



After therapy I chucked a full pack of ciggies into a loch and I haven't had one since

Mum-of-two Maria, 54, reveals secret behind quitting her 30-a-day habit and how she loves life being smoke-free

20s

Pleat bodysuit, £29.99 @ Zara



30s

belted dress, £29.99 by Mango @ John Lewis



40s

Lilac midi skirt, £24.99 @ New Look



dress your age

Sail in to spring, with these pretty, floaty pleats.

50s

Pleat maxi skirt, £30 @ JD Williams



60s

Red pleated blouse, £39.99 @ Zara



» MELANIE HARVEY
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A YEAR ago, Maria Aurhammer threw a full packet of cigarettes into Loch Lomond.

They were the last cigarettes she bought and she hasn't smoked since. Maria loved to smoke. She travels the world with her job and is never far from a duty-free shop, so cost was never an incentive to quit.

The mum-of-two said: "A lot of my colleagues smoke.

On every flight, we'd say to each other, 'Not long now till we light up.'

"Just over a year ago, I said that to one of my colleagues and he turned to me and said, 'I don't smoke any more', so I asked him how he did it."

The colleague was fellow Scot Dale Robertson, from Kilwinning, Ayrshire, and he told Maria about Anne Penman, who uses laser therapy to help smokers quit.

Based in Glasgow, the Irishwoman combines laser therapy with 24-7 back-up support.

Maria lives in Sussex but was born in Fort William and is a regular visitor to the Highlands, where her mum and dad still live.

She said: "I'd tried to stop before on many occasions but I just couldn't



'I'm one of the lucky smokers - I hadn't got sick before I decided to do something about it'

SUCCESS STORY Maria Aurhammer receiving laser treatment and, above, enjoying life now she's smoke-free

nailed it, couldn't hit it on the head.

"I'd smoked for 35 years, having 20 to 30 cigarettes a day. I liked the social side of smoking. I always had an excuse.

"Now, after a year smoke-free, I realise you can't put a price on your health."

Maria, 54, contacted Anne and made an appointment to get her first laser treatment in January 2015.

She said: "It wasn't a particular date that I set but it coincided with my New Year visit to see my parents.

"It just felt right, although I have to admit I bought a packet of cigarettes at Glasgow Airport when I landed. I was thinking to myself, 'If this is a con, at least I have cigarettes

I can smoke on the drive to see mum and dad."

Making a pit stop at Loch Lomond after her hour-long laser treatment, Maria realised she didn't feel like a cigarette with her coffee and promptly threw the packet of 20 cigarettes into the loch.

She said: "Sometimes I still can't believe I've done it. Some of my friends still think I'm going to fall off the wagon, but I'm not.

"It's changed my life, my kids are proud of me and I'm proud of myself."

On her way back from her mum and dad's last January, Maria went for a second laser treatment - but she didn't need the third one to complete the course.

She said: "I've been married for 22 years and smoked all that time. My husband Ulli smoked 40 a day but

even after he had a heart attack and quit I still didn't stop.

"Now I run and keep fit. I love being smoke-free, although I don't love running - but the sense of achievement I feel when I finish is worth it.

"My sons, 16-year-old Sean and 15-year-old Michael, cheered me on when I did my first race."

With one Race for Life under her belt, Maria is training for this year's run. She said: "Sometimes I have to pinch myself when I think of all these years when I couldn't run for a bus.

"I'm one of the lucky smokers - I hadn't got sick before I decided to do something about it."

● For more information about Anne Penman laser therapy, log on to www.annepenman.com, visit her clinic at 41 Clarkston Road, Glasgow, or call 0141 637 5956.