

I traded in cocktails for cardio at a Greek wellness resort and now I'd never look back'

★★★★★ Neilson Messini Beachclub

My quest for a sun-kissed tan took an unexpected turn when I chose to fully immerse myself in every activity available on my few days away at Neilson's Messini Beachclub in Kalamata, Greece, but I left with a sense of achievement I'd never felt on holiday before.

By **EMILY BRAEGER**, Daily Express Consumer Editor
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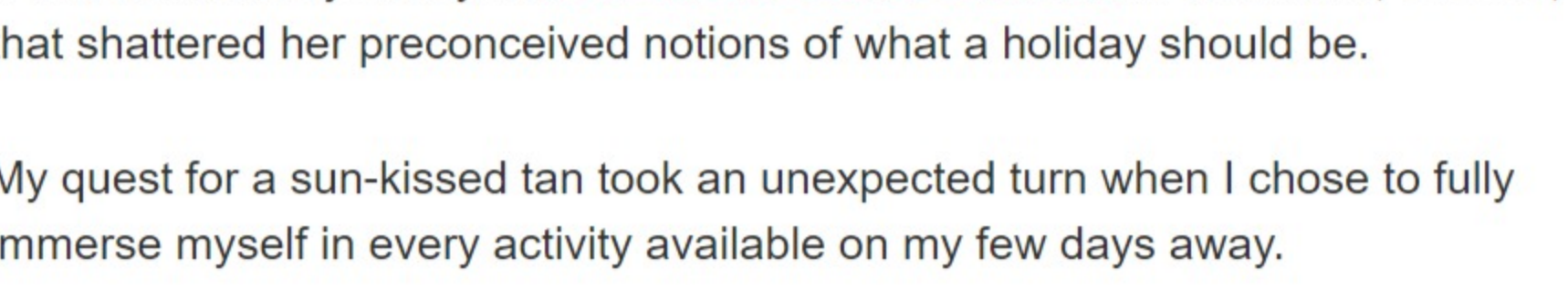


There are countless activities on offer at Neilson's Messini Beachclub in Greece (Image: Neilson)

Usually, my ideal summer holiday is made up of lazy days by the pool, in a bikini topping up the tan, with an ice-cold cocktail in hand.

But what happens when an avowed poolside aficionado decides to trade in the sun lounger for a paddleboard, and the cocktail for a sunrise yoga session on the beach?

