



Britain's most extreme weight-loss programme promises women they'll drop a dress size in a week – if they follow its gruelling military-style regime. **Elizabeth Choppin** says

# Weight-fighters

Summer is upon us – the dreaded bikini season that strikes fear into the hearts of women far and wide. I'm faced with two options: shroud myself in billowy kaftans until the leaves start to fall, or do something that extra weight I've put on this and I've decided to do something. "The Camp", an exercise course in Scotland, claims it can help women dress size in just one week. It is not for the faint-hearted. Operated by ex-UK special forces soldiers in a "location" in Dumfries and Galloway, the camp combines 10 hours of fitness a day with a diet of protein and complex carbohydrates – ideal for melting off pounds hanging up in a hurry. Costello, The Camp's founder, says: "I know how it works. The average weight of women at The Camp is half a stone. I'm a woman who has completed the programme and has lost a dress size." So, it's good. No alcohol, sugar, caffeine and salt, hello broccoli and a hell of a lot of exercise. But if this means I'll be able to lose my waist once again – sign me up.

When we're shown around the camp, a state-of-the-art home surrounded by acres of woodland, I realise doing a runner is out of the question. Dinner is a tasty, but skimpy, spread of butternut squash soup, haddock, broccoli and lentils (no refined carbs in sight) before an introduction to physical training (PT). I do something resembling a press-up – it isn't pretty. Then we are led on a walk through the woods before I fall into bed at 12.

**SUNDAY**  
I am jolted from bed at 5.45am by three bangs on my door, and 10 minutes later I scamper outside for PT with Matt and Joe. These people are not messing around. We do sprints, crunches, squats, press-ups and ab-curls before a breakfast of muesli and herbal tea at 7am. We're split into two groups according to our levels of fitness. I'm in the fitter group, but you better believe the instructors will also have the 63-year-old granny out there doing press-ups. "We shock the body in the first two days so it doesn't know what has hit it," says Sam. Dodge ball, skip rope and boxing keep us moving and then it's on to my least favourite activity of the week: "trim trail" – circuit training in the forest using trees

for press-ups, rocks for step-ups and so on. Before dinner, we squeeze in a 5km hike on a boggy moor and I'm forced to imagine a hamburger on the horizon to get me through it all. After dinner, there is a final PT session. I go to bed feeling broken.

**MONDAY**  
I feel less miserable this morning, except that my entire body aches. I waddle down for PT at 6am, wondering how I'll cope. Fortunately, the guys keep a watchful eye to ensure we warm up properly. With the prospect of a hike in the forest, most of us are not pleased with a smallish glass of smoothie for breakfast, but an afternoon treat of dark chocolate makes up for it. We are never told what activity is coming next, so I have no time to dread a rigorous trim trail (with additional sprints up and down a hill) in the afternoon followed by fire-building lessons. "This camp is different because we use a lot of engaging activities," Sam explains. "We try to make it interesting to distract people from the fact that they're tired or hungry." I almost cry with joy when I see we have beef stew for dinner – then it's on to more PT with Swiss balls and yoga.

**TUESDAY**  
The day starts as usual with Matt and Joe's orders at PT. I notice that I'm not as out of breath as I was yesterday. It's quite fun to be shouted at by cute military boys while doing crunches on the wall. For breakfast, we are given porridge topped with berries but something encouraging has happened and my appetite has shrunk and I struggle to finish. A nutritionist warned that this might happen as we adjust to getting essential nutrients in smaller and more constant meals. The abseil down an 80ft drop. After a three-hour hike we return to camp for trim trail and a competition. Dinner is delicious – roasted beets – followed by PT and a movie. I think I'm getting the hang of this. Unfortunately, two women were not up to the militaristic regime and have left. Costello says: "Maybe people think there's a gap between the effort involved. There is a lot of effort involved. The motivation that keeps people in people is what works here and that's the term, after people go home."

**WEDNESDAY**  
After the usual morning routine we do fire-building in the forest using logs, followed by a river crossing using a rope to hold on to. We are all

and-Rovers take us to the top of Cairnsmore, a 100m-high "hill" we will spend the day climbing in gale-force winds. There is no way I could have done it three days ago. Back at The Camp, instead of letting a group of bedraggled women go in to soak their feet – it's time for PT before dinner! We eat and hide Matt's cones. Luckily, I'm quite up for it.

**THURSDAY**  
Another lie-in before a 50km bike ride on forest trails. It isn't raining, but we all finish. I've been told that the most weight is lost in the last two days of camp so almost everyone turns up for optional PT. For dinner, we eat cod wrapped in bacon, washed down with a celebratory glass of cava!

**FRIDAY**  
The day of reckoning and we gather at the camp to be weighed and measured. Shocking! (I can't remember what I weighed, but I know I lost a dress size.)

How to lose weight fast