

Riding high
on my own
hoverboard

Bridget Harrison tries eFoiling, the new surfing craze, at a Balearic yoga retreat

If you happen to be sipping rosé at a trendy Mediterranean beach bar this summer, gaze out to sea and spot someone flying past on what looks like Michael J. Fox's hoverboard in *Back to the Future Part II*, don't blame it on the afternoon drinking. You'll have seen the latest toy of the superyacht set and the new water-sport trend. Noisy jet-skis are out. This year it's all about eFoilS, stubby-shaped surfboards

that are powered by an electric propeller and levitate over the sea.

Zooming along silently above the water, these whizzy toys make anyone riding one look as relaxed and elegant as an expert surfer. Mastering them is another matter, as I discover on my first lesson when, flat on my stomach, seawater blasting in my face as it powers along, I'm soon so far out of my comfort zone that my legs shake.

The boards work by having a tiny mast

underneath them that is attached to a battery-powered propeller and underwater wing. When you pick up speed — controlled by a switch in your hand — the wing forces the board to rise above the water's surface so you can glide along without friction. They cost about £13,000 and are flying off the shelves, according to Sebastian Devonshire, a rather debonair Brit who runs Ibiza Foils, the main supplier of the boards.

For mere mortals Devonshire gives eFoil lessons off the bay by Ibiza Town. He promises me that to master one you simply have to have good balance, be zen. For my lesson I wear a helmet that contains an earpiece so he can give me instructions and encouragement. "Relax! Keeping breathing!" he shouts as I manage to get to my knees and precariously stand on the thing a few times. However, as soon as it picks up speed and starts to levitate, the sensation feels so alien I topple off it.

I'm learning as part of a yoga retreat, the idea being that I try it at the start of my trip, then spend three days becoming more "in tune with my body", then have another lesson at the end. Right now I am thinking it's going to take more than a holiday of downward dogs to become an eFoil.

The retreat is held by the respected yoga instructor Jacqueline Lysycia and is based on a 30-minute ferry hop from Ibiza, on its sister island, Formentera. A rocky strip 12 miles long and barely two miles across in its middle section, Formentera is often described as “elemental” by yoga types. I soon see why. We are based on the island’s rugged eastern side, in a pretty villa set in a garden of lavender and rosemary.




The Formentera Yoga retreat

Beyond it a long plateau of golden wind-blasted sandstone crumbles in jagged chunks into the Mediterranean.

Lyscia is a down-to-earth British woman with a fantastic laugh, who has hosted retreats on Formentera since 2005. Her aim is to make them intimate and informal, with plenty of time for “grounding”—ie, lounging around, phone off, enjoying the view. The nine of us will have two 90-minute yoga classes a day, eat a vegan diet that is gluten and alcohol-free, and do fireside meditations.

I confess that the idea of spending four days in the Balearics without a beer and large bowl of aïoli with every meal would usually strike me as a travesty. But I am curious. If the retreat chills me out enough to master the eFoil, it will be a decent measure of the good it will have done me.



Bridget

We begin each day with shots of kombucha, spirulina and coconut water, and salt water and lemon to aid gut health, then take an 8am meditative walk along the rocky shore line, then a low sun warming our faces. Our first yoga session is in the villa courtyard. And it's a revelation. Lysyia teaches Dynamic Yoga, the focus of which is about helping your mind to be more in tune with your body.

I've practised yoga for about 20 years on and off, but here, instead of rushing from posture to posture, we break each one down into parts, so we can concentrate on



Bridget Harrison attempts to eFoil

how our muscles respond with each movement, constantly “checking in” with our shoulders, abdomens and lower backs. It’s pleasingly strenuous and very relaxing. In the afternoon, the sessions take place on a huge shaded deck in the garden, where the indigo sea rolls in beyond us.

Despite my fears about the distinctly un-holidayish food regime, our meals, prepared by the macrobiotic-trained Italian chef Annalisa Rinaldi, are simply delicious. Breakfast includes avocado

smoothies, bee pollen and papaya. Lunches and dinners comprise combinations of roasted vegetables, homemade hummus, coconut-scented brown rice, seaweed salads and tofu in mustard and tahini.

Between yoga sessions, guests read on the terrace, get Ayurvedic massages, go for walks, or hire bikes and mopeds. Formentera is largely flat apart from a rocky elevation

at its southern end and has excellent cycle paths. It's also famous for its white beaches and turquoise waters. I take a moped to the western side of the island, where silky-soft sand stretches for miles in each direction. After a bracing swim, I have to use all my willpower not to stop for a beer in a beach shack.

In high summer, the eFoiling lessons will take place on Formentera and be an optional extra on the retreat. Lysyia added them to show how a challenge that

takes you out of your comfort zone is an effective way to put into practice her teachings.

