

Stretch yourself slim

Method Putkisto break at The Dionysus, Turkey

16-23 October 2004

Report by Caroline Rowe



Nestling high in the Turkish mountains with a breathtaking view over the Mediterranean's Kumlübuk Bay, The Dionysus village offers a peaceful and natural setting in which to take part in Marja Putkisto's innovative deep-stretching programme.

Over the course of week, Finnish dance/movement teacher Marja and her team, Cheryl Aker and Louise Curwen, took us through two sessions a day of stretching and breathing exercises designed to create more flexibility, tone the muscles and realign the pelvis, neck and shoulders - in fact reshape your whole body!



Teacher Marja Putkisto

Marja started developing the Method twenty years ago when Jane Fonda workouts were at their peak. She said: "Back then, I felt a world away from the aerobics boom while working on breathing techniques and long, precise stretches with Finland's National Opera singers."

But the hard work and dedication paid off. Now people are starting to recognise that bodily stress starts with poor posture (hunched over the PC at work, for instance); shallow breathing and short, tight muscles that restrict movement.



Method Putkisto takes those pre-workout warm-up stretches one step further. I learnt how to visualise my 'centre line' as a reference point for each stretch to help realign my body. Correct breathing - using the diaphragm as the breathing muscle- enables you to ease yourself into stretches aimed at elongating the muscles. It's the magic pause at the end of exhalation that helps you S T R E T C H...

We worked our way through all the muscles that form our posture: hip flexors, waist, upper body, buttocks, thighs and the dreaded hamstrings (described as the 'sweetest pain'!)

By the end of the week, I could hold the hamstring stretch for a full five minutes! Luckily one of the expert tutors was always nearby to correct my posture/alignment when necessary.

As for the results...my muscles strengthened, my rib cage lifted - improving my breathing - and I felt more energised overall.



Being in such a beautiful, unspoilt environment helped me feel peaceful and relaxed. There was plenty of free time during the day to swim in the pool, enjoy a massage at the Clarins spa and contemplate the dramatic scenery from the canyon-top.

The programme changed the way I see my body, made me more aware of my posture and enhanced my suppleness. My waistline became more defined and my digestion also improved. The techniques aren't complicated to master, but require commitment and focus: I can recommend the Method to men and women alike.

Looking at my fellow participants (including a singer/oboist, two advertising execs, an IT specialist and a yoga teacher) before and after the course, they're a walking ad for the Method. From drooping shoulders, to lifted posture and a spring to their steps, the transformation was amazing!

And the good news is, Marja promises: "Once you've elongated the muscles, to maintain them, all you need to do is stretch them after exercising."

She added: "You'll also find it easier to practise yoga or pilates once you've got the basics right."

So watch this space: Method Putkisto could be coming to your gym soon!

For more information, see www.methodputkisto.com

Marja's book, 'The Body Lean and Lifted,' and DVD/video are also available from the web site.

Stays at The Dionysus are organised by Exclusive Escapes. www.hiddenturkey.com
Reservations: 020 8605 3500.

