



CORFU

ALY HAZLEWOOD



Their team consists of leading experts in their chosen fields, all of who boast many years of experience in the health industry. Each highly qualified nutritional therapist, mind matters coach and yoga instructor will ensure maximum benefits for every guest, such as increased fitness and energy levels, stress relief, weight management and a heightened sense of well-being.

Early morning yoga is taught by Canadian Melissa Vandivier, on a mountainside platform with breath-taking panoramic views over the twinkling Ionian Sea. Melissa has taught yoga for over 11 years, training in Asia, Portugal and Greece, in Hatha, Hot, Vinyasa, Power and Yin yoga and her serenely gentle, encouraging approach had even the most reluctant of guests participating eagerly after just a day.

It must be said that this is not a boot camp or one-size-fits-all approach to wellbeing. The Health Matters 360 team takes great pains to tailor the programme to each individual's needs. One is encouraged to listen to one's body and pace oneself accordingly, but where necessary, to push one's own boundaries in order to overcome mental obstacles. As well as daily yoga, there are hiking sessions along a winding coastal path with stunning views, fitness classes, swimming and a fully equipped gym.

Being new to health retreats, I was worried that the food might be a little austere, though I needn't have. The menu has been designed holistically by expert nutritional therapist Jenny Tschiesche and Michelin-starred consultant chef Adam Simmonds and consists of delicious, local, seasonal produce. Meals were served *à la carte* on a beautiful terrace dotted with fire pits and lanterns, and everyone sampled a little of the local organic wines. There is no opportunity to go hungry with three healthy yet mouth-watering meals a day and two snack breaks consisting of homemade dips, local breads, olives, nuts, and freshly squeezed juices. My guilty sweet tooth was completely sated by a goat's cheesecake with fig compote.

Of course, real balance includes the body, spirit and mind. Mind Matters coach Janice Haddon is trained in psychology, NLP, hypnotherapy and psychotherapy, and has sensitively devised a timetable of group and one-to-one sessions

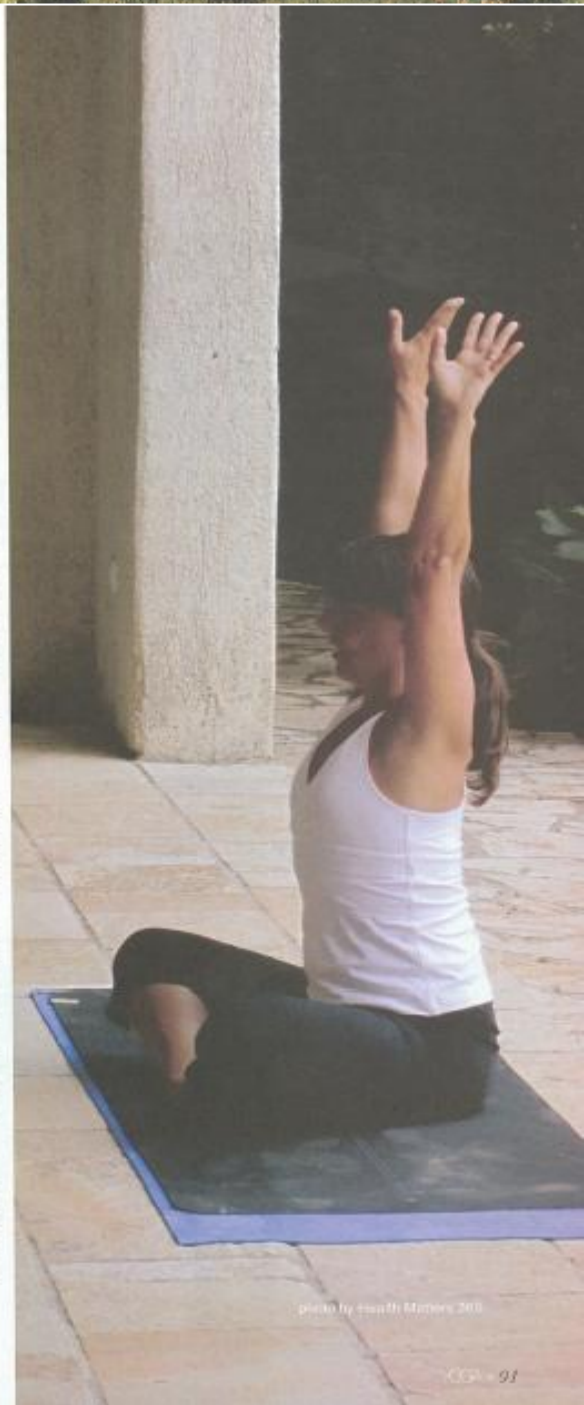


photo by Health Matters 360



Corfu is the Northernmost of the Ionian Islands and a much-maligned travel destination. With some areas blighted by over-development and a reputation for cheap package holidays, it is now undergoing something of a well-needed renaissance.

