

**S**ACRIFICE comes easier in certain surroundings – particularly if the surroundings happen to be a luxurious villa in the stunning mountains of Andalucía. Who cares about life's little vices – coffee, chocolate, a glass of wine or cigarettes, *jamón serrano* or Manchego cheese – when you have spectacular views, crisp clean air, wildflowers and sunshine and a deluxe cosy room in which to retire after a full day of hiking and yoga?

OK, maybe I do. But surely I can give something up for a week? I have a modest goal – I have come to the Complete Retreat, a raw foods and health centre in Gaucín, to temporarily leave behind my vices and live on raw foods, wheatgrass, vegetable juices and plenty fresh air.

The Complete Retreat is the creation of London-based naturopath, kinesiologist and raw foods expert Lisa Jeans. Several years ago, Jeans adopted a raw food diet after a period of flagging health. Her transformation was profound. She set aside her career as a photographer to become a specialist in the field of kinesiology and naturopathy, studying at the Hippocrates Institute in West Palm Beach, Florida, a leading centre for alternative health education. After treating clients in the UK for many years, she launched the Complete Retreat.

She explains: "You have to experience this feeling to know what we are talking about – it's cellular memory. This retreat is for people who are interested in making some healthy changes and want this physical experience."

On the first night, I sit down to eat with the other eight guests, all of us committed, for one reason or another, to a week of this raw food experience. I am worried. Am I really going to just eat plates of veggies three times a day with this group of total strangers? How am I supposed to make small talk if I am suffering from coffee deprivation?

Of course, my worries prove unfounded: my co-retreaters are an entertaining international lot ranging from actresses to investment bankers, all of whom become quite at ease with each other (it's amazing how early morning yoga, not to mention our amusing enema how-to demonstration, can bring people together). I also partially attribute the comfortable dynamic to how good we all start to feel – by day four, my energy levels have zoomed up, I feel ▶



## In the raw

To some, a daily diet of vegetables and wheatgrass, yoga, mountain hikes and massage sounds like hell on earth, but it made **CLAYTON MAXWELL** feel heavenly. Photos by **JESÚS DOMÍNGUEZ**





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happy and healthy and companionship with my fellow retreaters comes naturally.

We are here for different reasons. Some want to lose weight, others would like to give up significant coffee or smoking habits, some feel listless and, says Jeans, there are "those who feel pretty good but just want to take it up a notch".

Jeans also works with patients of cancer and other serious illness with successful results. In 400BC Hippocrates said: "Let food be thy medicine and medicine be thy food." Jeans adheres to this philosophy, using the raw food diet to help severe health problems.

Contrary to popular misconception, raw does not have to mean rabbit food. The meals here are ample and tasty, so it is no big sacrifice to eat raw for a week. Cat Mcleod, the gracious Australian chef, creates feasts so lovely it is hard to believe they are only vegetables: heaps of avocado, carrots, sprouts and purple cabbage, for example, are sprinkled with sesame seed salt and accompanied by crackers of seeds and nuts. A favourite dish is the taco dinner: a thick purée of macadamia nuts and cauliflower adorned with vegetables sitting in a big leaf of iceberg lettuce which we roll up and eat like tacos.

The heart of the Complete Retreat is

green, with a juice that conjures images of fishponds. Our first morning, we stand apprehensively around a tray of wheatgrass shots and two pitchers of cucumber and celery juice so vividly green they are luminescent. Jeans urges us to drink up: "Your liver loves it and you love your liver," she coos. We toast each other and swallow – it's not bad if you are quick about it. After the wheatgrass, we drink at least two glasses of the cucumber/celery juice – at first it tastes bitter, but by the end of the retreat some of us actually love it. But not as much as our livers do.

The Complete Retreat is aptly named. In addition to the cleansing diet, our days are full with yoga, hiking, personal training, short morning meditations, dips in the gorgeously positioned, chlorine-free pool, educational talks and a kitchen demonstration. We stay busy. The daily schedule flows something like this: 7.40am, the yoga teacher wakes us with a ring of a bell at our doors; 8am meditation; 8.45am green drinks; 9am yoga; 10.30am more green drinks; 11am hike; 12.30pm lunch; 2pm personal training; 2.30pm consultation with Jeans; 3.30pm green drinks and talk; 5pm yoga; 6.30pm dinner; 7.30pm hike; 9.15pm massage; 10.30pm fall into a very comfortable bed, much too exhausted

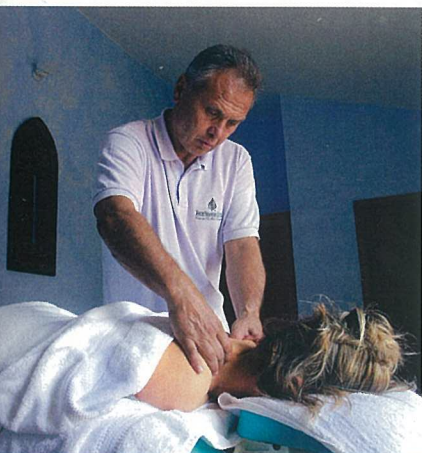


to dwell on your desire for a glass of wine or any other absent treats.