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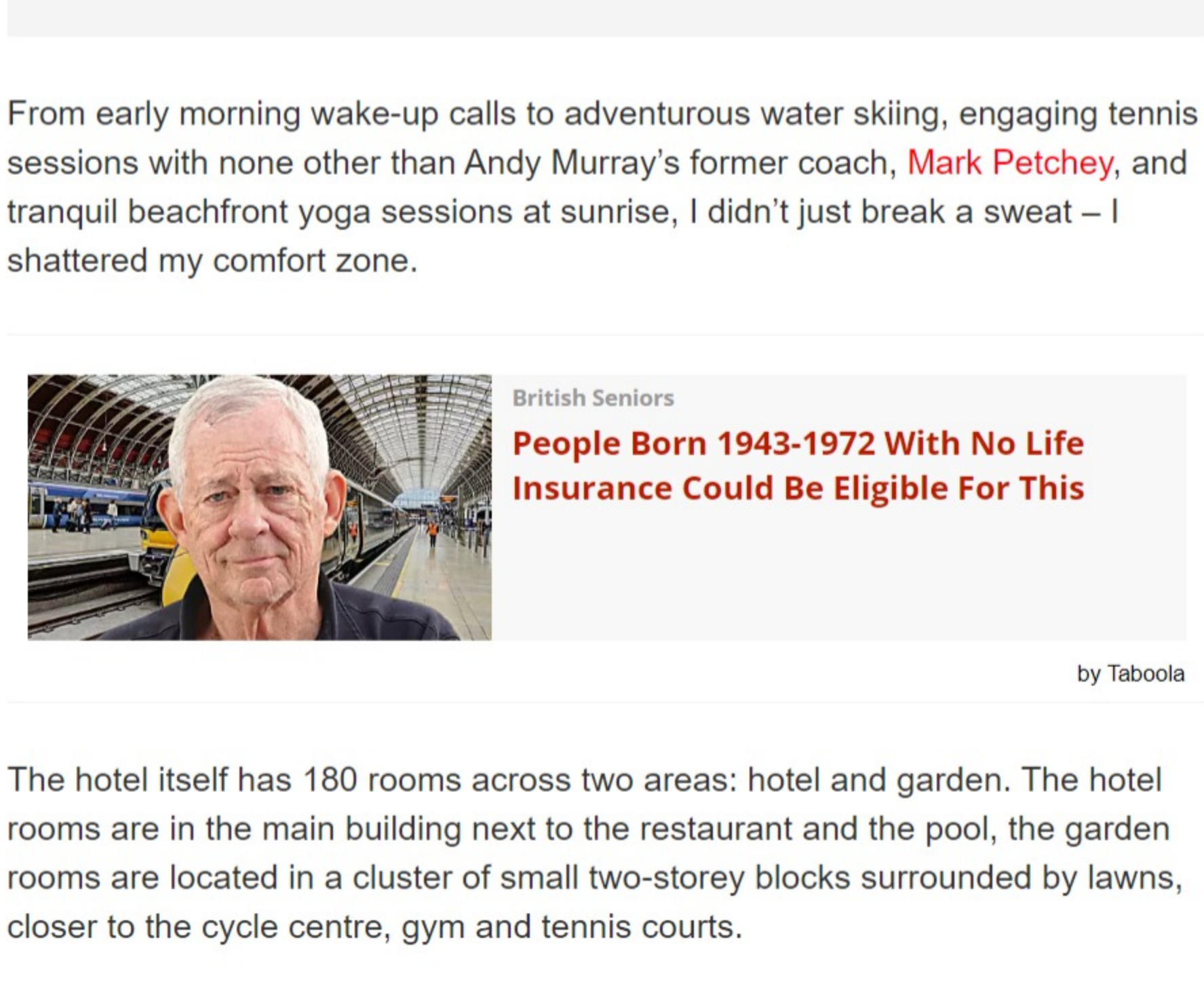
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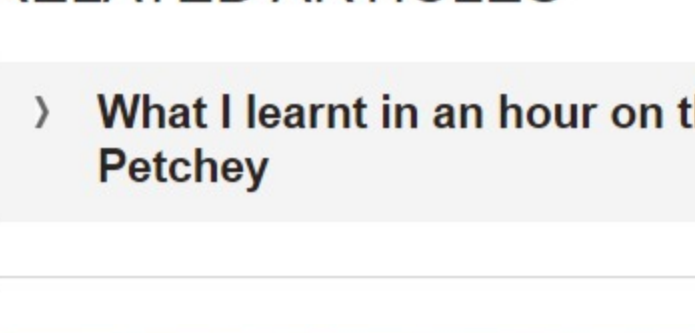
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I'm a self-proclaimed beginner in the world of active holidays, who embarked on a transformative journey at **Neilson's Messini Beachclub** in Kalamata, Greece, that shattered her preconceived notions of what a holiday should be.

My quest for a sun-kissed tan took an unexpected turn when I chose to fully immerse myself in every activity available on my few days away.



From early morning wake-up calls to adventurous water skiing, engaging tennis sessions with none other than Andy Murray's former coach, **Mark Petchey**, and tranquil beachfront yoga sessions at sunrise, I didn't just break a sweat – I shattered my comfort zone.



