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## Reclaim Your Self, Marrakesh

### **A good-value wellbeing break held in a riad sets the blueprint for breaks in the Cotswolds and Tanzania**

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**USP** Affordable wellbeing holidays combining yoga, healthy eating, life coaching and holistic therapies in carefully chosen locations in Europe and Africa, including short breaks in the UK and occasional de-stress days in London. The breaks take a maximum of 15 people, and conveniently, Reclaim Your Self offers monthly payment plans.

**AMBIENCE** Reclaim Your Self was set up by down-to-earth and dynamic massage therapist Julia Sampson, more affectionately known as Jools. The breaks are inspired by her own experiences working in a stressful, isolating government job in Tanzania when a massage teacher, she says, 'saved her', by teaching her about food, nutrition, exercise and yoga. It helped her 'reclaim herself', cope with her job and, eventually, leave it to do what she really wanted.

To similarly de-stress and inspire you, Jools chooses her locations and her team to create a peaceful, friendly atmosphere that feels welcoming to anyone, whether you're a novice at being healthy or not.

I attended a four-day break in Marrakesh, staying in a family riad in the centre of the city. The team made the well-worn riad warm, fragrant and bright throughout our stay, using a range of delicious-smelling incenses, an iPod which played uplifting or soothing music depending on the mood, candles which lit the way to the rooftop at night and large vases of fresh flowers that graced our supper tables each evening.

Central to the feel-good feeling were the dynamics of the team looking after us – organisers Jools and Tracey, life coach Stephen Yates, Scaravelli yoga teacher Helen Noakes and nutritional chefs Ella Scott and Gerry Carless who worked seamlessly together to look after the group and were cheering, often witty and always available when needed.

**QUALITY OF EXPERIENCE** My four days were an uplifting break that took me out of my familiar head space. I especially enjoyed the Scaravelli yoga – it's based on the style of yoga developed by Vanda Scaravelli, who emphasised the importance of the spine, the natural gravity of the body and awareness of the breath.

We had a 2-hour rooftop class each morning and, after watching the sunset, an hour's class each evening, which was usually punctuated by the other-worldly sound of the call to prayer. [Helen Noakes](#) was a vibrant, clever teacher who kept the movements basic to cater to a very mixed ability group but still managed to make us feel challenged in all the right ways. Reading a poem before each yoga session as food for thought was a lovely touch.

After breakfast each day group coaching sessions were held in the intricately tiled, large and light central courtyard, where NLP Practitioner and trainer [Stephen Yates](#) encouraged us to pick an area of our lives that currently needed work, such as money, relationships, family or work-life balance. He had clever little tricks to get people to open up to each other in pairs, and was excellent at helping you to clarify thoughts and set realistic goals you could then follow once home. Everything was optional – you could take the morning off if you so chose.

Lunch was followed by a visit to a local day spa for a hammam or a massage on two afternoons – the third was left free for exploring. Though the spa felt a little busy, the standard of treatments was high, but I confess it was always a shock to emerge into the hot and bustling (and sometimes rather smelly) city after being cocooned inside. That said, Marrakesh is an exciting, uplifting place to be – as a welcome break from the souks, I particularly enjoyed a trip to the peaceful [Jardin Majorelle](#).

**FOOD AND DRINK** We were served tasty, vegetarian meals using no wheat, sugar or salt prepared by Ella Scott, who trained at [The College of Natural Nutrition](#) and her side-kick Gerry. A buffet breakfast each morning included wheat-free pancakes with lemon and honey, compotes, yoghurt, fruit and a choice of muesli or granola. Lunch and dinner featured dishes such as polenta topped with goat's cheese and onion marmalade, aubergine potato cakes with a fresh herby sauce and traditional Moroccan soup with salad and corn tacos. We were given some recipes to take home – on other breaks there also workshops on natural nutrition, which encourages you to eat and live your life according to your own health story and in tune with your constitution.

**IN-CROWD** These breaks are popular with single women from London, though everyone is welcome. My break attracted an interesting bunch of people from a wide range of professions including the UN, various charities and the arts, and included 12 women, 3 men, two couples and a pair of friends.

**WALLET WATCH** Four days in Marrakesh cost from £500; [easyJet](#) flies from London Gatwick to Marrakesh from £65.99 one way (£95.98 return) including tax. A Cotswolds weekend costs from £400 per person, a week in Tanzania from £900. The prices include everything except for transport/flights.

**NEED TO KNOW** Reclaim Your Self (07939-907501 or 0208 350 8943, [www.reclaimyourself.co.uk](http://www.reclaimyourself.co.uk)). Forthcoming Reclaim Yourself breaks include Tanzania 28 February - 5 March 2010, Cotswolds 19 - 21 March 2010 and Marrakesh October 2010.