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Instant weekend: Biarritz

Nicki Symington finds the perfect place to soak away your Christmas overindulgence

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Why go now?

We all need a little help with our New Year's resolutions - be they stopping smoking or losing weight, and the Thalassotherapy Institute can help you with both.

Where to stay

Miramar (13 rue Louison Bobet; 00 33 559 41 30 00). As well as some of the best facilities in town (pool, sauna etc), this modern hotel has one of the finest restaurants (Le Relais) and is home to the institute. Doubles from €260 (£190) a night.

What to do

Soak away your Christmas overindulgence with a treatment at the institute (from €49 for a half day) including hydrotherapy, a sea-water shower and a seaweed wrap. Serious weight-loss requires a six-day programme which costs €158 a day. If you succumb to cabin fever, stroll down to the Côte des Basques or La Grande Plage to watch the surfers brave the chilly Atlantic waters. If you are feeling even more energetic, the ski slopes of the Pyrenees are less than an hour's drive away, or there are no fewer than 10 golf courses in the immediate surroundings.

Where to eat

A favourite is the intimate St Amour (26 rue Gambetta; 00 33 559 241964), a little bistro opposite the market which serves excellent local wines to accompany delicious regional food. If it's spanking fresh pintxos (Basque tapas) and seafood you're after, Bar Jean (5 rue des Halles; 00 33 559 248038) is a lively tiled Spanish-style bodega.

The big night out

Prepare to blow some cash at the lovely Art Deco Municipal Casino (00 33 559 22 52 52) on the seafront which stays open until 4am.

Getting there

Fly direct from London Stansted with Ryanair (0871 246 0000;
www.ryanair.com) from £50 return.

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