

FOR FOLK WHO PREFER SPUNKY HOLIDAYS OVER BREAKS WHERE ALL YOU EXERCISE IS SELF CONTROL AT THE DINING TABLE, **CHUMKI BHARADWAJ** OFFERS YOU FITNESS GETAWAYS THAT PROMISE BOTH A TAN AND A TONE

BOOT CAMP BECKONS

A holiday could be almost anything these days. But if the classic sun, sea and sand formula does not satisfy that burning testosterone urge, nudge your wanderlust to a host of less conventional possibilities like extreme sports adventures or holidays more reminiscent of an army boot camp than a break, to celebrate both machismo and masochism. Once there, let your guided tour to fitness begin: run, punch, hike, bike, kick or kayak, burning calories and melting lard is part of the package deal. Jump into your tracking boots and explore beyond. Whatever you choose, it will beat expectations. But it won't be a Versace advertisement come to life. No European playboys, or lounging on megayachts, not even endless flowing Champagne. It's time to give hedonism a holiday!

Fitscape

If you're one of those energetic folk who prefer livelier vacations than a few downward dogs and a quiet lie-in by the pool, a fitscape holiday is the holy grail. On offer are seven-night fitness programmes in three spectacular destinations: the Atlas mountains of Morocco, the Dolomite Mountains in northern Italy and a charming corner of rural Ibiza. A team of highly-motivated (read unrelenting) and experienced (trained in the art of torture) personal trainers packs in a host of outdoor pursuits—hiking, circuit training, boxercise, core fitness, jogging, running, cycling, mountain biking, stretching classes—designed to peak your fitness levels and leave you feeling fitter, stronger and more nimble. Noticeable improvements in cardio fitness, stamina and strength, apart from the mandatory weight-loss, are just some of the perks.

The fitness programmes are individually tailored; daily training sessions, classes and activities are optional, and you can design your personal programme if you so choose. Swimming and golf are considered recreational with masseurs close at hand to knead those aching muscles. Food is healthy, delicious, nutritious and plentiful so banish the idea of gruelling diets.

As the day draws to a close, spend the evenings socialising, soaking in a scented bath or simply dreading the next day. Sweat and toil reap sweet benefits; just slug it out for a week.

Cost: £1,450 (Rs 1.03 lakh) for 7 nights on a twin-sharing basis. Booking: www.fitscape.co.uk



Purescapes

As the name suggests, Purescapes is a heady break not just from an established routine but old holiday habits—a novel way to relax and recharge with personal rewards that extend beyond a tan. The brochure does promise a life-altering programme but it's not one of those existential exercises that get you in touch with your inner self, rather it's a bold fitness regimen in four exotic locations that promises to get you in touch with lesser-known musles.

Each guest is provided with a complete holistic package tailored to meet individual requirements after consultation with trainers, nutrition experts, exercise kinesiologists, physiotherapists, yoga teachers and bodywork practitioners so

Kopie von tagliatelle di carubbe at a Fitscape retreat (bottom left); yoga lotus in the archway at Fitscape (bottom)



you can continue even after the holiday—and the programme—are over.

Prepare to be pushed, pummelled and pampered into making healthy choices and achieving personal fitness benchmarks that you would ordinarily ascribe only to semi-pro gym rats.

Of course, there's fun too. With fitness programmes sprawled across magnificent locations like Tuscany (Italy), Girona (Spain), Lanzarote (Canary Islands), The

Circuit training at a Wildfitness camp in Kenya (above); stretching on the lawns of a Purescapes Tuscan villa (far above)

Algarve (Portugal) and Mozambique, pleasure is almost collateral damage.

While the Tuscan quarters boast a grand 17th century house with luxurious modern Italian décor where, after an invigorating day of exercise, you can loll among the oaks, surrounded by exotic

truffles and picturesque olive groves. The 15th century villa in Spain is set in the midst of the Catalan countryside, with views of the Pyrenees and the Volcanic National Park. Swim in the crystal clear Banyoles Lake, cycle the afternoon away on quaint off-road trails, or get in touch with your inner Lance and ride up to the foothills of the Pyrenees if your fitness levels are touching Tour de France heights.

Lanzarote offers a 28-acre beach paradise interrupted only by cliffs of volcanic rock. The exotic Indonesian décor fused with Moroccan architecture are the perfect distraction from the tough training. At the 40-acre Portuguese farm estate—The Algarve, swim in the pool or battle the waves on sea kayaking and surfing expeditions. The exotica of Mozambique is the latest addition and will be fully operational by 2011.

A typical day begins with a morning energiser—yoga or qi-gong, exercise circuit training followed by breakfast. Off-site activity includes local adventures hiking, kayaking, cycling, surfing (in Portugal and Canary Islands), swimming, exploring the local culture—with fitness challenges that venture further afield. A picnic lunch is more often the norm, followed by some functional training and core conditioning. By late afternoon, it's me-time or massages depending on mood and muscle fatigue. By about 6 in the evening, it's restorative yoga and stretches with a well-deserved early dinner by 7.30 p.m.

