





Staples diet for fitness

Louise O'Loughlin talks to Adventure Boot Camp founder
Kate Staples about her hugely-successful get-fit business

Q Are you and your business partner Daley Thompson still travelling to the United States to get the latest fitness initiatives and ideas for your boot camps?

A Absolutely. We still meet with John Spencer Ellis, who is the leading fitness guru and founder of Adventure Boot Camps in America. We constantly look at ways to improve and enhance our programmes and John shares with us his latest findings in the fitness world. We then implement these into our development programmes.

Q Did you think the boot camps would be this popular?

A Without being too big headed, I did. The Adventure Boot Camp in the US is the most successful fitness programme around, so it wasn't an accident that it would be equally successful here.

Q How many camps do you have now?

A We had a lot of disappointed people who were on the waiting list for the camp at Whitley Village, so we expanded to Oxshott. Soon, that was fully booked and so it went on. We now have 17 boot camps in Henley, Wandsworth, Fulham, Herne Bay in Kent, where they train on the beach, and Whitley Village. There are a few more on the way to Dublin.

Q Obviously you can't get round to all the camps in the UK, so what standard are the trainers in the other centres?

A We are rigorous in our selection process. It's not just about having the highest fitness qualifications. It's about life experience and how they are with people. That means empathy is valued as highly as accomplishment. Our trainers have a phenomenal range of experience between them, from Olympic athletes like Tony Lester, Brian Hooper and Ray Stevens, to people like James 'Hunter' Crossley from the Gladiators.

It's a fantastic and motivating team at the very top of their game and we feel lucky to have them on board.

Q Do you have retreats for your recruits?

A Based on the response this year, we're organising a series of four-day retreats in Majorca for next year. They are based on Adventure Boot Camp, but with only 15 places available each time, it's an opportunity for a more in-depth and intimate experience of ways you can improve your total well-being. They're great fun – sessions in hiking, yoga, kayaking and beach work – balanced with our wellness masterclasses in nutrition and the paths to looking your natural best. Set against the beauty of a Majorcan spring, it's a wonderful immersion and kick-start to the summer.

Q What are the real benefits of your camps?

A They help people cope. Whether it's coping with the challenges we all face because of the financial climate or simply dealing with the increasing pressures of every day life, exercise is the base building block of reducing stress and anxiety. We find if we commit ourselves totally to the wellbeing of the people that join our camps, they respond in kind and they get immediate results. Everyone seems to love it. It's because it is social, it is safe and it's incredibly effective.

Q What can a Boot Camp recruit expect to achieve over a four-week programme?

A They will see dramatic improvements in their self confidence and well-being. Not only will they increase their strength, but energy and muscle tone, with up to 30 recruits each camp, they'll find it all hugely enjoyable along the way. It's all about how people feel and it really doesn't matter where they are in terms of size. It's about the commitment to where they want to be.

Q If there are 30 people in a camp, how can you ensure you are looking after their individual needs?

A People have the option of having a pre- and post-programme assessment. Most people opt for one of these. There are two trainers to every 30 clients. A new recruit will obviously be at a different level than someone who has been with us for some time. We assess their fitness level on their first day and determine the right ambition, depending on their ability.

Q Are there any other programmes in place?

A Yes, we have developed a new corporate well-being programme that is aimed at big city firms and is being rolled out as we speak.

Q Where do you see yourself with the business this time next year?

A Our vision is to inspire people to make a first step towards a real improvement in well-being. Our goal is to make outside exercise accessible to as many people as possible across the country by continuing to increase the numbers of communities we reach. For example, we have just reached agreement to run camps in over 70 leisure centres across the country and will be starting a series of pilot camps with schools for young people and their parents in the spring. The most important thing is that we never forget what sets us apart is the personal ownership our customers feel for their camps – and that will always be at the heart of what we do. ●

fact file

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