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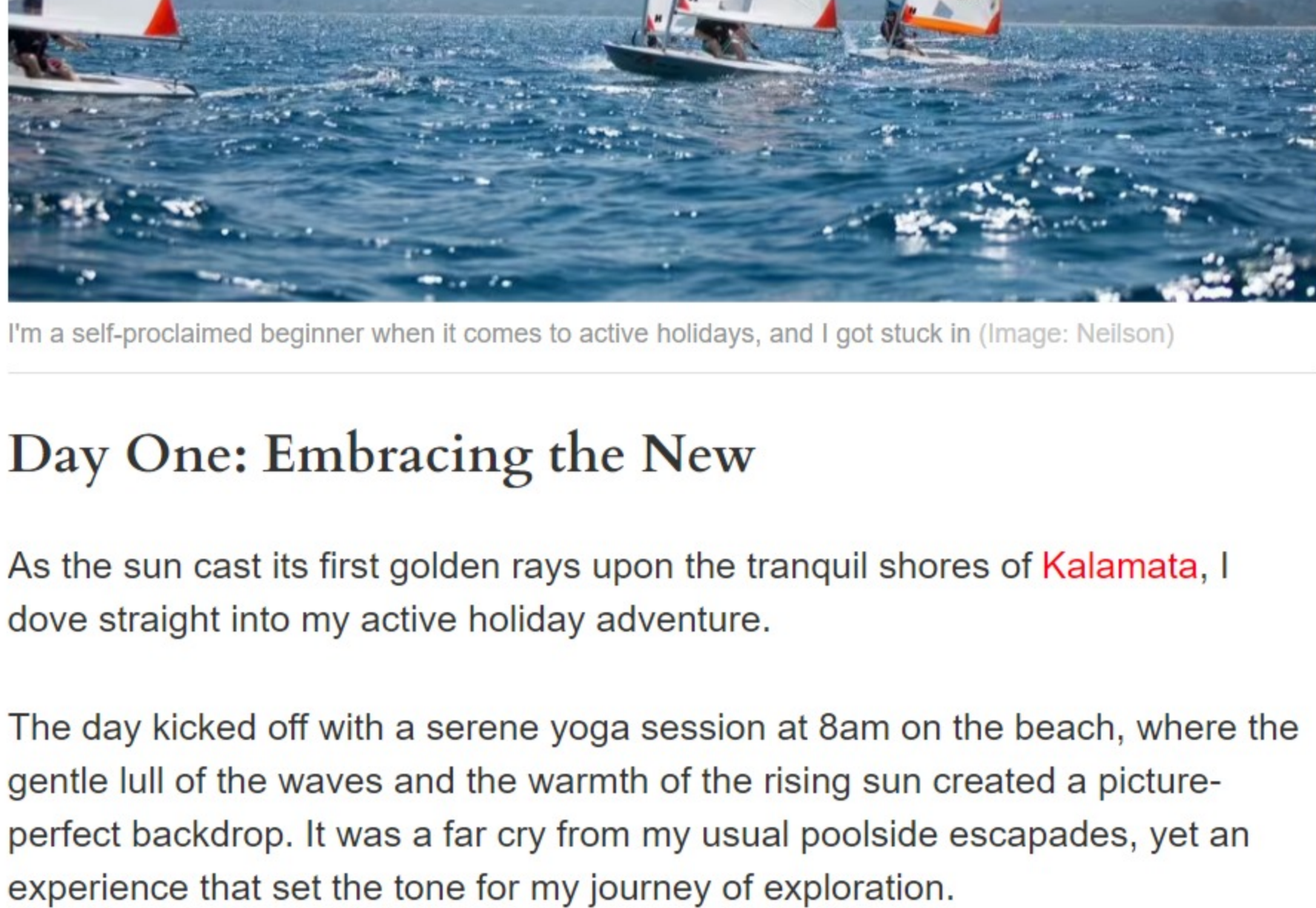
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The hotel itself has 180 rooms across two areas: hotel and garden. The hotel rooms are in the main building next to the restaurant and the pool, the garden rooms are located in a cluster of small two-storey blocks surrounded by lawns, closer to the cycle centre, gym and tennis courts.

