

IF THE BOOTCAMP FITS

Want to shape up for summer in double-quick time? There's a bootcamp out there for everyone – whatever your fitness loves and loathes!

Best for FITNESS FUN-ATICS

Jacqui Meddings faces her fear of fitness – and kicks its ass – at The GI Jane Bootcamp, Kent

There's camouflage paint on my face, twigs in my hair and I'm crawling through a field holding a wooden gun. Not my usual idea of fun. But just two hours earlier, I'd rolled up at Scuttington Manor house in Sittingbourne, in the sunny Kent countryside, for my GI Jane Bootcamp experience. Ever since landing a busy job

in London four years ago, I've gone from being a fitness fanatic to a fitness phobe, so I'd been hoping this would shake me back into action.

There is no time for nerves, though – after being weighed and measured, here I am ready and waiting in my GI Jane gear. Our group of 16 GIs has been instructed (read: shouted at) by a former Royal Marine to search the fields for the 'enemy' – aka Royal Navy PT Staff Rob. But crawling through the fields, I barely notice the dirt. Or the stinging nettles. Or my body's protests against exerting itself for anything other than a Topshop sale. Instead, I'm so



fired up, I'm running around and even shouting. Next, I'm helping carry our 'injured' comrade back to base on an incredibly heavy stretcher. I feel →

Travel

something very strange is happening to me: I'm actually *enjoying* exercise...

And the food? 'Little and often' is the bootcamp philosophy. By little, I'm talking one chicken breast, two Chantenay carrots and three mange tout for our first dinner. The second day, I'm so hungry I want to cry. But my body quickly adjusts to our 1,200-calories-a-day food rations, and the fact the food tastes so great helps, too.

Every morning we're lined up outside at 6.30am for a warm-up, followed by a 90-minute power walk/jog. A mixture of gruelling army assault courses, plus more conventional circuit training and boxing classes, broken up with snack breaks, takes us through until 5pm. By day three, my muscles ache so badly, I brave an ice bath – something I'd sworn I'd never do for fear of brain damage. But, determined not to let my aches hold me back, I dunk. On day four, completing the dreaded Iron Woman challenge – running up and down what

the girls nickname Ba***rd Hill four times, each time carrying a heavier box – feels incredible. My fellow Janes cheering me on gives me an energy boost I'd never feel on the treadmill, staring at a wall. One of them has beaten breast cancer, another lost her partner last year – how could I not be inspired to push on? This was about girl power, too.

Back home, my body feels and looks tighter. I've lost three pounds and six inches – incredible results for just four days work. More important, it's inspired me to keep it up, too. Morning workouts, lunchtime step classes, jogs to work – I've overhauled my lifestyle and lost a few more pounds along the way. But I'm more wowed by the changes inside. This bootcamp made me face my fear of exercise and kick its ass!

■ **A four-night, mid-week training course costs £695, including food, accommodation and a massage (www.gijanebootcamp.co.uk).**



Best for **FOODIES**

Vital Health, Surrey

This seven-day bootcamp, run by nutritionist Vicki Edgson at Surrey's Grayshott Spa, proves how a nutritious diet can help you drop pounds, increase energy levels and relieve stress – and still taste good. After a one-to-one with Vicki, you'll hear her daily talks on the role of diet in weight management. Fitness classes and walks through the country challenge your body, and there's also the chance to sample Grayshott's spa treatments. You won't feel starved or deprived – just ready to turn your love of food into a lifetime of health.

■ **Vital Health runs 25 September to 1 October and 13 to 19 November. Prices from £1,705 (www.grayshottspa.com).**



Shape up in luxe surroundings

Best for **LUXURY**

Bootcamp Jersey, Channel Islands

Circuits and sprints assume a luxe flavour when they take place on soft, warm sand. And a state-of-the-art training facility offers a five-star setting for the military-style sweat sessions. Yes, you have to work hard, but with delicious food, Egyptian cotton sheets and spa treatments waiting for you post-workout, you won't even mind.

■ **From £1,295 for six nights excluding flights (www.bootcampjersey.com).**

Best for **ASSAULT-COURSE HATERS**

Lyndsey Heffernan *shimmies and shakes her way to toned* at Brealy Bootcamps, Bucks

The bootcamp promise of double-quick results has always appealed to me, but the thought of crawling through mud while an army sergeant yells at me has always put me off. So, a dance bootcamp (no mud, no shouting, presumably) seems perfect. That's not to say I'm not apprehensive. What if I get shouted at? What if I'm hungry all weekend? And what if all the Lycra-clad dance bunnies tut at me and my flailing limbs for getting in their way?

