

Q I'm looking for a boot camp somewhere in Europe that's close to a beach. What can you suggest?

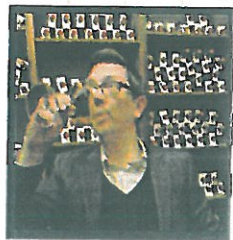
A Purescapes (www.purescapes.com/portugal) is renowned for its tailor-made group fitness holidays, and its next retreat, on the cliffs of the Costa de Prata in Portugal (20-27 October), fits the bill perfectly. You'll stay at Areias do Seixo, only 45 minutes' drive from Lisbon airport. It's a cool eco-hotel with a modernist look warmed up with wood-burning stoves, natural fabrics and an elemental landscape: pine trees on one side, sand dunes on the other, and all the while the crashing sound of the Atlantic. On average, only eight people are booked on a retreat so you can expect highly supported group sessions: circuits on the beach, yoga, swimming, hiking, cycling, kayaking and surfing. Don't worry about your fitness levels, you'll be pushed just outside of your comfort zone without being scared witless. There are also individual nutrition sessions packed with handy tips – for example, if energy levels are low eat quality protein at every meal, even if it's just a few nuts. And once the exercise is over, you can rest weary limbs in the sauna or have a Turkish bath or a massage in the Ayurvedic spa.



Daisy Finer
Editor at large

Q My cousin is visiting from the States and she wants to stay within striking distance of London's Kensington museums. Any thoughts?

A South Kensington's a place I associate with flaking stucco, but two smart options have opened recently. The Adria (www.theadria.com) is set in two townhouses close to the Natural History Museum; the decor mixes Fifties drawing-room poise – very Cecil Beaton – with Arabian flourishes. Unusually, it's a 'dry' hotel – though handy if your cousin wants to detox. At The Ampersand (www.ampersandhotel.com), however, you can snaffle a Tintoretto (Aperol and rum) cocktail or two in the cosy Victorian cellar bar, which doubles as an all-day dining room with lots of tasty sharing plates. The hotel takes its visual cue from the nearby museums, so you'll find astronomy, geometry and sheet music on the walls, cabinets of curiosities and a well-curated art collection – I particularly liked the flocks of birds cut from street maps. There's a quirky drawing room for tea and, best of all, prices are pretty reasonable, with doubles from £174. Don't bother packing a book – the library has everything from the latest Ackroyd to a tome on deadly plantlife. Your cousin may hear the rumble of the tube beneath (South Ken station is over the road), but she'll know she's in London!



Rick Jordan
Chief sub-editor


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