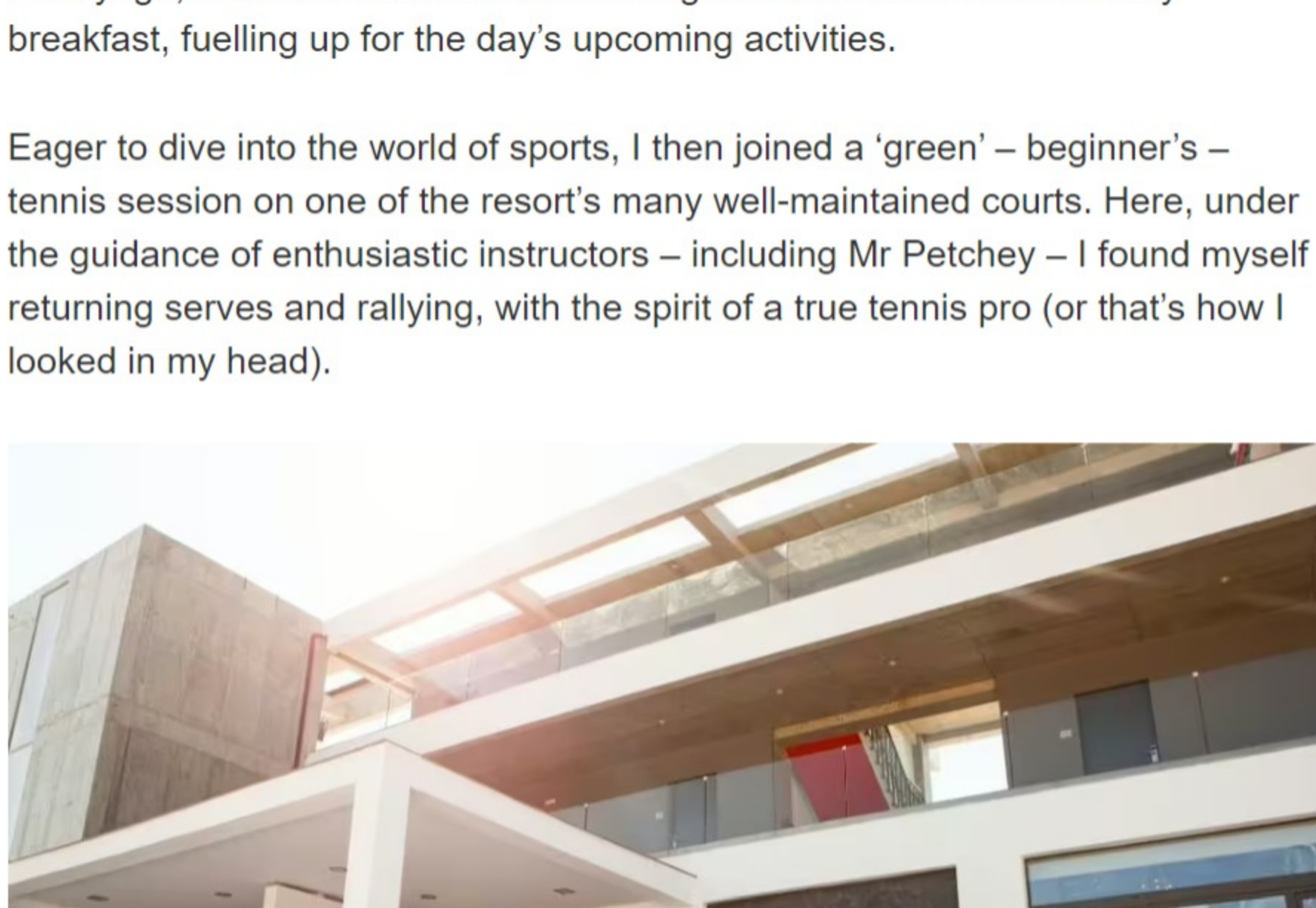
There are countless activities on offer: dinghy sailing, mountain biking, road cycling, electric mountain bikes, kayaking, wakeboarding and climbing. Or, if you do just want to find a quiet spot on the sand to read your book in peace, that's fine too.

