

'I went to Scotland to drop a dress size – I came back and threw away the scales'

Determined to beat her yo-yo dieting habit, Top Sante's Samantha May, 26, went to The Camp in Scotland and found out that being a size-10 isn't everything in life.

I've tried absolutely everything in my quest to be the perfect size-10 – the cabbage soup fart-fest, the Atkins diet that left me boyfriend-less (my breath stank!) and let's not forget the raw detox, where I actually gained 5lbs thanks to the ridiculous amount of nuts I gobbled in a week.

For almost all my adult life I've been on some kind of weight loss plan but I'd always get

bored and resort back to my snacking and grazing habits within a week. Then I heard about a week-long military boot camp in Scotland where I'd get healthy meals at regular times, and would be doing army-style activities like hiking, mountain biking and abseiling for up to 14 hours every day, no excuses accepted.

I knew it would force me to stick with a diet (chocolate was forbidden, so I'd have no choice) and I had high hopes.

The night before I went, I was packing my waterproofs, scoffing snacks and knocking back wine in a frenzy. My biggest fear was being humiliated. I'd told all my friends that I was going to come back slimmer and more toned – what if it didn't work? I knew such extreme exercise was going to be tough and I was scared I'd give up and get the train home after the first 6am personal training session. So it was a relief when the car

pulled up outside a lovely highlands Georgian mansion and to be greeted by 14 other hopeful women, looking just as shit scared but determined as me.

There was no easing in gently – we were woken at 5.45am the following morning for a gruelling personal training session, which had us doing press-ups and star jumps in the rain, with ex-Special Forces instructors shouting at us. It was the hardest thing I'd ever done and when breakfast was served at 6.30am I'd never been so glad to see a bowl of plain porridge!

Things didn't get easier as the week went on – although I didn't get hungry on the oatcakes and hummus, seeds, smoothies and Thai curry, I really missed being able to graze whenever I felt peckish. I was only eating around 2,000 calories a day, but burning almost 5,000, so I felt totally knackered. And all the hikes meant by day three my stomach muscles were so sore even coughing

hurt – I was tired, tearful and craving sugar; I would have sold a kidney for just one Diet Coke!

But somehow I stuck with it, and by day five I'd even started to relish the morning personal training sessions. I was pushing myself harder than I'd ever done and loved the way it made me feel.

By the day of our big hike into Galloway Forest I was raring to put my hard work into practice. The terrain was more mountainous than I'd expected but I wasn't going to be put off. As we approached the last hill, panting and craving a long hot soak in

'My eyes filled up with tears. Words can't describe how proud of myself I felt'



The camp crew and Sam (fourth from left) feeling triumphant after a mammoth hike

the bath, I whacked my iPod on and steamed to the top. I was the first one there and as I looked down at the rest of my group clapping and cheering me on, my eyes filled up with tears. Words can't describe how proud of myself I felt.

When it came to the last day I really didn't want to leave. OK, so I was aching all over but I'd lost 11lbs and made some fantastic friends. We'd been through so much together – from crossing a freezing-cold river fully clothed to sharing disastrous stories about exes – and it was chatting to them that made me realise I'm not the only one who stresses about my body all the time. It suddenly clicked being fit, healthy and happy in my own skin is more important than being a size-10.

Now that I'm back home, I'm eating three healthy, balanced meals a day. Like anyone, I still have days when I look in the mirror and think... urrrgh, but I don't beat myself up about having a biscuit anymore. I've even stopped weighing myself! Before going to The Camp I lacked the confidence to succeed in my work, home and social life, but not any more. I can now set myself challenging goals and for the first time in my life I feel I can achieve them if I just believe in myself.

GET ME THERE... Prices start from £1350. For more information log on to www.thecamp.co.uk, or call 0870 033 2375



Shennanton House: it may look pretty, but that's military boot camp. No, really!



It's a long way down: facing fears in the forest



The group take time off from hiking to make their own forest base camp