In the seven days, we enter a vast new horizon of health education. Jeans' mind is an encyclopedia of nutritional facts and she inundates us with pointers: "Lemon juice in the morning does wonders for the liver and makes the body more alkaline; your grey streaks are lovely, but if you want to get rid of them, a good B-complex and mineral supplement will help; if you must eat fish, tuna is high in tryptophan and good for building serotonin, a natural anti-depressant."

We are continuously amazed by her repertoire of info, which is not confined to the raw foods paradigm – she is also open to other aspects of health care: traditional medicine, Chinese medicine,





Ayurvedics. "I just really like to learn about health," Jeans says. "When I go on holiday, my leisure reading is a book on amino acids."

She has boundless energy: you would have to, to do what she does. She shepherds us through the week, organising our daily schedules of massages, consultations, chiropractic visits, whatever we need (she even sent one Russian woman off to a hypnotist to help her give up smoking).

She meets with each guest twice to discuss personal health issues. One of her biggest challenges is just keeping the pantry stocked – in my week alone, the nine of us go through about 600 cucum-

bers. Much of the supplies she or her co-workers bring in from London: Jeans had to buy four extra seats on one flight just to carry down all the wheatgrass and vitamins needed to keep the retreat going.

A quick glimpse of the staff reveals why people say eating raw is better than plastic surgery for youthful good looks: they seem to glow. Furthermore, they contribute immeasurably to the experience. Susanne Brix, the German yoga teacher, caters to a wide range of expertise levels and her Sanskrit singing is pleasantly infectious. Paul Harper, the friendly personal trainer from New Zealand, leads us on breath-taking hikes as well as training sessions ▶

Clockwise from far left: Paul takes Clayton through some exercises; Tony helps ease those aching muscles after a bracing mountain hike, below; Cat prepares lunch





## FOOD FOR THOUGHT

The **COMPLETE RETREAT PROGRAMME** is based on vegan raw food cuisine and green juices (wheatgrass, vegetable and sunflower sprout) that detoxify the liver and cleanse the blood. The principles of the Hippocrates Health Institute ([www.hippocratesinst.com](http://www.hippocratesinst.com)) say that the standard Western diet, high in sugar and refined flour, meat, dairy and coffee, wreaks havoc with the body's blood sugar levels and its alkaline/ acidity balance. This in turn encourages overeating and leaches essential minerals from the bones. The Complete Retreat diet restores that balance by flooding the body with oxygen, enzyme and chlorophyll rich food.

For more information on raw food philosophy: *The Ph Miracle*, by nutritionist and microbiologist Robert O Young, PhD and Shelley Redford Young and *Living Foods for Optimal Health: Staying Healthy in an Unhealthy World*, by Theresa Foy Digeronimo and Brian R. Clement.



that actually lift sagging triceps. And Tony Zemlicka, the quirky Czech masseuse, has an uncanny talent for hitting problem spots (he is also massage therapist to the stars – Liz Taylor is one client).

After seven days of such healthy living, I feel great, even euphoric at moments. In one of our talks, Jeans says: "If you can't get out of bed in the morning and jump and say, 'Yes!' then something is not right."

"I considered how for the past ten years, the only word I could say first thing in the morning was 'Coffee'. But after a week of waking up to the garden of calla lilies and nasturtiums and a mountain that greets me as I make my way to the yoga room, I feel my coffee-defined days could be a thing of the past."

By the end of the retreat, it seems everyone has gained a new vitality (not to

mention rosy complexions and improved muscle tone). Our farewell hike is a rigorous steady climb as we take in a final view of the green mountains and the strait of Gibraltar. It is a clear day and we can see Morocco. Several people who seemed reluctant at the start of the retreat now effuse healthy energy. And later, as we sip on our last round of luminous green drinks, one guest expresses: "I feel bouncy and chipper. I feel like I could climb that mountain all over again." □

See [www.thecompleteretreat.com](http://www.thecompleteretreat.com) for more information, or email Lisa Jeans at [lisa@lisa.com](mailto:lisa@lisa.com), tel: 0044 (0) 207 689 00 30. Prices start at £950 for a shared cottage and £1,400 for a room in the main villa. The next retreats will be in September and October. Smaller retreats will also be held in Devon, England in July and August.

Susanne gives an early morning yoga class