

## Travel

# Tune out and drop in for an adrenaline cocktail

**Andrew Eames** signs up for an adventure weekend with a difference in Pembrokeshire

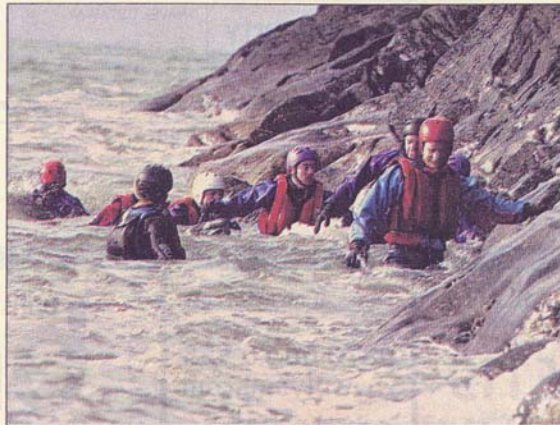
**I**T was the closest I've got to being laundry. There we were, slobbered and bludgeoned in suds and froth, catching momentary glimpses of the world as it revolved, with trousers wallowing by and the occasional wandering sock in our teeth ... except that this wasn't the laundrette, the surf didn't come in a box, and the sock had a foot in it which was attached to another nutcase like me, all of us a couple of smiles away from the asylum.

Any passing spectators on the Pembrokeshire coast that winter Saturday could have been forgiven for wondering what those brightly coloured bodies were doing bobbing around at the foot of the cliffs and giggling; was this extreme orienteering? Fish farming with attitude? Hydroponic skateboarding?

Nope, we were indulging in something called Coasteering with our hosts, Preseli Venture. The adventure weekend specialist had lured us down with the promise of an Adrenalin Cocktail — a stimulating health drink and activity weekend. We'd already downed an Ozone Slammer (depressant tonic) at the lodge, and as another wave thundered in and knocked the s\*\*\* out of us, I could see where they'd got the ozone slamming idea from.

In this modern era much leisure activity focuses on the pursuit of altered states of consciousness, centring on the achievement of a high via drink, dance or substance abuse. As yet, transforming oneself into laundry doesn't feature on many lists of euphoric experiences, but it could. Adventure weekends are creeping into the mainstream of consumer society as they become less expensive and better regulated.

On my weekend, the lodge at Preseli Venture was full of American students.



Ride the horses, milk the cows: getting into an altered state in the great outdoors

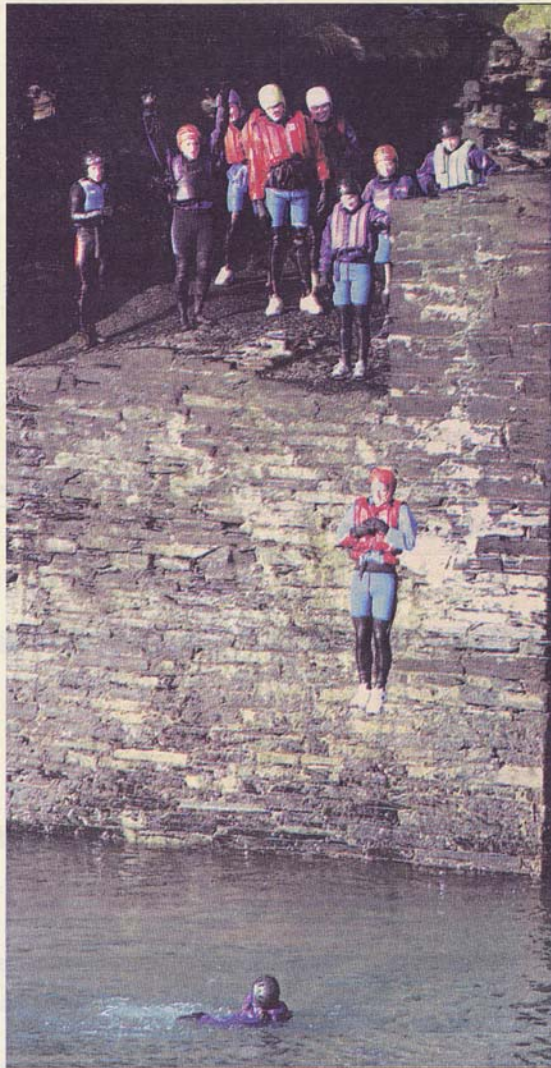
The upside of such exotic companions was that many were reassuringly unathletic; the downside was finding oneself permanently in conversations about how Texans were crud and people from Ohio were usually nice.

"We are supplying urban people with the chance to access adventure in a reliable way," says Preseli's Nick Hurst, the architect of the Adrenalin Cocktails, which also include less extreme activities such as sea-kayaking, mountain biking and hiking. "Outdoor activities alter the physiological state more than any other substances. By the end of the day our

clients will be on a major endorphin high." It was true, the students were getting pretty excited. "Coasteering ripped," was one of the comments in the guestbook that night. "The H2O took my breath away," said another. "I'm a boat", and the rather surreal "Ride the horses! Milk the cows!" — and all achieved with no substance abuse (excluding the wetsuits) and where the only Es involved were of the "wheeeee" variety.

The Cocktails did, however, have an optional legitimate herbal additive. The lodge bar offers a choice of the likes of Brain Boosters (containing ginkgo biloba to boost the brain's energy), Ginseng Hammers (with ginseng and kava kava to enhance energy) and Relax Juice, with hops and lavender to produce a relaxed, yet alert, state of mind. And if that was no good, there was always the Hobgoblin ale.

But the jewel in the endorphin-blasting crown has to be the coasteering, where the natural highs and lows vary according to the state of the tide. Coasteering was first mentioned in an early 20th century guidebook to North Devon, but Pembrokeshire, the home of Britain's



Come on in, the endorphin high is brilliant: watery bungee-jumping

only coastal National Park, has turned it into a science. The idea is to do a traverse along the land/sea interface, through the only bit of our environment that we human beings have yet to devise a vehicle for. You don't need equipment or lessons, to do this, and a combination of the wetsuits and the adrenalin are sufficient protection from the cold.

It sounds dangerous, but Preseli says it gets more bumps and scrapes from the mountain biking. Perhaps the most gruelling bit was clambering into a cold suit beforehand ("we like to keep them moist for you,"

joked the guides). In full gear, I felt a bit like the man from Milk Tray looking for a novel way to deliver a box of chocolates.

Coasteering ends with optional jumping. This is a sort of watery bungee jump but without the bungee, and involves hurling yourself off a cliff into deep water. It sounds horrendous, but if you start off at a low level, your confidence grows fast. Personally, I was doing fine until I got to the 40ft jump and looked down — "Holy s\*\*\*," as they say in Ohio — at which point I suddenly remembered that I am a family man.

## Way to go

**PRESELI Venture** (01348 837709, [www.ukadventure.com](http://www.ukadventure.com) or [www.preseliventure.com](http://www.preseliventure.com)) will pick up customers from the train station at Haverfordwest (First Great Western, 0845 7000125, returns from £27.50). Adrenalin Cocktails start from £39 per half day rising to £185, depending on activities, for a weekend, including all meals and two nights' accommodation.