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Andy Murray's former coach, Mark Petchey, is a regular at the stunning resort (Image: Neilson)



I'm a self-proclaimed beginner when it comes to active holidays, and I got stuck in (Image: Neilson)

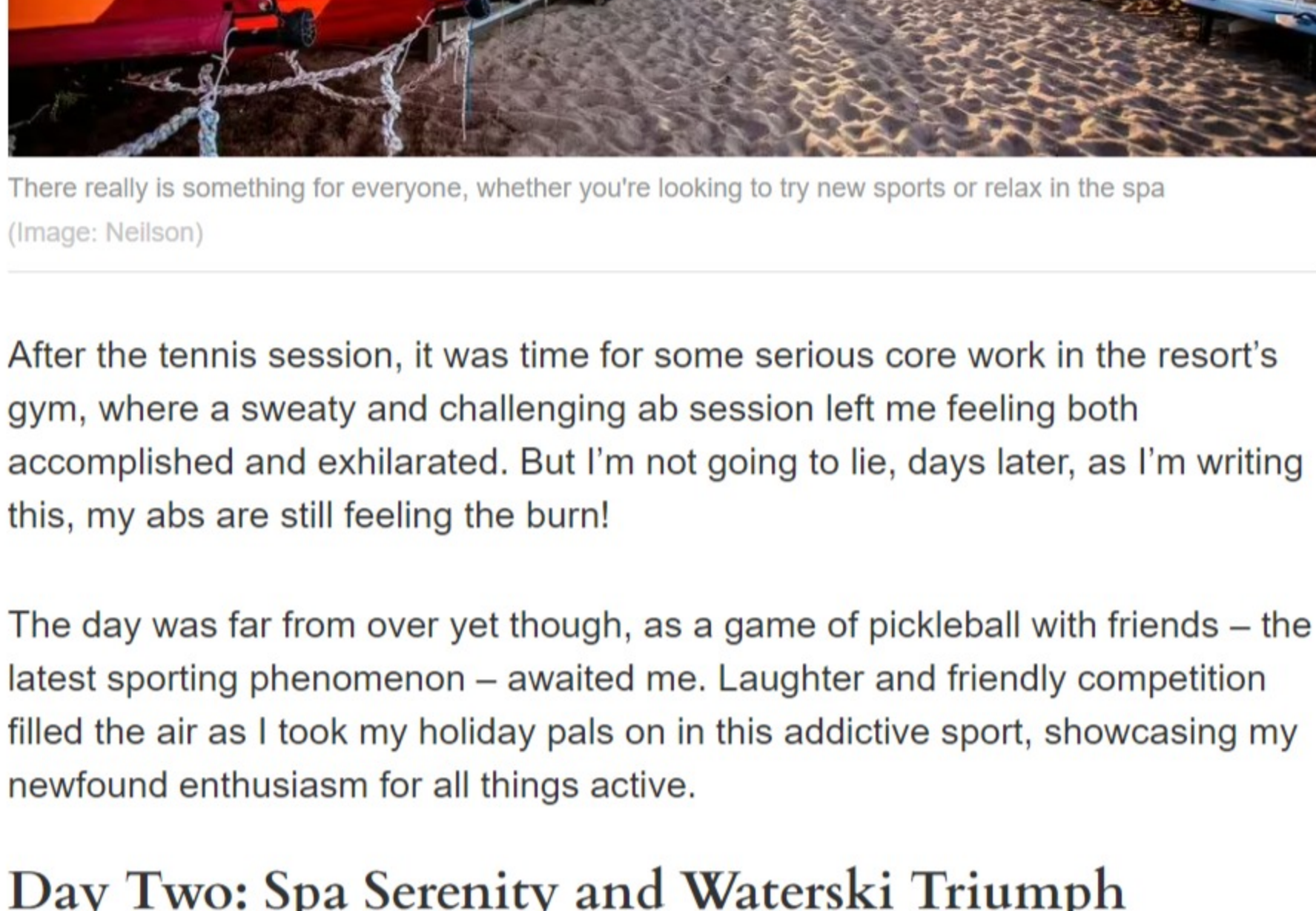
Day One: Embracing the New

As the sun cast its first golden rays upon the tranquil shores of **Kalamata**, I dove straight into my active holiday adventure.

