



Seven-Day life change

Chelsey Baker travels to a military-style Boot Camp in southern Spain and discovers how to lose a dress size, feel great and kick-start your fitness in just one week

If you're searching for a way to lose weight, improve your fitness, increase your energy levels or simply de-stress, look no further than Boot Camp Spain; this exclusive luxury seven-day course is designed to help you tone up, slim down and take control of your life. Boot Camp Spain's slogan is, appropriately, "Be The Best You Can Be" and, as a stressed-out city exec with a chronic loathing of exercise, this looked like an irresistible opportunity. I needed a life-changing kick-start and to get fit so, leaving the stress and smog of the city behind, I accepted the challenge to

become slimmer and fitter. How tough could it be?

I was greeted at the airport by Sarah, Boot Camp Spain's director. Her friendly, calming approach to my barrage of questions allayed my initial fears and left me comforted and excited. An hour's drive from Malaga, our destination was a stunning converted mill in a lush valley near the crystal-clear waters of Lake Iznajar, the unspoiled beauty of the area a far cry from the bars of nearby Marbella. Acres of olive groves and a winding stream running through our retreat made this the perfect setting for outdoor activities. The beautifully converted

mill has everything the discerning traveller could wish for, and each room has a completely individual character with all the usual mod cons. With our every need catered for, including daily maid service, we were able to focus solely on our training.

The camp accepts just 16 participants and follows a structured regime, combining a controlled diet with exercise, led by highly experienced British Army Physical Training Instructors (PTIs). My fellow Boot Campers all came with different goals and aspirations, including a hedge fund manager wishing to stop smoking and de-stress, a high-powered city executive needing a week away from the office and an HR manager slimming down to fit into her dream wedding dress. Stories of stressful divorces and the desire to start a new fitness regime before turning 50 were told; each had their own reason for attending but all came with one aim in mind – a seven-day life change.

My initial thoughts of a Boot Camp conjured up offputting images of crawling in mud, unappetising food and blood, sweat and tears. At Boot Camp Spain nothing could have been further from the truth. The first evening consisted of a welcome meeting followed by a private assessment. Diet, lifestyle and goals are carefully evaluated for each guest to ensure the training programme is tailored to their personal needs and that they are working towards reaching individual goals, whether related to weight loss, fitness or general wellbeing.

Each day started early and we continued with our carefully selected activities until late, with plenty of breaks including some welcome downtime for sunbathing. I rejoiced in every day being planned out; all I had to do was switch off and follow instructions, giving my mind a well-needed break. We were to adhere to a wheat- and dairy-free diet, designed to detox our bodies and promote the benefits of the training. As a lifelong junk food fan I was, quite frankly, scared, particularly as I had heard horror stories of starvation rations from friends who had attended boot camps in the past. So it was with trepidation I sat down to our first meal. To my surprise, meals consisted of delicious chicken, fresh fish, soups and salads, all homemade from local produce. We even had treats throughout the week, including chocolate brownies and dairy-free cheesecake, and ate five times a day with no calorie counting or hunger pangs on the agenda. Most meals were taken on the main terrace overlooking the beautiful gardens and swimming pool.

Paul, the nutritionist, was on hand for private consultations, working with each guest to improve their diet and to make improvements to their health that were compatible with their individual lifestyle and personal preferences. By making simple changes, these will continue to benefit guests long after they have left Boot Camp Spain.

Our PTIs were determined to change our outlook on fitness through appropriate coaching and education along the trekking route. Fears of being shouted at were quickly set to rest and their approach was to win "hearts and minds" through motivation and encouragement, not by intimidation. Throughout the week we were led in small steps out of our comfort zones; this training style has a cumulative impact, leaving you wanting more and believing you can conquer the world.

It's an action-packed week; training includes boxing, scenic hikes, jogging, command tasks, various sporting games and plenty of circuit training. We also took part in navigation exercises, canoeing and rock climbing as well as combat training. There were moments when I pushed myself to the absolute limit, but the camaraderie, endless patience and good humour from the PTIs and the support of the fellow Boot Campers carried me through every stage. Knowing we had a support group around us was invaluable.

Other unexpected treats included deep tissue massages in the evenings, where every aching muscle was eased by the lovely masseuse who worked her healing powers to smooth away the day's pain. A visit to the Arabic baths for a relaxing, pampering experience in sumptuous surroundings, in the shadow of the Alhambra palace, made me feel like I was on holiday, not at Boot Camp.

Boot Camp Spain is dedicated to changing how you think about exercise and nutrition and shows you how easily this change can become part of your daily life. The average

boot camper on my week lost about eight pounds and gained a completely new lease of life. The most striking thing by the end of the week was the fundamentally changed perspective and increase in confidence we all had.

The experience made a dramatic impact on my life both mentally and physically, and far exceeded my expectations. I lost a dress size (over five pounds in weight and three inches from my waist), gained a new sense of wellbeing to last a lifetime and even came back with a suntan. This week is perfect for city dwellers who have to maximise personal time and achieve results in a short period. For a seven-day lifestyle change in luxury surroundings with added benefits of year-round sunshine, delicious food, and massages, Boot Camp Spain really is the answer. ■

www.bootcampspain.com

Call 0800 334 5077 for more information

Prices from £1,295

