

Regime change

A former Special Forces soldier is promising women they can drop a dress size in a week (if they follow orders)

BY GABY SOUTAR

IF YOUR IDEA OF LIGHT EXERCISE is to reach over for another handful of custard creams, but you're still anxious about the love handles, there's an ex-army man who would like you to try weight-loss boot camp.

His name is Sam Costello, and as well as being a former British Special Forces soldier he's a trained expedition leader and canoe and climbing instructor. What he offers is a week-long break, for women only, at a place called The Camp, the central aim being to have participants losing at least half a stone through military fitness and motivational techniques. The team at The Camp say they want to give women, of any level of fitness, the means and motivation to achieve rapid weight loss and improved muscle tone through constant, low-intensity physical training.

The Camp takes its women far away from temptation to a secret, secluded location on a 3,000-acre estate in the beautiful Dumfries and Galloway countryside. Exact details are on a strictly need-to-know basis, but let's just say that recruits won't be slumming it; expect an en suite.

So what prompted action-man Costello to create The Camp? "I thought it would be a good business idea, but also something that's good for society in general, because of the increasing problem with obesity. I noticed that I'd periodically lose weight by accident, just through

work and being on expeditions, and I wanted to recreate that effect in a more organised environment."

The first course took place in February and recruits are now enlisting – sorry, customers are enrolling – for June. The last group of 12 lost an average of half a stone and all of them dropped an entire dress size. After a year of planning this was a "huge relief" to Costello. Some of his converted ex-recruits are hoping to visit The Camp for a top-up once a year; and many of them have found new sports and hobbies, helping them to maintain their svelte new figures independently.

Army-style survival training is not the only focus – Costello says the experience is also meant to be enjoyable. "It's fun too. There's abseiling, mountain biking, team games in the woods and on the tennis court, boxing training and self-defence classes. The trick

A dip in the river for The Camp's 'recruits' with course leader Sam Costello looking on, main; mountain biking, below



is to distract people from the fact that they're losing weight.

"I'm quite proud that after the last course one client was going to join her local boxing club while another couple of the girls were going to buy walking gear and compasses to take up orienteering."

Nonetheless, as befits a course concocted by an ex-military trainer there is a touch of the sergeant-majors about it all. "One of my instructors shouts quite a bit. I've got a qualified physiotherapist who's Mr Nice while this instructor plays Mr Nasty. We support people throughout the week, but they need to be encouraged, especially when they're doing exercise early in the morning. On the last course, the girls taking part asked if they could be shouted at more often, as it really motivated them."

Although food at The Camp isn't based on any starvation-type regime, there isn't a shop for miles and eating is strictly regulated. With days starting at 6am and finishing at 10pm, fuel

comes courtesy of three meals and two light snacks, prepared by a chef and a clinical nutritionist.

"Our nutritionist, Helena Oades, prepares the diet," says Costello. "There are five feeding times a day,

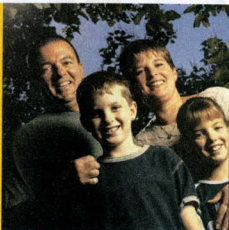
because if you feed people little and often their bodies don't tend to hang on to fat so much. Participants can expect to eat lean meat, vegetables, quinoa, salad, fruit and green tea, with porridge and muesli for breakfast." However, recruits are allowed a small piece of dark chocolate each day, to deter anyone from going AWOL.

At The Camp you don't have to worry about catering, or anything else for that matter. Accommodation, meals, activities, equipment, fitness, nutritional advice and comprehensive insurance are all inclusive. You just have to do as you're told. **SM**

■ A week's stay at The Camp costs £1,500. The next dates are 9-16 June, tel: 0870 033 2375, or visit www.thecamp.co.uk

"The girls asked to be shouted at"

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