The day kicked off with a serene yoga session at 8am on the beach, where the gentle lull of the waves and the warmth of the rising sun created a picture-perfect backdrop. It was a far cry from my usual poolside escapades, yet an experience that set the tone for my journey of exploration.

Post-yoga, I headed to the resort's inviting buffet restaurant for a hearty breakfast, fuelling up for the day's upcoming activities.

Eager to dive into the world of sports, I then joined a 'green' – beginner's – tennis session on one of the resort's many well-maintained courts. Here, under the guidance of enthusiastic instructors – including Mr Petchey – I found myself returning serves and rallying, with the spirit of a true tennis pro (or that's how I looked in my head).



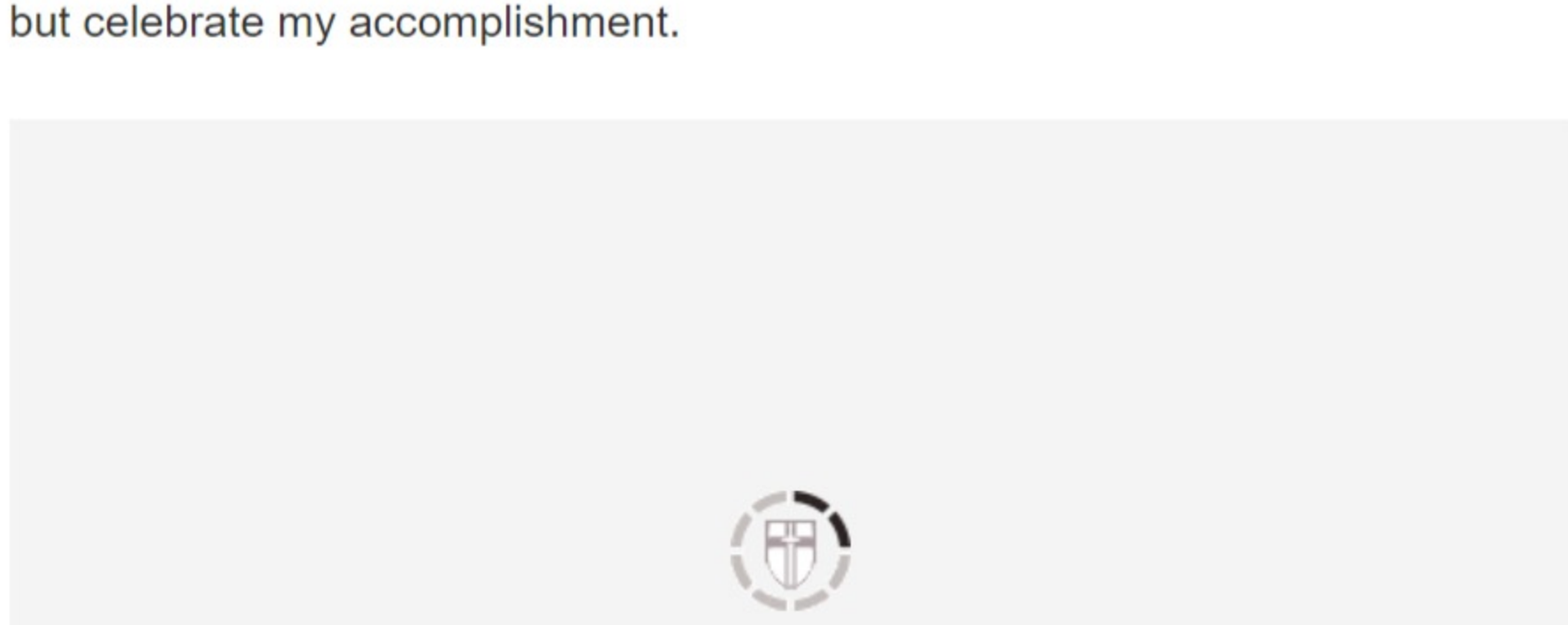
The hotel itself is beautiful, with stunning views and excellent food on offer (Image: Neilson)

