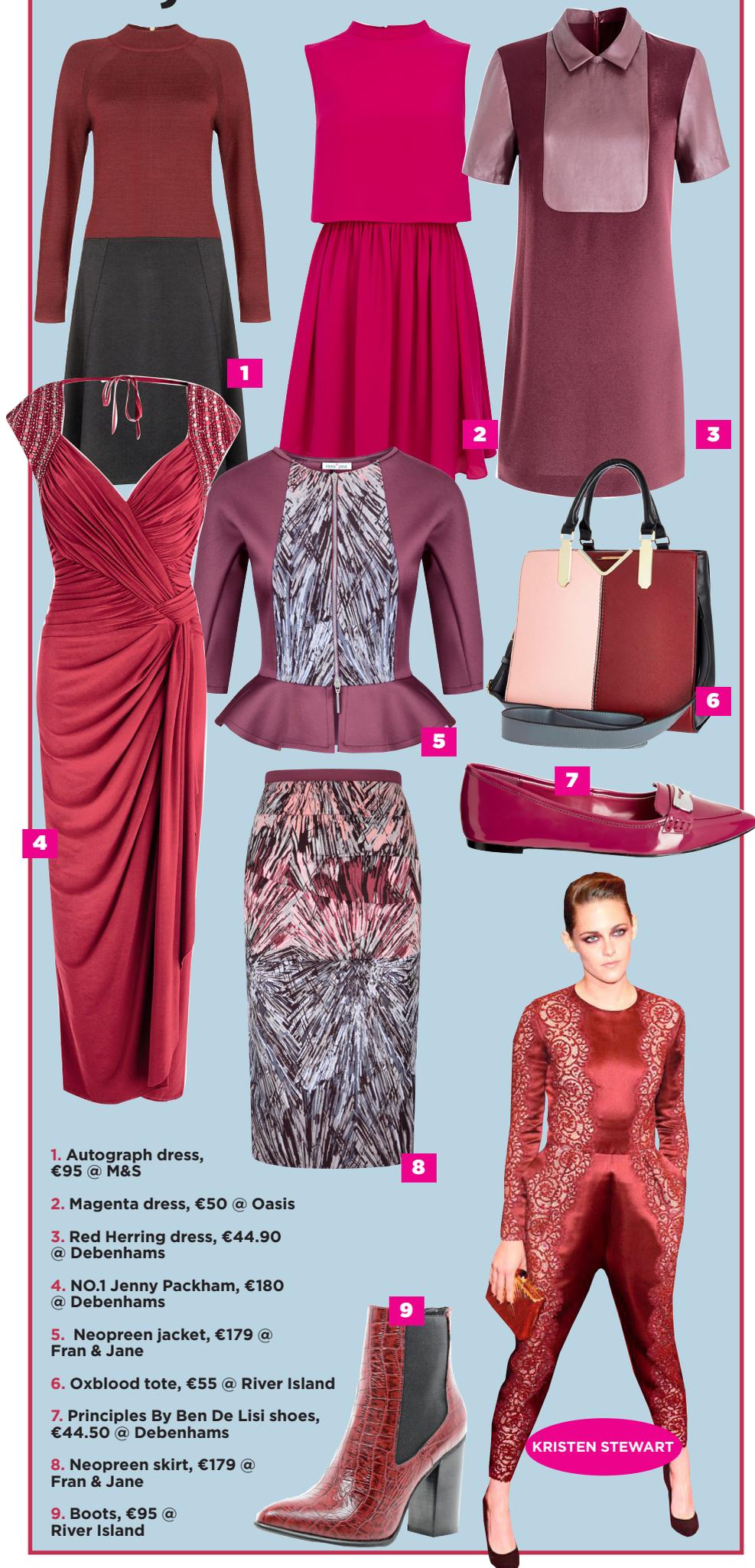


> STYLE EXTRA

COLOUR TREND: OX BLOOD SHADES

THERE WILL BE, EH, OX BLOOD



1. Autograph dress, €95 @ M&S

2. Magenta dress, €50 @ Oasis

3. Red Herring dress, €44.90 @ Debenhams

4. NO.1 Jenny Packham, €180 @ Debenhams

5. Neopreen jacket, €179 @ Fran & Jane

6. Oxblood tote, €55 @ River Island

7. Principles By Ben De Lisi shoes, €44.50 @ Debenhams

8. Neopreen skirt, €179 @ Fran & Jane

9. Boots, €95 @ River Island

KRISTEN STEWART

IS ONE WEEK OF WORTH EIGHT

PUSHING YOUR BODY TO THE LIMIT FOR FIVE DAYS IS NOT EVERYONE'S IDEA OF FUN, BUT **LOUISE HERAGHTY** WAS UP FOR A CHALLENGE

THERE were a few reasons that I decided to take on the challenge of spending a week in a female-only residential fitness bootcamp in the UK. I wanted to challenge myself physically and take my fitness to the next level. I also liked the idea of spending a few days away from it all (social media, news etc) and meeting women with similar goals and interests. Although weight loss wasn't my main aim, if I toned up and lost a few pounds along the way it would be an added bonus!

