

A watery work out with teenagers at Anassa, Cyprus



Anassa means 'queen' in Greek – and happily the resort lived up to our queenly expectations.

'We never stop moving. Even our toes get a workout'

Caroline Phillips and her teenage daughters experience a Flipper Camp at Anassa resort in Cyprus



Caroline & her daughters at Anassa

I'm not a fan of resorts. So why go to Anassa, the Cypriot mother of all resorts? Two teenage daughters, that's why. First there's the weather. 40 degrees in the shade in August, which suits teenagers whose idea of a holiday is to get brown, then browner and even more brown. Meet Anya, 18, dark mahogany and Ella, 15, deep hazelnut. Then there's the huge, whitewashed, pretend traditional Byzantine village hotel in gardens heady with rosemary, bay and jasmine. All looking out onto the sea. Mwah.

Let's not forget the Cypriot staff. Their country may have just been hit by the banking crisis, but still they remember which one of us likes fizzy water and who prefers still. And which bread we like and then deliver it to our next meal even though we're in a different restaurant. To say that they are extraordinarily attentive, friendly and professional is an understatement: Zeus doesn't get better service.

We came for Flipper Camp – a special watery programme that covers all bases. We're offered catamaran sailing, windsurfing, water-skiing, wakeboarding, wake skating and walking on water (just checking you're still concentrating). Four (yes, four!) hours of watery pursuits a day for four days plus a spa day.

CREATED BY

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For real retreatists, snorkelling is as meditative as it gets – with only the rhythmic sound of my breathing and the seabed to keep me company. It's particularly enchanting when a sea turtle pops up for air. Wakeboarding is like snowboarding on the water – when I'm not doing face plants (aka belly flops). Of course the kids get up and stay up first time. Paddle boarding involves us crouching in permanent squats, seemingly emulating African tribesmen in mango bark boats. Then there's wake skating. If I say that's like snowboarding blindfolded and with Vaseline on my feet, you'll get the gist. Suffice to say it's great for cleaning the nasal passages. People pay good money for that in ayurvedic clinics.



Flipped up and ready for action

Much of this exercise is done beside limestone rock formations with secret caves and hidden beaches on a bright blue sea. It's also very safe – even jellyfish don't come into the bay – and the water is crystal clear. Double mwah. We never stop moving. Canoeing works the abs. In wake skating even our toes get a workout. Water-skiing tends our core and calf muscles. Even pulling up an anchor – 12 kilos of it – is working our pecs. It can be as extreme or gentle as we choose – hours of strenuous windsurfing or more emphasis on aqua yoga. It is enormous fun and I cannot recommend it highly enough.



Water therapy in abundance

And our time in the spa? Every day there is aqua gym and aqua yoga. Aqua gym – in their light-bathed indoor swimming pool – is like a Personal Training session underwater. We get a great workout, against the water's resistance. Aqua yoga is perfect – it strengthens, detoxes and stretches with the gentle support of the water. We move from warrior pose to cobra-style spinal twists underwater, ending up lying in 'corpse' pose for relaxation. (OK, the last position was on dry land.)

There's also lots of thalassotherapy – four spa treatments are included in Flipper Camp. Everything has a watery theme, and often includes algae and seaweed. I enjoy a thalasso bath, a jet shower (to boost circulation and lymphatic drainage), an Osea Undaria Seaweed Scrub and an Osea Ocean Body

Cocoon – an algae wrap. Plus I have a facial and massage with Michaela who has magic hands. It doesn't matter which facial or massage I had – anything is worth having with her.

When we're not in water, we're on dry land eating. There's little to beat some fish dishes such as the grilled fresh red snapper with mounds of Greek salad – but, it has to be said, the ingredients and cookery are not always tip-top. You might get overcooked fish at the beach BBQ, figs, tomatoes or avocado that's not quite ripe or the saltiest of smoked salmon at breakfast. But then there are some excellent dishes at the fiesta – from moussaka to baklava. And whilst their Basilico restaurant isn't Nobu or Roka, it certainly serves good enough fusion food.



