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WE WENT ON HOLIDAY AND... CAME BACK WITH NEW BODIES!

By Alison Palmer

PILING on the pounds is the price we pay for a fabulous holiday but wouldn't it be lovely to return with a curvy new body? Well, that's what pals Katie Foster and Rachael Palmer did.

This summer, they spent a week at Clinic De La Soukra, a private plastic surgery hospital in Tunisia.

There, Katie, a 20-year-barmaid from Mansfield, Notts, opted for a breast lift and enlargement. Divorced mum-of-two Rachael, a 26-year-old holistic therapist from Grimsby, NE Lincs, who had a breast op in Prague last year, went for a tummy tuck and liposuction. Here, are their diaries.

RACHAEL'S DIARY: TUESDAY, AUGUST 9



AFTER: Rachael had her fat sucked away

I REALLY hope this hospital is going to be OK. It's recommended by an independent cosmetic surgery adviser. I'm she wouldn't send us anywhere dodgy.

WEDNESDAY 10

THIS place is fabulous. I lie on the beach wishing I didn't have to have surgery tomorrow. The doctor in London said I wouldn't need my stomach muscles stitched, just the excess fat taken from my belly. I was relieved because I know how painful it is to have your muscles sewn up. But today Dr Hamza said not stitching them would be doing half a job. I'm gutted.

THURSDAY 11

TODAY is awful. I am scared to death before the op, then I wake up in the recovery room and crying out in pain. Someone must have given me drugs because I went back to sleep. The next time I woke, Katie was about to have her operation.

FRIDAY 12

I AM in agony all night. They have taken 2.5-litres of fat from my thighs and for the next month I have to wear a tight body suit which goes from my bust to my knees. I'm terrified to take it off to go to the loo in case I fall apart! I need help to do everything. Katie is moaning and groaning. I want to tell her a boob job is a walk in the park compared to what I've had.

SATURDAY 13

KATIE is out today - she's made a good recovery. But I still feel grim. I keep looking out of the window and wishing I could explore this beautiful country. I sit outside for a little before going back to bed.

SUNDAY 14

I PHONE the kids and my daughter Amber, four, gets tearful. She says she misses me. The bruising is coming out, and my thighs are black. I am really low so I am pleased when Toni (another Brit, here for a face-lift) and Katie suggest a walk, or in my case, a push. We have chicken and chips in a restaurant - divine, as the hospital food isn't great. I start to remember that I'm out here on holiday.

MONDAY 15

I'M determined to go back to the souks. I must look ridiculous, bent double, but it's too painful to stand up. Katie's gone clubbing, although the hospital warned her not to as the locals aren't used to Western women.

TUESDAY 16

KATIE makes it back in time to pack and go to the airport. The flight is tough. I'm so pleased to be home.

TWO WEEKS LATER...

MY STOMACH is flat and although my scar looks angry, it's below my bikini line and will fade. The bruising and swelling on my thighs has gone and I'm a better shape, although my size hasn't changed - I'm still a 10/12. The recovery process has been long and painful but it's worth it.

KATIE'S DIARY TUESDAY, AUGUST 9



AFTER: Katie shows off her bigger bust

IT'S midnight and we've just arrived. We're sharing a room as Rachael is worried we'll be bored in separate rooms if we couldn't get up after surgery. I'm nervous, but I know Rachael recovered quickly from the boob job she had last year in Prague. I've had a disappointment, though - my operation's been moved from tomorrow to Thursday, the same day Rachael has hers.

WEDNESDAY 10

WE spend the morning at the markets, then head for the private beach near the hotel and sunbathe before having a swim. We also have consultations with our surgeon, Dr Hamza.

THURSDAY 11

RACHAEL looks terrified going down to theatre. They don't come for me till teatime, and I catch a few minutes with Rachael. She is drowsy and in pain. When I wake up it is 8pm and although I'm not in any pain, I am very tearful. I'm glad we're here together.

FRIDAY 12

NEITHER of us feel great. We stay in bed gossiping and swapping magazines. This afternoon Rachael has her dressings changed while I have the drains under my arms and bandages removed. Then they unveiled my boobs, up from 34C to an impressive 34DD. I'm really pleased but they're so swollen and heavy, they feel like they're going to drop off.

SATURDAY 13

WAKE feeling much better, so go back to the markets. I sit in a bar and watch the world go by, then go for a look at the spectacular fountains in Tunis.

SUNDAY 14

I'M almost back to normal. I sunbathe for a while, admiring my lovely full chest in my bikini. Rachael feels more human this evening so she, Toni and I dress up in Tunisian costumes and go out. We look hysterical, me in a kaftan and headscarf, Toni wearing a fez and dark glasses to hide her black eyes and Rachael, also in a kaftan, being pushed in a wheelchair. I haven't laughed so much in ages.

MONDAY 15

I'LL be glad to get home as Rachael and I are starting to get on one another's nerves. It's not like being on a normal holiday where you can escape to your own room. I buy some lovely little tops to show off my new cleavage, then go clubbing with a local guy I got chatting to earlier. I have an amazing night and get back really late.

TUESDAY 16

DR HAMZA is pleased with my recovery. I still can't believe I'm going home rested, tanned and with a fabulous new figure!

TWO WEEKS LATER...

I'M thrilled with my new boobs. All my friends think they look fab. I can't wait to go out shopping for sexy new underwear.

SAVINGS

BREAST LIFT AND ENLARGEMENT:

Average cost in the UK: about £6,500.

Katie paid: £2,600, including food and accommodation.

Saving: £3,900.

TUMMY TUCK AND LIPOSUCTION:

Average cost in the UK: about £8,000.

Rachael paid: £3,150 including food and accommodation.

Saving: Just under £5,000.

PROS & CONS

Pros: The cost. You can save thousands by going abroad. The chance to see another country. It's discreet - you don't have to face the neighbours right after you've had surgery.

Cons: It's hard to check on the credentials of foreign surgeons. You may not feel much like a holiday after major surgery. If something goes wrong, you'll need corrective surgery at home - cancelling out any saving you might have made.

STAY SAFE

British Association for Aesthetic Plastic Surgery (www.baaps.org.uk) advises against surgery abroad. But if you're considering it...

Don't fall for the hard sell. Do your research.

Make sure you have a thorough consultation in the UK before going.

Ask about follow-up care.

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