

ADRENALINE RUSH

The idea of throwing yourself off rocks into freezing cold sea off the coast of Wales may seem like something only for the insane. However, CAROLYN BOYD was only too happy to give it a go.

You have to wonder, at what point did adventure sports become something akin to madness?

As I was bobbing around in the sea off the coast of Wales, the image of two long-haired thrill-seekers sitting around dreaming up, aided, no doubt, by a joint, their next adrenaline-seeking activity, popped into my head. "Hey man, I'm bored with surfing," says Brad. "Yeah man, me too. Wouldn't it be great to combine rock climbing with diving and surfing?" says Mitch.

"That'd be way cool, we could even find some, like, huge rocks to jump off and then get swished around in the swell like laundry and, hey, it wouldn't even matter if it was raining 'cos we'd be, like, wet already." Although I'm sure the conception of coast-eering didn't quite happen this way, it didn't seem too far from the truth. Before taking to the waves on a grey and windy April day, I had to question my sanity. I was about to jump off some rocks into the cold sea. Why weren't there some men in white coats hanging around with straitjackets at the ready?

Once in the water, it wasn't long before I realised that if being mad meant having the biggest laugh you could have dressed in a

seemed it really was time for me to see a shrink.

Once we'd tired of the washing machine, our instructor, John, hauled us out and we moved on around the coast to a jump. It was quite a climb up and a long way down, so I was glad all the jump sites had been tried and tested for depth. After hurling ourselves into the sea like lemmings, we bobbed around in the dark in a nearby cave and then made our way back around the coast to a lagoon. Here the water was calm which made the jump from a 10ft wall near an old slate slightly less nerve-racking, although the presence of a small group of hikers, dressed in coats, hats and scarves, who had gathered to watch the crazy people jump off a rock into the cold water, added to the adrenaline rush. We took it in turns to leap off the wall, and the braver among us even tried jumps from a 25ft ledge.

Back at base camp, the adrenaline had worn off slightly and we were in need of a boost to take us into the afternoon activity of sea kayaking. We had a brain booster cocktail, a herbal mixture specially designed to work with the activities to give your mind and body a workout from the inside. We knocked the shot-sized drink back and were ready to brave the elements once again.

The cold wind whipping around our wetsuited legs on the shore was enough to get the heart racing. Unfortunately, the wind made it quite difficult to go too far from our launch area and after a bit of paddling around, our instructors taught us a game of kayak-style catch. A few capsizees and eskimo rolls later, we dragged ourselves back to shore ready to collapse for the evening.

Of course, the best recipe for relaxation is

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hard helmet, wetsuit, waterproof jacket, buoyancy aid and trainers bobbing around in the sea, then I was quite happy to be carted off to the loony bin.

We started off by climbing along the rocks, trying to avoid knocking our knees or slipping off into the waves. It wasn't long before I was fully immersed in the water trying to get back to the rocks. However, each time I got even close, a wave would sweep me back again. The fact I was laughing so hard at how much I resembled a plastic bottle bobbing around probably didn't help my chances.

After a bit more rock climbing and a jump off the rocks into the sea, we came to a spot they call the 'washing machine'. We slid into the culvert in the rocks and were swished in and out by the waves. By now, I was not only familiar with the inner feelings of a plastic bottle, but also those of a sock going through the spin cycle. Though the lifestyle of an inanimate object was pretty good fun, it

alcohol and after dinner we all headed up to the village pub for a drink or five. Those who knocked back the five were particularly glad of the liver reviver herbal cocktail the next morning. However, the best hangover cure was the fresh air and scenery of the famous coastal walk, the Pembrokeshire way. The sight of the waves crashing against the cliffs below provided only a small adrenaline rush, but thankfully the crazy person in me wasn't begging me to leap off in search of the ultimate high. I'd leave that one, I decided, to the likes of Brad and Mitch. ■

■ Carolyn Boyd spent the weekend at Preseli Venture at Mathry, near Haverfordwest. Their Adrenaline Cocktail weekends cost from £139 and includes accommodation, food and three activities. You can choose from coast-eering, sea-kayaking, hiking, mountain biking, surfing and horseriding. Call 01348-837 709 or see www.ukadventure.com.



FACT FILE:

■ The Pembrokeshire National Park is Britain's only predominantly coastal park and is a favourite for outdoor sports fans from all over the world. To get there, take the train to Haverfordwest or Fishguard. Trains run from London Paddington and you must change at Swansea. For advance tickets and times, call National Rail Enquiries on 08457-484 950. If you're driving, take the M4 west as far as it goes past Swansea, and then join the A48 to Camarthen. Then take the A40 west towards St Clears and continue on the A40 to Haverfordwest or Fishguard.

■ Wetsuits, buoyancy aids, helmets and sports equipment are all provided, you'll just need to bring trainers that you don't mind getting wet, swimming gear, a couple of towels and lots of warm clothes.