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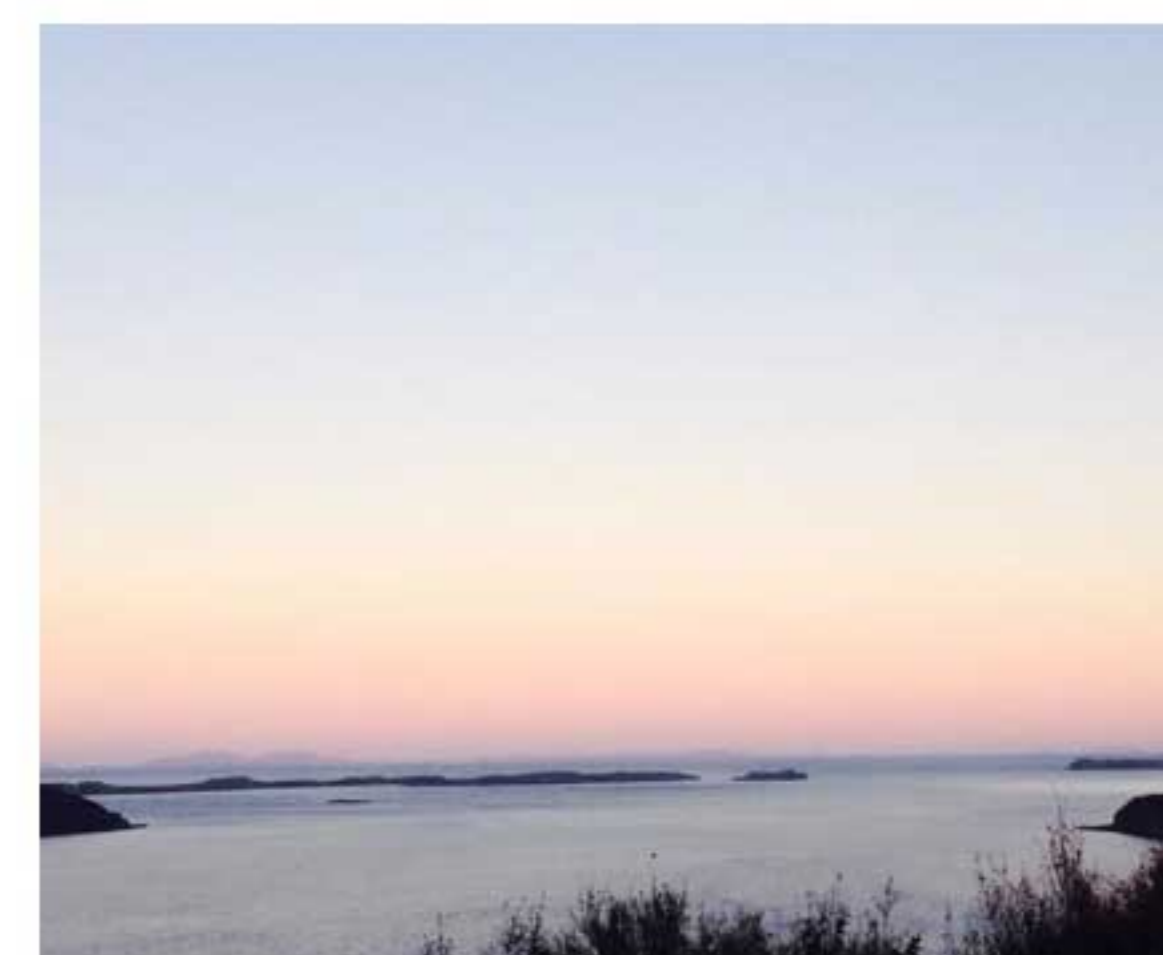


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The accommodation? We have a Junior Suite, with an extra single bed popped in to add to the two already there. First impressions aren't impressive. Everything is covered in a fine mist of water – something to do with the air con or the Med – and the decor is simple, bordering on characterless. But who cares? You open the door and wow! There's the rugged coastline and the Med again.

My conclusions? Flipper Camp rocks – it offers cross-generational fun. The location is great and the staff members are wonderful. They specialise in achieving the impossible, whether that be hosting a party for Philip Green – who once took over the entire hotel – or dealing with my Anya losing her antibiotics at 5pm on a weekend, mid-course. They magicked up more medication and a doctor, in nanoseconds. They're used to dealing with demanding clients.

