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This Crete retreat will whip you into shape

by Richard Eden

XHAUSTED and frazzled, I was looking forward to a lazy week. My two daughters, Marina, 13, and Sofia, ten, had other plans.

'Come on, it's time for Aqua Fit,' announced Sofia on day one at our swish hotel in Crete, barely ten minutes after I had plonked myself down on a sun lounger.

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Sure enough, I was dragged into the vast swimming pool to join 20 or so women and children, and a handful of reluctant looking chaps, to do star jumps as music hoomed from a loudspeaker.

chaps, to do star jumps as music boomed from a loudspeaker. Nicklas, our Adonis of a Swedish instructor, shouted: 'You're not going to complain it's too easy today, are you?' Fat chance, but I was struggling to keep up with women of a certain age.

We were staying at

Cavo Spada Resort
and Spa, a 40minute drive
from Chania
airport in the
North West of
Greece's largest island,
where it's
delightfully
warm for the
October half term.
The 150-room
beachside hotel —
which has been fully
renovated — has panoramic
views of Cape Spada, where a
naval battle was won by the
Allies in World War II.

In addition to Nicklas, there were three other Swedish fitness instructors. They led runs or power walks before breakfast, arranged volleyball matches, spinning classes or, for the ambitious, high-intensity training. All free of charge.

I had never been to a yoga class. The girls and I joined the 9am session, where enthusiastic Naemi urged us to 'feel the sea breeze'. I was too busy trying not to fall over as I drew my left leg up to my thigh in the Tree Pose.

Evenings could be energetic, too. One night we were entertained by traditional Cretan dancers, performing routines that involved men dressed like Scout masters in brown trousers and black boots, leaping into the air and slapping their feet. They encouraged us to join them in the only Hellenic dance most of us knew, Zorba the Greek.

Happily, the resort is just as enjoyable for those who prefer sunbeds to circuit training and is perfect for children of all ages, with a range of kids' clubs. The sea is a two-minute stroll, a quiet beach bordered by pine trees. Bring jelly shoes, though, as the beach is pebbly.

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There's a spa with a mind-boggling range of treatments, and among the less strenu-ous activities are cookery lessons, where Sifis, a hand-some Greek chef with a salt-and-pepper beard, taught us how to fry a sizzling

prawn Saganaki, enriched with a shot or three of Ouzo.

There was so much to do that we ventured out only once, to Chania, half an hour away (=3 on the bus or =30 in a taxi). We sauntered down to the 14th century Venetian harbour with one of the world's oldest lighthouses.

'This is so Instagrammable,' Marina declared.

For those not familiar with teenage social media habits, that's high praise indeed.

TRAVEL FACTS

CAVO Spada Resort & Spa (cavospada.gr, 030 2824 022 121) offers seven nights in a deluxe room from £1,054, all-inclusive with Easyjet to Chania. Based on travel from May 2019 onwards. Package available through travel republic.co.uk/020 8974 7200.

LOCAL KNOWLEDGE

Crete's Caves of Matala were a favourite Sixties hippie-hangout for the likes of Bob Dylan, Cat Stevens and Joni Mitchell



Lap of luxury: The Swish Cavo Spada Resort and Spa offers a range of exercise classes including Aqua Fit