Cost: £1,940-2,230 (Rs 1.4 to 1.6 lakh to) for a twin sharing or luxury occupancy. Booking: info@purescapes.com

Wildfitness

Most may deem it crazy, but barefoot running is a craze that's taken the fitness world by storm. For those who want to transform their running style, Wildfitness is the only fitness holiday where you can learn how to do it correctly.

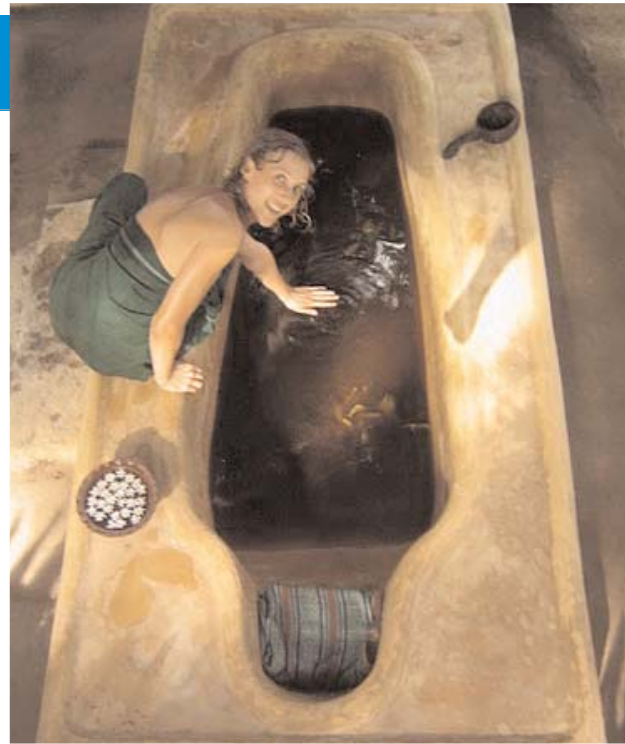
Wildfitness coaches and courses can help everyone from beginners to marathon runners to improve skill and avoid injury as they transition from normal running style. It's not about throwing away your trainers and pounding

DESTINATION

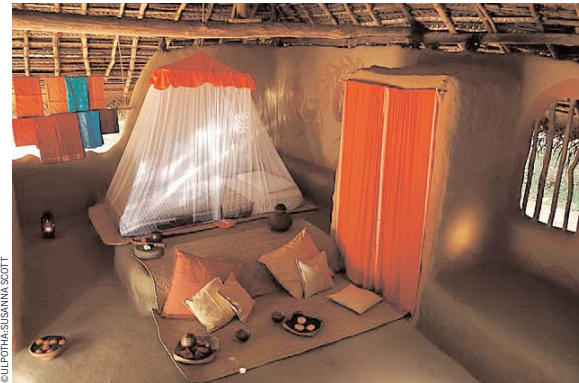
the streets in naked feet, it's about looking at the way you would run if you went barefoot.

Wildfitness courses in Kenya and Greece range from the one-week Boost to the 3½-week Transformation, with key drills incorporated for barefoot running within the wider programme of activities and nutrition. Clients are introduced to the theory of barefoot running which is then followed by a one-on-one running gait analysis with daily sessions with expert coaches to help with natural movements, translating into an improved ability to barefoot run. The idea: to help urban dwellers, otherwise known as 'zoo humans', transform their fitness and health by looking at nature and evolutionary wisdom as a guide. Back to basics is the backbone of theory and practice here. Runner's high, we call it.

Cost: £1,850 (Rs 1.3 lakh) onwards for the nine-day programme in Kenya. Bookings: enquiries@wildfitness.com



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An ayurvedic herbal steam bath being prepared at one of the treatment centres in Ulpotha (top); Triple hut accommodation (left)

Ulpotha

Although this one can't qualify as a boot camp, it does not make the cut as a classic indulgent hotel option either. This oasis of tranquility is a traditional working village cradled on one side by low mountains and a lotus-ringed lake and on the other by emerald green paddy fields.

Ulpotha sprawls languidly across 20 acres at the base of the Galgiriya

Mountains in the jungle heartland of Old Ceylon. With wild (but gentle) elephants visiting the property from time to time, this natural sanctuary is a soothing commune with nature, yoga and ayurveda.

Accommodation is provided in simply detailed wattle and daub huts with open sleeping/living areas covered with a pitched roof of thatched palm fronds. By design, there is no

electricity (so no TV or internet) and life is lived by the rhythm of the day. But don't worry, the loos are modern although the showers are in the open, (not en-suite) in keeping with traditional village practices.

There is a treatment centre for complete ayurveda treatments administered by Ulpotha's resident doctor. Yoga classes are available twice a day taught by some of the world's leading teachers. Or opt for walks in the mountains, swim in the lake, meditate, participate in pranayama sessions, go bird watching, indulge in massages and herbal steam baths or simply ponder life on the many hammocks and hanging beds that dot the grounds or hang around atop the lovely tree-house if you prefer an aerial view. Here, life is about healing and feeling so the pace is slow and the race forgotten.

Cost: \$1250-1500 (Rs 89,000 to Rs 1 lakh) per person per week. Bookings: info@ulpotha.com 📧