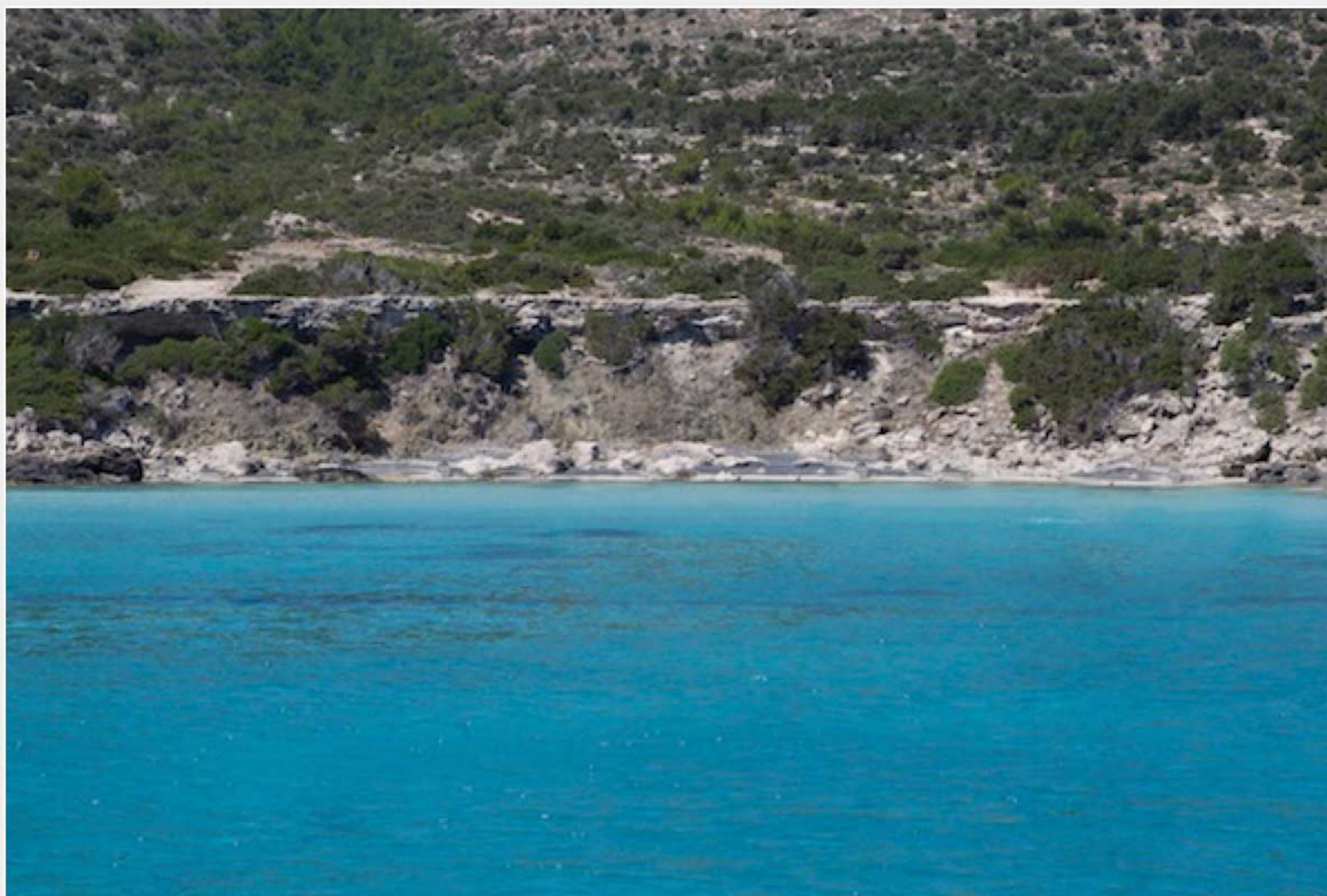


The view from the suite

And guess what? I'm still not a resort hotel type. But even though I have 'BOUTIQUE HOTEL WENCH' tattooed on my heart, we had a good time – relaxing, exhilarating and toning. That's partly because my coronary arteries are imprinted, 'BORN TO SPA.' But also because there are some things that Anassa does so well. My aorta now reads, 'J'ADORE FLIPPER CAMP'.

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The gorgeous Blue Lagoon which you can reach by boat from Anassa