MONDAY

Having flown from Dublin to Gatwick on Monday morning, I was feeling slightly nervous about it all. I didn't doubt my ability, but I was worried about whether I would be able for the task mentally. The camp is located in Sittingbourne, a lovely rural area about an hour from London.

I arrived at the country manor (it used to be a guesthouse, the family still lives there) at around 1pm and was greeted by the lovely Mandy. Almost immediately I was put at ease as she was very friendly, informative and helpful.

Mandy showed me to my room, which I discovered I would be sharing with another girl. I didn't have a problem with this but there is an option to get a single room if you wish. I was weighed-in, measured, and asked if I had any dietary needs — I don't but they are happy to accommodate vegetarians/coeliacs etc.

Before meeting the other girls I thought I'd have nice cup of tea just to settle myself after the flight. I was in for my first shock — having poured my tea (decaffeinated) and on asking for milk I found out they "don't do milk here — only at breakfast". Aah, the food restrictions I could handle but how could I live without my tea and coffee?

I was introduced to the rest of the group — a lovely bunch of girls of all ages, shapes and sizes. Some of them were on their second week. There were five of us there for the Monday-to-Friday camp. Taster days are an option too, or you can go for a weekend.

COACHES

We met our trainers — Leon and Ayesha, both of whom were personal trainers with the Royal Navy. It's easy to run with the perception of these camps having intimidating, loud trainers, these two were far from it. They were friendly, motivating, and amazing coaches. I think I would have turned on my heel if it was a roaring-in-your-face approach.

The first activity was to gauge the fitness levels of the newbies — myself and four other girls. This included a timed run around the dreaded Triangle — a 1.3-mile course. Then it was back to base for press-ups, squats, sit-ups and a good stretch. One thing they insist on is spending a lot of time stretching, which is important, especially when you're working out for up to six hours a day.

Ok. So far so good, I thought, as I was able to keep up... but this was only an hour in to the first day.

After our snack (yoghurt) it was back outside for some boxing drills. I never realised how tough boxing was. Even just punching for two-to-three minutes takes it out of you — respect to Katie Taylor.

The good thing about bootcamp is that you snack regularly, but what really was an eye-opener for me were the portion sizes. Yes it's all healthy food, and it's important to keep fuelled when so active, but I was used to having around three-times the portion sizes we were getting. I realised that I had been fooling myself and although I am very active it is important to control portions.

Dinner was typically a piece of meat or fish (quorn for the veggies) with loads of lovely salad or roasted veg — perhaps one or two very small potatoes.

Psychologically after dinner is the toughest time as you are generally finished eating by 6/6.30

— then there are activities organised by the camp, and although it's fun to take part, most of us were zonked at this stage. Bingo the first night was good craic, but I still couldn't get my head around going to bed by 7.30. Well at least I had a good sleep for the next day.

TUESDAY

We had to "fall in" outdoors at 7am. I woke without an alarm — well I should hope so after going to sleep by 9pm. This part of the day was the toughest as everyone anxiously awaits the task ahead. Also, as breakfast was



F MILITARY-STYLE TRAINING POUNDS OF WEIGHT LOSS?



GOING FOR IT: Louise getting to grips with some of the tough exercises

not until 8am and we hadn't eaten since six the previous evening I was starving!

For the first activity we all headed off for a run. After the warm up jog it was sprint sessions. We worked in pairs and sprinted around a 300 metre route. It was pretty exhausting and I was ravenous.

For breakfast there was a choice between eggs and smoked salmon, porridge or muesli (homemade, no sugary ingredients). I made the mistake of going for eggs the first morning but I realised I needed the porridge for energy release!

PLACEBO

After breakfast and with a pep in my step from the decaf coffee (it must be the placebo effect) we went outside to do a circuit course. This is one of my favourite types of exercise. It was pretty tough though. The circuit included burpees, press-ups, kettlebell swings, pulling a tyre with a rope and loads more. Our 10.30am snack was a skewer of fruit.

Then we headed off to a nearby field (about a 5k walk away) carrying weights and kit along the way. The camaraderie was great, and the intensity of the experience meant that even at this early stage I began to feel like I had known some of the girls for years.

We set up a game of rounders which was so much fun and a great way to burn calories without even realising you're doing it!

After the game Leon took us through some 'Zuu' training — I had never done it before and now I know why. It's based on high-intensity primal movement patterns, mixed with strength, endurance, and body weight exercises. It includes crawling like a bear, squatting like a frog, and walking like a gorilla — and yes it is as tough as it sounds!

Lunch was wholemeal pasta with tomato sauce and a mandarin — I never thought I'd be so happy to see a piece of fruit.