Is she right? During my second session, I feel quite different: calmer, better slept, energized by good food and stronger from the yoga. So this time, as I lie on the floor and press the trigger in my hand to power up, I feel a little more confident. It bumps into the water and swiftly I move on to my knees then on to my feet. I press the accelerator and the board starts to pick up speed and rise up. Then suddenly it's as though I am flying along on a magic carpet, the water rushing past two feet below me. It feels incredible. "I'm levitating!" I shout out, and promptly ditch into the sea.

I can't say that I quite mastered eFoiling. However, I have come home newly inspired by the benefits of yoga and a (mostly) vegan diet. Less fabulous, I admit. But more useful I am sure.

Need to know

Bridget Harrison was a guest of Formentera Yoga (formenterayoga.com) which has four-night retreats from £1,240pp based on two sharing. Flights cost extra. The eFoil package costs from €300pp (£267pp).

An eFoil lesson in Ibiza starts at €124 for a group booking (ibizafoils.com).



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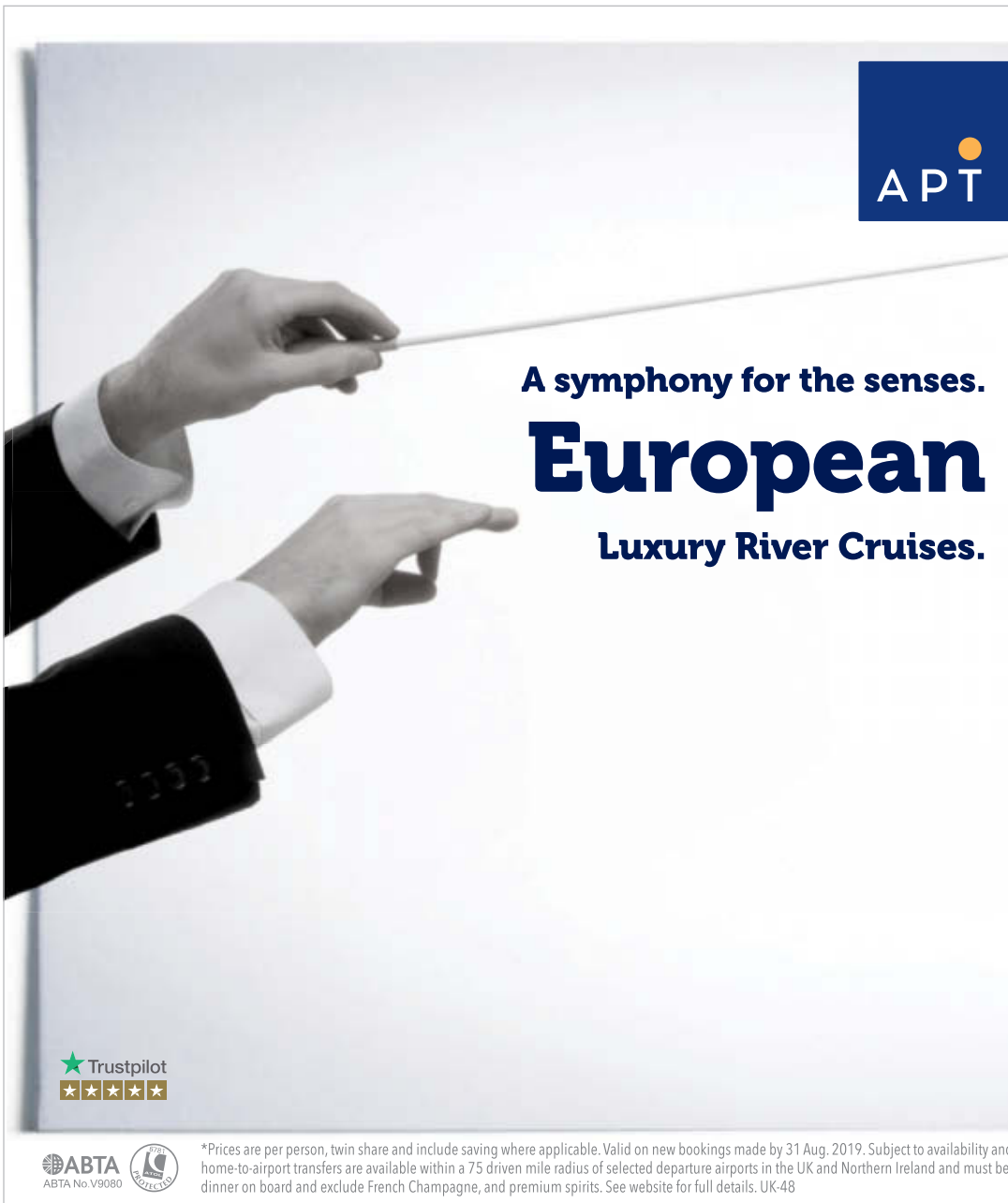
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