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'Heartcore's dynamic pilates retreat in St Tropez left me energised and refreshed'

This four-day wellness programme focuses on positive movement

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'You have around 70,000 thoughts a day,' Jessie Blum, founder of the revered pilates concept [Heartcore](#), whispers over the soft St Tropez breeze. It's 10 am. A 90-minute dynamic pilates session is coming to an end. The sun is darting between the clouds and I'm catching my breath.

It's just one of the many moments during this four-day wellness retreat where whirring thoughts of to-do lists and work begin to dissipate, my mind focuses and I lean into a different kind of holiday.

Centred on finding connection and calm through the power of positive movement, for the second year running the LA-inspired, London-born pilates brand has extended its unique ethos to a Spring retreat on the French Riviera, which I was lucky enough to experience.

Here's a slice of what to expect if "pilates retreat" is on your holiday bucket list this year.

Isn't St Tropez less about rest and more about revelry?



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Taking time out from all that pilates

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St Tropez might sooner call to mind a sybaritic lifestyle of superyachts and designer shopping, and while it does have that in spades, there's a softer side to discover before the crowds descend in summer. Heartcore's wellness retreat typically takes place in May, during which St Tropez is a little busy but not bustling; the temperature is warm but not overbearingly stuffy.

And the best part: it takes place at [Hotel Villa Cosy](#), the wellness-led hotel that's just a five-minute walk from the town. Secluded yet moments away from the action, Villa Cosy is a picture-perfect boutique hotel whose muted colour palette, well-equipped spa (featuring a jacuzzi, hammam and sauna) and outdoor pool are the perfect backdrop for a retreat.



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Exploring the town

But it's not just the location that's unique. Deprivation and withdrawal are often words synonymous with wellness retreats, yet here's where the Heartcore x Wandawonda retreat differs. Unlike standard retreats that can feel solitary, isolated and often, let's face it, unenjoyable, Heartcore's is one centred on building new friendships, reaping the endorphin-boosting benefits of movement and choosing exactly how you spend your free time. For me, that meant time to explore St Tropez town, meeting new people and hanging out at Villa Cosy.

How do you get your sweat on?

Every morning, I kick-started the day with a 90-minute (sometimes two-hour) pilates class. Focusing on Blum's signature dynamic classes, these sessions take place outside and can be challenging, with the aim of building strength, improving posture and connecting to the breath. They're catered to all levels and Blum offers modifications and lots of adjustments where needed.



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Positive movement by the pool

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The blend of stretching, strengthening poses and cardio left me feeling energised and refreshed, while the harder sequences pushed me out of my comfort zone. When Blum speaks of her pilates concept she says that by 'connecting every cell, every muscle, every breath, every heartbeat through focused dynamic movement, we're able to push through what we think we are capable of.'

What else is there to look forward to?

Aside from daily pilates, there's plenty of free time to enjoy coastal walks and daily jogs led by Jessie. But if that's not your thing you can simply lounge by the pool or explore St Tropez. The proximity to the town means you can really soak up the scenes of the coastal town, and without all those crowds too. We also spent an afternoon on a catamaran, an evening playing petanque, along with plenty of dinners in nearby buzzy restaurants.

Cheesy as it may sound but one of the biggest highlights for me was meeting everyone on the retreat. Since meals are eaten with the rest of the group which are, incidentally, a far cry away from typical 'wellness retreat' fare - fun, tons of flavour and a focus on local cuisine - I really enjoyed the social element of the retreat, too.

Final thoughts and FAQs

There is something really special about this retreat. Not only is Jessie's approach to movement and wellbeing completely unique but it's all about taking what you want out of it. For me, that meant enjoying moments of calm, moments of fun and lots of movement, allowing myself the space to enjoy some stillness, to meet new people and be a little more present than I usually am back home.

The programme, which will be available to book soon, includes everything but flights; from your own choice of room, all meals, group classes and more. You can now sign up for interest and join the waitlist for the next retreat, [here](#).

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