My fears are allayed as soon as I arrive at Latimer Place, a beautiful De Vere hotel in Chesham, Buckinghamshire, and meet the other bootcampers. Some are in groups, but the atmosphere's in no way 'cliquey'.

After a quick intro, we start our first session: metabolic circuits. These bursts of aerobic activity get our heart rate up and Julie, the founder of Brealy Bootcamps, explains how this helps boost metabolism. After a quick tea break (*this is more like it!*), it's time for Jazzercise, a fun, high-energy dance

class, and I before I know it, it's dinner time. We each get a chicken breast in a tomato sauce, then help ourselves to vegetables, and fruit for dessert. We're then given free time, so most of us head to the pool for a few lengths, followed by a chat in the hot tub, then a chat in the steam room. It's lovely everyone's so sociable, and great to be able to make full use of



Bollywood, here we come! Lyndsey (back row, second right) and her fellow campers belly-dance their socks off

the hotel's facilities. By 9pm, I'm completely shattered and head to bed. It's Friday night. Rock and roll...

The 7am start is a sharp reminder that this is a bootcamp, but heading out into the fresh air wakes me up. The great thing about Brealy Bootcamps is that you go at your own level – pushing yourself to your own limits. The weekend course focuses on

dance – lots of Zumba, plus belly dancing and Jazzercise – but it's interspersed with other toning activities. We do circuits and kettlebells outside in the lovely grounds, which provides a welcome distraction from the pain for a while! And there's plenty of respite between classes – not just for lots of delicious and healthy food (two courses at breakfast? Home-made

flapjacks mid-morning? Bootcamp, schmootcamp), but also for Pilates, hypnotherapy, and, my personal favourite, a 'poor man's massage' using rollerballs to massage our aching muscles. One of our team is a little too excited about the prospect, before we realise she's misheard and expects a 'four-man massage'...

It's soon time for our last class: Zumba Party – complete with maracas. It's a fun end to a fun, but tiring weekend. I've lost a couple of pounds, toned up – and given my laughter muscles a great workout, too!

■ **The Dance & Tone Weekend at Brealy Bootcamps, Bucks, costs from £395, including accommodation and food (www.brealybootcamps.co.uk; 07710 760814) (www.devere.co.uk).**

Best for **RESULTS**

NuBeginnings Weight-Loss Camp, Devon

When Alexandra Burke needed to shape up for a charity trek along the Inca Trail, she chose NuBeginnings to kick-start her training. Boasting an average weight loss of 10lb, NuBeginnings is the bootcamp of choice if you're after serious results. A three-pronged approach is key to this camp's success: first, a daily five-hour dose of exercise classes – ranging from hiking and weight-lifting to qigong – works your muscles and blasts calories. A nutritious menu of low-cal, organic food, some of which is grown on site, detoxifies the system and supplies your hard-working body with healthy fuel. Then nightly hypnotherapy sessions train you to alter unhealthy eating and exercise habits and help to set realistic goals for the future, whether that's to scale Mount Everest or just drop a dress size or two. It's not all hard work, though. Set in a grandiose mansion on the north Devon coast, complete with spa and lush gardens, there's as much space to relax in as there is to sit and sweat. Choose from one- to four-week sessions, depending on your goals, and from two locations: Devon or this year's new venue in France.

■ **From £2,095 for a week (www.nubeginnings.co.uk).**



Wave goodbye to your wobbles in Hawaii!

Best for **BEACH BABES**

Surf and Bikini Bootcamp, Hawaii

This Hawaiian getaway is more hang ten on the beach than crocodile crawls through the mud. The four-day Surf and Bikini Bootcamp makes the most of the stunning surroundings of Honolulu to whip you into beach-ready shape. Begin each day with a poolside yoga or cardio class. Afternoons of hiking, kayaking and paddle boarding allow you to enjoy the surf and sand while still burning calories. You'll even get the chance to ride a few waves with pro-surfer Evan Valiere. A menu of low-cal, nutrient-rich island-style meals keep you replenished – think coconut water, fresh berries and spicy tuna rolls. Plus, two pampering treatments in the full-service spa rejuvenate the achiest of muscles. You'll come home toned, tanned and ready to show off your beach bod.

■ **The camp runs once a month for the rest of 2011, from £270 per day (www.editionhotels.com; 001 800 466 9695). →**



Left: Five-star accommodation awaits. Above: Debbie throws some punches

Best for GETTING BIKINI-READY

Debbie McQuoid gets a summer-body makeover at the **Trimmer You Bootcamp, Nottinghamshire**

My boyfriend has bet me I'll cry at least once, but if bootcamp takes the wobble out of this year's bikini debut, I'm willing to shed a few tears.