Testament to Corfu's rugged beauty, is the fact that multi-millionaire philanthropist Nathaniel Rothschild bought a huge tract of the Corfu mountains to build a secluded holiday retreat. He also set up the Butrint Foundation to conserve the Albanian archaeological site, positioned directly across the channel from Corfu, and hailed as one of the most spectacular marine views in the world.

North-east of Corfu town in the mountains above Agios Stefanos, lies the breath-taking Rou Estate which, twice a year, is home to the Health Matters 360 experience. The site of the Rou Estate possesses a special kind of magic, built on ley lines converging through quartz and limestone, and endowed with an incredible quality of light. Rou means 'flow of energy', and this principle has been carefully integrated into the re-design of the estate which was once a bustling village lain derelict since the 70's.

Like an elaborate stage set, the British owner of the Rou estate has managed to create an arcadia that sits harmoniously in its natural surrounds with an incredible attention to detail. Local labour and materials, much of it recycled were employed in the village's renovation with an eco-conscious use of solar panels to fulfil its energy needs. Thoughtful landscaping sees fragrant pathways of lavender, rosemary and jasmine meandering between each villa, and as the evenings draw in, aromatic white blossoms perfume the air. Bees, cicadas and butterflies provide a constant low-level thrum, but that's about the only noise one hears at Rou. The stone villas themselves have been sympathetically restored to a luxuriously high standard, with stylish interiors each with its own plunge pool, landscaped gardens, wood burning stove and spectacular views of the ocean.

The Health Matters 360 philosophy is to create a life in balance, physically, nutritionally and mentally. Co-founded by fitness instructor Ian Freeman, and Sarah Morgan, once a high flying advertising executive who, after experiencing a serious health 'burnout', decided to quit her career and retrain as a meditation and relaxation teacher.

that help uncover the mental blocks that hinder progress in life. These sessions were extremely useful, particularly the instruction on learning how to conserve your energy for the more stressful times in life, and the techniques were very simple to incorporate into my daily routine. Additionally, on your return home the support is continued with telephone calls from Janice to help remind you where you need to keep focused.

As a practiced healthy eater, I assumed I had fairly solid nutritional knowledge. But the daily sessions with Jenny Tschiesche revealed just how much I had to learn. I identified several areas of poor eating habits along with their emotional causes and learned just how detrimental sugar and yeast is for me personally. I was given a menu of energy boosting foods and taught how to choose healthily from restaurants. Once home, you receive a specifically tailored nutritional report from Jenny with recipes to help you continue to live healthily.

I arrived in Corfu with a variety of stress-related illnesses, so this experience could not have arrived at a better time. The incredible peace and picture-postcard beauty of the Rou Estate left me feeling more relaxed, calm and cosseted than I have in years. Not only that, the great care and attention shown to the guests by the Health Matters 360 team resulted in a shift of emotions and an enthusiasm to begin the journey to get my health back on track. I could not recommend it highly enough. For me, the surprise was that it doesn't take much to uncover the secret of Corfu; that it is a place of unique beauty and refuge, a diamond in the rough.

HEALTH HUBS AT THE ROU ESTATE IN CORFU

start from **£2,345** per person for a week on a full board basis, including flights and transfers. Prices include an extensive programme of physical, nutritional and mind matters coaching, as well as full use of the gym and pool facilities. Health Matters 360 is working in partnership with Simpson Travel who are ATOL Holders (5858) and members of ABTA the Travel Association (WS698).

To book, please visit simpsontravel.com or telephone: **020 8392 5858**

For more information on Health Matters 360, please visit healthmatters360.co.uk or telephone **0800 1588 360**

For tourist information on Corfu, please visit: corfu.gr