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There really is something for everyone, whether you're looking to try new sports or relax in the spa (Image: Neilson)

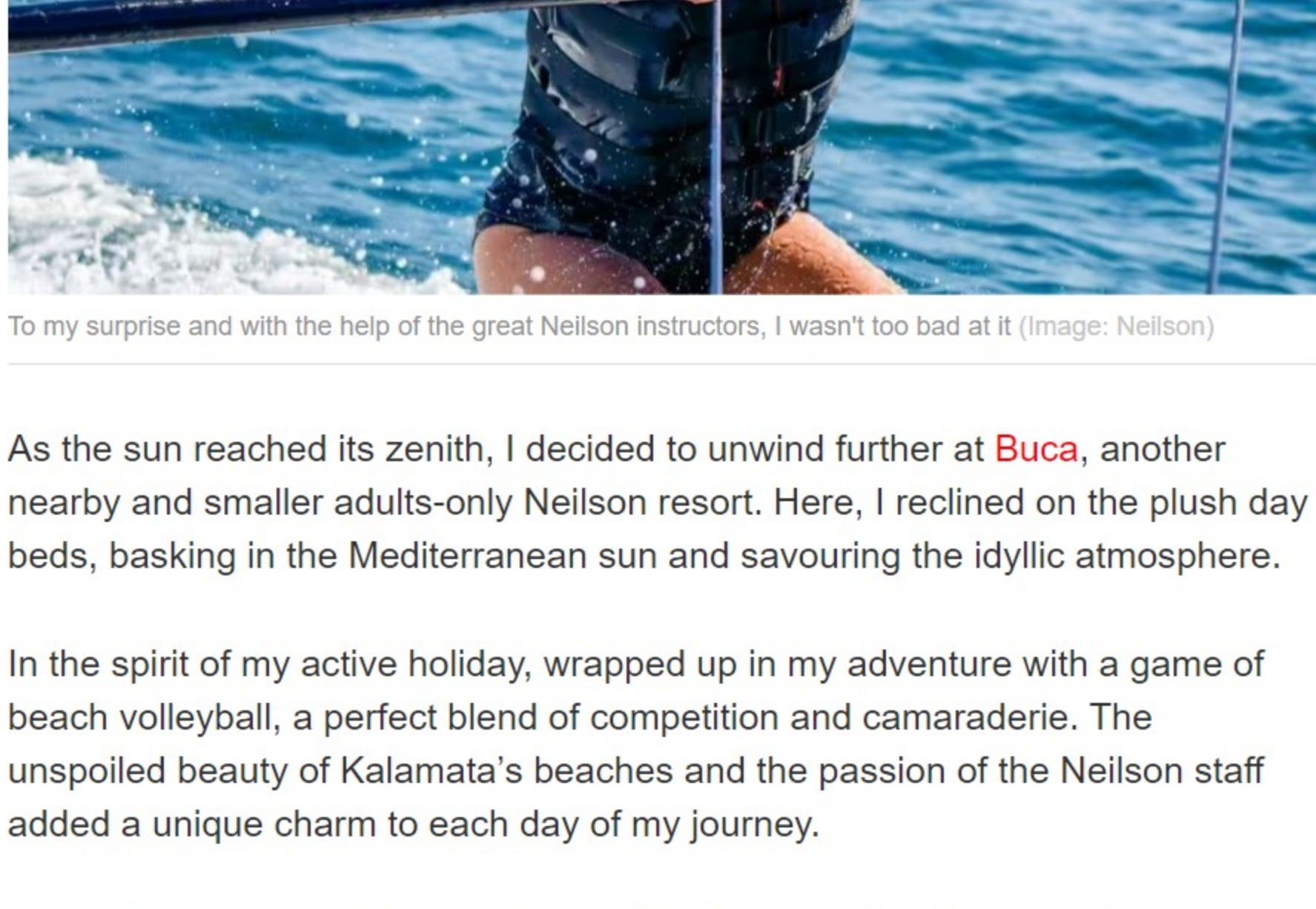
After the tennis session, it was time for some serious core work in the resort's gym, where a sweaty and challenging ab session left me feeling both accomplished and exhilarated. But I'm not going to lie, days later, as I'm writing this, my abs are still feeling the burn!