Arriving at the luxury accommodation (pool, Jacuzzi, stunning views), I'm relieved my fellow campers are just like me – first-timers who want a kick up the backside to wake them out of winter hibernation.

We're given a list of rules by the (at first) scary ex-army instructors, which include turning up for parade at 5.55am the next day with full water bottles or there will be 'consequences'. It takes only two of these – hardcore circuits and 800m sprints – to make sure we're up with the lark. From core stability and boxercise to yoga and

assault courses, we never know what's coming next, which means you never dread a particularly 'hated' activity, and certainly never get bored. In fact, a bike ride and a walk in nearby Sherwood Pines feel like real treats.

Healthy food and no caffeine, dairy or wheat, mean my skin is glowing by the end of the week, while my wobbly tum and even some of my cellulite disappear before my eyes.

I have my little cry on Thursday morning – it's been a tough week and, although I've enjoyed it, I miss home – so, my boyfriend won the bet, but, after a week of discussing my bowel movements, giggling at my roommate flirting with the cute chef, keeping watch while other girls pee behind bushes, and losing five pounds and four inches, I feel like the real winner. Bikini? Bring it on!

■ **A week-long camp costs £675, including accommodation and food (www.trimmeryoubootcamp.com; 0800 031 9189).**

Best for COW-GIRL CURVES

Rancho Cortez Fitness Ranch, Texas

The Texan wilderness provides the setting for the mix of practical ranch workouts, such as stallion-taming, and traditional fitness classes. You'll also make and enjoy ranch-style meals with a healthy twist, like BBQ chicken brisket. Stay from one week to three months. Yee haw!

■ **From £800 for a week, excluding flights (www.ranchocortez.com).**



Best for BUDGET

Ultimate Gym-free Workshop, London

This day camp consists of a variety of workouts, while the packed-lunch break includes a nutrition presentation and Q&A session, and you're given diet and fitness plans to take home. It makes you realise how little it can cost to stay on the fitness straight and narrow.

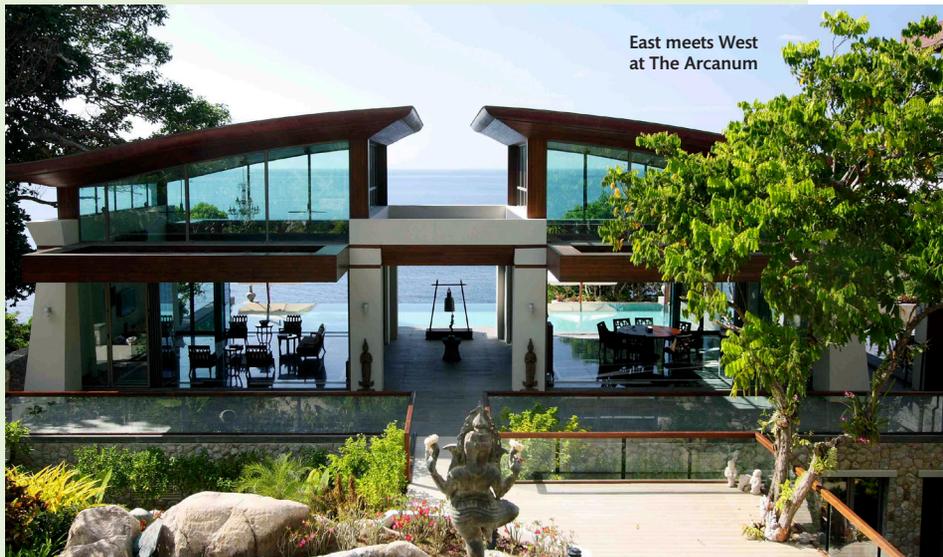
■ **Run in various locations in south-west London and cost £99, excluding lunch (www.inkilterfitness.co.uk).**

Best for A CALMER MIND

Total Body Transformation, Thailand

Perched by the sea on the island of Phuket – the exact location is only revealed once you've booked – The Arcanum Sanctuary offers a fusion of Western fitness and health practices with Eastern relaxation and wellness techniques. The two-week Total Body Transformation Course offers the best of both worlds: meditation merges into PT sessions, fitness classes bookend relaxing spa treatments, and yoga classes lead to adventurous excursions, such as sea kayaking and jungle hikes. A detoxifying menu includes fresh berries and veg, steamed fish and fruity mocktails in the evenings. You'll leave with a tighter bod and a calmer mind.

■ **The course runs 11 to 24 July and 11 to 21 August. Prices from £4,148, excluding flights (www.arcanum-phuket.com).** ☑



East meets West at The Arcanum