

I survived bikini



Not too bad so far, except this is just the warm-up



I was never meant to be a tree-hugger - this hurts!

When an email went round the **Now** office asking if anyone wanted to drop a dress size, the offer seemed too good to refuse. What I didn't take into account was what I'd have to do to get into those size 10 jeans. The aim of **The Camp** is to keep you on your feet from 6am until 10pm, doing physical training (PT), boxing, trekking and abseiling, all in the beautiful but damp forests of Galloway in Scotland.

Saturday I arrive at 5pm, am offered water or fruit tea and informed that the week will be caffeine-free. Now I'm scared - I'm a coffee addict! There are eight other women and we're all weighed and measured - I feel rather like a lamb going to slaughter as I step on the scales. I'm pleasantly surprised with dinner: no rabbit food at all and it's actually good. But now the hard work begins. We're assembled on the lawn for our first PT session and, despite the fact that it's drizzling and the midges are feasting on me, we do push-ups, crunches and lunges for 40 minutes. Next is gyrokinesis, a series

of breathing exercises and gentle stretches. It's a relief after all that running around, but I've hardly had time to relax before we're off for a trek in the grounds.

Wearing our head torches we trek into the pitch black forest. It feels a little spooky, especially as we're told that a cult once lived in the house and carried out sacrifices here. I can't wait to get back to my room.

Sunday I'm out on the lawn at 5.40am with a PT session that'd make Mr Motivator look like a couch potato. After breakfast it's dodgeball, hunter (a bit like tag), then boxing. Finally we break for food, then it's the Trim Trail. Or the terror trail, as I prefer to call it. This involves running through the forest carrying logs and doing bench presses on trees. Just as I think the torture has gone on long enough, we're taken on a hill walk, which nearly finishes me off. After dinner is a class on Swiss Balls, which is the final straw for my stomach and I'm sick. I'm reduced to a crying, embarrassing mess. I can't go on. The team are great, especially Hamish, who assures me that it's perfectly normal, and Billy, who gives me the best massage I'm sure I'll ever have.

Monday The alarm goes off at 5.30am for more PT. We run for 30 minutes around the tennis court, do some exercise ball work and then take a long walk through the forest. My thighs are killing me! The tears have subsided, but I'm feeling a little fragile and thinking murderous thoughts.

After lunch it's back to the terror trail, this time in the pouring rain, sweating buckets in waterproofs. A gyrokinesis class follows, then volleys on the tennis court and a lesson on riding mountain bikes - including an extra small one for me! - and boxing. After dinner there's yet more PT, but the pain in my legs has made running almost impossible. I've never known anything like it.

Tuesday PT in the rain and, thanks to the screaming pain in my thighs and now my groin, I can't keep up and the tears come again. Brilliant. After breakfast we cycle through the forest, which is surprisingly good fun, then it's abseiling. Brilliant! Who would have thought that being lowered off a cliff could be so much fun? We're all on a high afterwards. Next is a survival lesson, where

we cook a freshly caught rabbit on a campfire. I'm assured by a woman braver than myself that the heart is very tasty! But this is followed by the terror trail, which I now hate with a passion.

In self-defence class, the relish with which we're told ways to brutally defend ourselves from attackers is worrying but informative. And PT is improved by Matt playing *The Prodigy* full blast and some impromptu raving. The week is still tougher than I could have ever imagined and my legs hurt like crazy, but today has been the best yet.

Wednesday Early-morning PT is arduous as the week's work starts to catch up on us. Today we orienteer around Galloway Forest Park and build a shelter from branches and moss, of which we're very proud! Then there's the river crossing, which is hilarious. We jump in and, hand-in-hand, walk across through freezing water. Clambering out the other side I feel elated, even though I look like a drowned rat. Back at the house it's time for more survival techniques, then the bikes, yoga, dinner, PT and yoga again... I'm ready to collapse. The good news is that tomorrow we can lie in until 7am. Heaven!

boot camp!

This exercise regime is run by ex-army instructors and promises that you'll lose a dress size within a week. Does it work? We sent writer **Karen Dunn** to find out...



Chuckling myself off a cliff? All in a day's work!



The water may be chilly but the friendship's warm

Thursday My groin is killing me, my skin is weather-beaten and I've got more midge bites on my face than I can count. But, and I hate to say it, I'm finally close to enjoying this. My good mood doesn't last long. We set out on a 35km bike ride and harsh is not the word. Stopping only for lunch on a mountainside, we ride through wind, rain and mud with one of the women screaming as she nearly comes off more than once.

I almost fall myself and tears prick my eyes as I whack my groin, which was in enough pain already. Apparently I had a face like thunder for the second leg of the ride, but as we reach the finish I have to admit that I'm very proud of my myself.

After dinner we have our final PT session, which includes boxing, Swiss Ball work and yoga. To celebrate we drink herbal tea and fantasise about cocktails...

Friday Today we start with a six-hour walk up to the top of a mountain, which isn't nearly as bad as I expected and the views are amazing. As we walk back down everyone chats away about girly things, which makes Matt blush. Bless!

One of the best things about

this week is how close everyone has become. It's a varied group, from a 64-year-old woman to a 17st lady who wants to shift the pounds to get into a bridesmaid's dress that's two sizes too small.

After walking all day, we're let off any more exercise after dinner. It feels strange to actually be doing nothing at all.

Saturday At the final weigh-in I've only lost a disappointing 4lb, but losing 2in from my waist is great and I feel so much fitter than a week ago. We're all excited for each other, especially when the woman who wants to get into her bridesmaid's dress discovers she's lost 10lb.

Now I'm determined to keep exercising. Would I do The Camp again? No. Would I recommend it? Yes. The progress we made and the effort we put in deserves a medal. It's harder than most of us ever imagined, but to kick-start an exercise regime and make new friends, it certainly does the job.

● For more information call 0870 0332375 or visit www.thecamp.co.uk. Outdoor clothing supplied by Blacks The Outdoor Experts, www.blacks.co.uk. Additional gym kit supplied by www.mandmdirect.com.



Karen's fitness fact file

Before

DRESS SIZE 12
WEIGHT 9st 12lb
WAIST 31in
HIPS 39in
BUST 36in
ARMS 12in
THIGHS 23in

After

DRESS SIZE 10/12
WEIGHT 9st 8lb
WAIST 29in
HIPS 38in
BUST 34in
ARMS 12in
THIGHS 23in

A typical day's diet at The Camp

BREAKFAST Porridge and berries
LUNCH Oatcakes and guacamole with sweet potato soup
DINNER Cod wrapped in bacon with new potatoes and spinach
PUDDING Chopped strawberries in natural yogurt with porridge oats crumbled on top