

## A stretch in the Ionian

Ian Belcher  
Saturday April 15, 2006  
The Guardian

Affordable yoga, a refreshingly practical natural cure for hangovers and expert nutritional advice lie at the flexible, sun-kissed heart of the latest health break in Greece.

The first "Week of the Brand New You" kicks off next month on the Ionian island of Lefkas. Held three times over the summer by Wildwind Holidays, they are part of a newly launched potpourri of fitness packages including a three-day Reiki workshop and a women-only fitness week with aqua aerobics, hikes and runs.

"They're accessible, light and fun," says co-founder, Varvara Dranidis-Morgan. "They're designed for people interested in learning more about a healthy lifestyle without ending up in a fundamentalist retreat or spa. We don't treat health as a cult. You can do as few or as many of the activities as you want - and you won't be told off for having a glass of wine."

Wildwind's regular "Healthy Options" weekly packages include five 90-minute yoga sessions in a beachfront tent, massage, hiking, guided cycling and water sports. But The Week of the Brand New You stirs extra ingredients into the mix, including a one-day workshop with Lefkas phytotherapist Brigitte Roth-Kokotsi, who explains traditional uses for local plants. Alongside cooking from nature's pantry - wild asparagus and herb omelette anyone? - she demonstrates plants' alternative medicinal uses including a hangover tea containing marjoram, marigold, basil and St John's wort. You can't argue with a fitness break that lets you drink and then provides a natural balm for your morning-after head.

And it's not the only reasonably priced stretching and meditative breathing offered in Greece next month: Neilson is launching a yoga week at The Retreat in Sivota on the mainland's west coast, offering morning and afternoon Hatha and Ashtanga sessions, along with sailing, windsurfing, waterskiing, and tennis.

- The first Week of the Brand New You (01920 484515, [Healthy-option.co.uk](http://Healthy-option.co.uk)) departs May 7, from £435pp including flights, transfers and room-only accommodation. The Neilson Yoga Week (0870 9099099, [neilson.co.uk](http://neilson.co.uk)) departing May 14 costs £799, including flights, transfers, most meals, children's clubs (under-fives go free in May) and activities.

---