

What's it like...Coasteering?

Technically it is called 'sea-level traversing' but, to you and me it, it's called Coasteering. But what exactly is that? Well, it's a bit like rock climbing except that you go across instead of up. And when you reach a point that you can't continue going across, you fling yourself into the pounding sea below. Sound good to you?

Coasteering, which sounds like something a host of a drinks party should be doing, originated over 100 years ago when early rock climbing pioneers traversed rocky sea-cliffs, the idea being that the sea below would soften their fall should they lose their grip.

But it wasn't until twenty years ago that it became a sport when it was discovered by accident. Surfers and kayakers in the Pembrokeshire coastal town of St David's became restless when the winter weather prevented them from venturing out into the sea.

So, it was only a matter of time when some bright spark came up with the idea, 'Why don't we climb the rock face and then jump off the cliffs into the sea below?' Mad as it seems, many other people also thought it was a great idea. And today, Coasteering is the number one adventure sport in Britain.

Kitted up in a wetsuit, helmet and buoyancy jacket you scale along the cliff face overlooking the coast to a series of scheduled jump points, special whirlpools and tidal reaches to jump into and swim in.

There is also the wave pool which is a gap between two rocks that you fling yourself into and then get thrashed about by the waves like a giant teddy-bear. Then, when you finally get a grip on something, you drag your body up the wet cliffside and do it all over again. Are you mad?



Here's a tip: wear a pair of trainers with a good grip otherwise you will find yourself attempting to scale a Teflon-like rock face which, let's be honest, is no easy task.

Coasteering is perfect for everyone regardless of your level of fitness. It is one of the few extreme sports that does not require any skill, sporting prowess or previous experience. And it's a great topic of conversation on a Monday morning when your colleagues ask you what you did at the weekend.

In *Waiting for Godot*, Samuel Becket said: "We are all born mad. Some remain so". Perhaps he was right. But, what fun!

What you will need

Wetsuits and helmets are provided by organisers.

You will need to bring your own bathing suit to wear underneath the wetsuit, and a pair of trainers.

Where to go

The home of Coasteering in Britain is Wales – the Gower Peninsula near Swansea, the Pembrokeshire National Park and the coasts of Anglesey and Snowdonia in North Wales.

When to go

Anytime of the year. Regardless of the weather, hot or cold, you are protected from the elements by your wetsuit.

Useful websites

www.angleseyadventures.co.uk
www.adventure.visitwales.com
www.tyf.com

If you like this, then try...kayaking, white-water rafting, mountain biking.

Copyright © 2007 Paul Mackenzie-Cummins