After lunch we did bums-and-tums type workout including loads of core work. I really struggle with core exercises as I don't do them enough, but it was great to concentrate on weaknesses as well as strengths. After that it was more boxing for 30 minutes and our afternoon snack was a stick of celery with peanut butter.

For the evening activity we did what's called an 'Iron Soldier Challenge'. This involved running up a hill with various pieces of equipment: tyres, heavy containers, weights. Finally, Leon pretty much worked us to the point of exhaustion — from running around, crawling, doing burpees, sprints and press-ups. At this stage I could feel my brain going to mush — a sure sign of dehydration. It was time to finish and I was glad the first full day had come to an end.

For dinner it was a chicken salad, no dessert but help yourself to Bovril or Marmite — yuck.

WHAT REALLY WAS AN EYE-OPENER FOR ME WERE THE PORTION SIZES. I WAS USED TO HAVING THREE-TIMES THE SIZES WE WERE GETTING

In fairness there was honey which was pleasant when added to some of the herbal teas.

A few of us did salsa, but the poor instructor was dealing with zombies.

WEDNESDAY

Having heard whispers that Wednesday was a 'treat' day I was feeling pretty excited. I would have been up for another day of tough challenges but the girls who had been there for five days already and the two-weekers were finding it

THURSDAY

By Thursday morning I was feeling pretty exhausted, my muscles were aching, but knowing that the end was in sight made it little bit easier. At 7am we ran the triangle twice and for breakfast I went for Muesli just to change things up a bit!

The next activity was called 'Filthy 50' — and it was as hideous as it sounds! Fifty press-ups, 50 squats, 50 lunges, 50 knee-tucks, 50 shoulder presses with kettlebell, finished off with 25 medicine-ball bounces and 25 burpees.

After the snack of two oatcakes with soft cheese, we headed off for a long walk while an assault course was set up. Again I loved this type of challenge and the competitive streak that I didn't know I had came out. The course involved things like crawling under a net, transporting a weighted stretcher, pulling tyres, kettlebell swings, running through tyres and bear crawling. Teams competed to get the quickest time.

Lunch was lovely carrot and coriander soup. At this stage I savoured every morsel.

The afternoon session was an hour of netball where I realised that I was still as crap at team sports as I was at school.

The best part of the week was on Thursday evening when we all retired to the living room and were met with a glass of bubbly and strawberries — heaven. The trainers spoke individually about every girl and what they had achieved. It was a lovely touch, and with the finish line in sight everybody went to bed in good spirits.

FRIDAY 7AM

The last morning session would be an easy one — or so I thought. We headed out for an early-morning jog, and then got to the bottom of a very steep hill. The idea was to sprint up the hill giving 100pc (or whatever energy was left at this stage). It was amazing how competitive some of us still were and each sprint saw somebody else reach the

top first. We did around eight hill sprints and that was it — finally!

All that was left was the weigh-in and breakfast. As I heard the success stories from the other girls — "lost 5lb, lost 7lb" etc — I went in for mine. To be honest I didn't feel as if I had shed loads of weight, but at the same time I would have been pretty annoyed if I hadn't lost a few pounds. I couldn't believe it... 8lb lost and 9 inches (1 off chest, 1 off waist, 1.5 off each arm and 2 inches off each thigh — the biggest shock of all. I can never seem to lose weight off my thighs so naturally I was delighted).

We said our goodbyes and I headed for the train to London. I was on a high, and although all week I had dreamt about eating a beautiful carb-filled Italian meal that night, my mindset had changed and I wanted to continue my new healthy lifestyle. I felt so revitalised.

I would definitely recommend GI Jane Bootcamp, but you would certainly have to be in the right frame of mind to attend. For some it is the longest time spent away from children, a partner or their families, but you come out feeling so positive and certainly with a new outlook on healthy living.

Mid week camp, £595; weekend camp, £399; full week camp £995; see gijanebootcamp.co.uk for offers



tough. At 7am we were indoors for core work, more sit ups, planks, and donkey kicks.

After breakfast we did boxing and some high-intensity training including sprints, squats and burpees.

Then the treat was revealed — a trip to the beach!

CHEATING

We drove to a nearby seaside village called Whitstable. It was so pretty and nice to take in the scenery. The group walked around 3.5 miles along the beach, stopping for lunch en route (a chicken salad wrap and a piece of fruit). Then we had half an hour to ourselves to have a look around. I knew where I was headed — straight to Costa Coffee — some of the girls were slugging saying I was cheating but I didn't do the camp to give up caffeine so I was getting my fix. I savoured every sip of the Americano!

The trainer treated us to an oyster — my first time to taste one, but when food is restricted I'll try anything. We then ran back along the beach to round off a lovely day.

Back at camp we had an informative talk about fitness and got the chance to ask questions. The treats didn't stop there — each one of us got a 30-minute massage — bliss.