

Sizzle in style this winter and roll out your mat in the Canary Islands

How great are the Canary Islands? A place where you can spend your Spanish euros and soak up some year-round African sunshine (well almost: the islands are located just off the African coast), all just four hours or so away from the hustle and bustle of London.

Actually, there are lots of islands dotted around here, although for most folks at home it is the big holiday ones, Tenerife and Lanzarote, that are best-known among UK sun-seekers.

Another of the better known ones is Fuerteventura, which boasts in equal measure the (almost) African sunshine, beautiful, sandy beaches and a laid back vibe that will soothe your soul as soon as you step off the plane. The palm trees in this part of the world are quite a very welcome sight after the wind and rain and cold back home.

Dream setting

And where there is sun and natural splendour, you're guaranteed to find yoga. That's certainly the case in Fuerteventura where you can find plenty of great holiday choices if you're looking to take some time out, get on the mat, and work on your tan.

Azul Yoga & Pilates *(azulfit.com)* is a great place to start on your quest for holiday wellbeing, set against the island's dramatic and energising volcanic scenery. It offers yoga, pilates and meditation holidays at two sites, where you can choose to stay either at a tranquil villa retreat or a beachside lodge.

It's the perfect place for improving your health, mood and wellbeing, especially during the dark winter months. And the organisers have plenty of options to ponder to make it the right trip for you.

Whatever you choose you'll find a fun and friendly atmosphere, small class sizes and world-class instruction. Develop your existing skills on the mat, or try something new, and enjoy some sumptuous grub and chat with like-minded people.



Stay options

If you fancy the Azul Yoga & Pilates villa retreat, you'll get to enjoy two to three yoga classes daily, massage, holistic therapies and spa treatments in the villa's treatment tent, plus a choice of healthy and delicious meals.

It's a great location to take some time out and that includes the yoga areas too: classes take place on a beautiful outdoor deck or an indoor studio. Specialised retreat weeks are also available, where you can schedule more of what you like including pilates, Hatha yoga, Vinyasa Flow, nutrition and detox, among others.

And the accommodation is pretty fine too. Taking inspiration from the travels of the Azul team, the themed rooms provide a respite whilst allowing you to take a journey of the imagination. There are different levels of accommodation to suit all budgets, including the plush 5-star style Moroccan apartment complex (just 70 miles off the coast of Morocco, in fact).

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Among our favourites are the Sahara tents, which are effectively beautiful works of art to live in (and surprisingly cosy). This is more glamping than camping: with a double bed, a lounge with a big sofa and floor cushions, power and lights, access to an indoor bathroom in the main villa and an outdoor kitchen, you are never far from the luxuries of home.

Beach babe

If you're a beach lover, then head to the Lotus Yoga Lodge, which is located in the town of Corralejo in the north of Fuerteventura. Step out onto the white-sand beaches and wake up to healthy breakfasts, as well as more yummy massage, holistic therapies and spa treatments. Here, you can enjoy Hatha yoga and meditation at a central location, just minutes from Corralejo's beautiful beaches.

The tranquil yoga lodge, nestled in a lovely quiet area away from the main tourist sites so you get a chance to really unwind and disconnect, will put you in touch with your inner yogi. Here, you're pretty close to the ocean. It is sited just three minutes walk from the beach, as well as the supermarkets and restaurants of Corralejo town.

In your spare time you can relax and unwind in one of the chill-out areas at the lodge or one of the local beaches, or get out and enjoy the sights of the island. Walk along the coastline to the stunning Corralejo Dunes National Park, visit local markets, enjoy a seafood lunch at the harbour, climb a volcano, or visit the beautiful lagoons of El Cotillo. Wind down in the evenings with yoga and meditation on the lodge's roof terrace, then enjoy an inclusive full-body massage.

Active lifestyle

More than just a holiday, a visit to either base will help you learn mindfulness techniques and regain your harmony so you can be more calm and balanced once you head back home. Azul will also provide you with loads of ideas and positive energy to take back with you, helping you to find sunshine and motivation every day, wherever you are, whether that's Fuerteventura, or Fulham.

And if you're looking to combine yoga with other activities (aside from laying on the beach or browsing a good book by the pool-side) then there is lots on offer, from tai chi to cycling. Offshore, choose from some of the more adventurous activities available such as surfing or windsurfing.

Away from the action, this is also a place where you can get to explore a range of alternative therapies such as Reiki, integrated healing, touch therapy and Hopi ear candling. Ayurvedic consultations are also available.

Best of all, this is a year-round destination, so anytime is a good time to come. Azul Yoga & Pilates offers a comprehensive assortment of breaks pretty much every week of the year. With the coldest months now upon us, it seems like a pretty good idea to jet off right now.