The day was far from over yet though, as a game of pickleball with friends – the latest sporting phenomenon – awaited me. Laughter and friendly competition filled the air as I took my holiday pals on in this addictive sport, showcasing my newfound enthusiasm for all things active.

Day Two: Spa Serenity and Waterski Triumph

The following day brought a different kind of adventure, one that blended relaxation with excitement. I began my morning with a pampering facial at the resort's luxurious spa, embracing the tranquillity that enveloped me. It was a moment of pure indulgence amidst my active holiday, a reminder that self-care can be just as vital as the pursuit of adventure.

With my sense rejuvenated, I ventured into uncharted territory – water-skiing. It was my first attempt at this exhilarating water sport, and to my delight, I managed to defy gravity (and all expectations) and stand on the gliding, if only for a few moments before faceplanting into the ocean. The thrill of skis across the azure waters of Kalamata's coast left an indelible mark, and I couldn't help but celebrate my accomplishment.



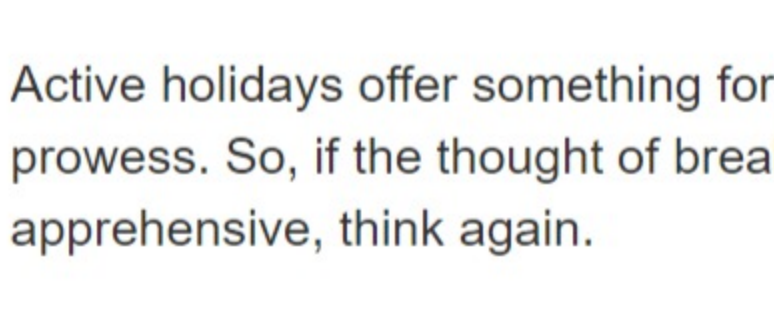
I even gave water-skiing a go, something I would have never dreamed of trying before this trip (Image: Neilson)

As the sun reached its zenith, I decided to unwind further at **Buca**, another nearby and smaller adults-only Neilson resort. Here, I reclined on the plush day beds, basking in the Mediterranean sun and savouring the idyllic atmosphere.

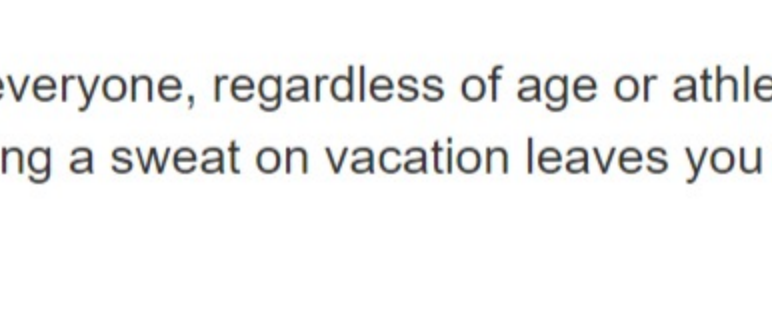
In the spirit of my active holiday, wrapped up in my adventure with a game of beach volleyball, a perfect blend of competition and camaraderie. The unspoiled beauty of Kalamata's beaches and the passion of the Neilson staff added a unique charm to each day of my journey.

In a world where vacationers often seek solace in relaxation, my adventures serve as a testament to the transformative power of embracing new experiences and pushing one's boundaries.

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Active holidays offer something for everyone, regardless of age or athletic prowess. So, if the thought of breaking a sweat on vacation leaves you feeling apprehensive, think again.

Neilson's offerings are as diverse as its picturesque landscapes, promising a memorable experience for all.

Packages to Neilson's Messini Beachclub start at **£1,139pp** for Tuesday 24th September from London Gatwick.