

**Boris & Marina** A very modern marriage Virginia Ironside, News, page 16

# THE INDEPENDENT

SINCE 1986 FREE FROM PARTY-POLITICAL TIES | FREE FROM...

www.independent.co.uk  
TUESDAY 19 OCTOBER 2010  
Number 7,454  
• £1 (Ireland £1)

As leaders of Britain's large... g cuts ...

44 Living  Health & Families

The wet suit Emily Dugan learns to hone her surfing technique in Cornwall **LYNN SEARLE**



Surfing is not just for dudes in baggy shorts. Fitness fans of all ages are discovering that there's no better autumn workout. **Emily Dugan** catches some waves

## Get on board

**H**urting through the sea on a cold autumn day may not sound like a healthy pastime. In fact, in many people's minds, slipping so much as a little too into the British sea in October is a little dose of man flu. But this month, a little more than a little dose of man flu is what makes an average trip to the beach that makes an average trip to the gym look about as good for you as a bag of pork scratchings.

All these fitness snobs of chilled-out hip-pies dishing along waves have faded the perception that surfing requires only a nonchalant stance and a pair of baggy shorts. That the reality is a little more taxing. This month, I took lessons from someone who knows just how demanding the sport can be. Russell Winter, the only Briton to make it on to the World Championship Tour of the world's top 44 surfers, is now offering his expert advice to those wanting to improve their surfing.

"When you've been surfing for a couple of hours, you're completely knackered afterwards - you use your whole body, your arms, your legs, your core muscles, everything," Winter explains. He's not joking. After the first lesson, at Newport's Town

beach, my limbs are so useless I can barely drag myself or my board back to the hotel. In July and August, Britain's surfing capital can be a frightening cacophony of fun, sights, stag dos and drunken teenagers, but Newport is almost tranquil at this time of year. I stayed at the Carracorth Hotel, whose powerful rooms have large decks whose powerful rooms have large decks whose powerful rooms have large decks.

But the pros and quads is not the only reason to surf in October and November: the sea has also been warmed by the summer sun, and the crowds of learners have gone away, and reliable ocean swells bring more waves rolling in. As winter and the prospect of weekends edged up inside lessons, autumn surfing offers a great chance to ensure that your time outdoors doesn't end with the school holidays. Also, as seasons get lighter, warmer and more feasible, there's no reason the elements should outdoor trips in the summer.

Today, an estimated 200,000 people in Britain go surfing every year. These are not



all teenage dropouts, either: it is as common to see people paddling out on long boards far into retirement as it is to see someone turn up straight from work and wriggle into a wetsuit or a toddler being pushed along on a board in the shallows. For those less limber, surfing is about fun and cruising into the beach. But Winter's way of surfing is not about posing and twirling odd waves, but thrashing, turning and twisting along every ripple that breaks his way. The lesson is serious - for a start, he's come equipped with a clipboard, a spread sheet and a video camera - but he's also keen to see improvement.

I've been surfing for a few years with signed up to one of his coaching weekends in an attempt to improve. Winter's tips are simple: I'm not kicking my arms round to catch up with the wave, my arms need to twist so I can lead for the top of the breaking wave, and I need to pump my heels and toes to go faster. Trying to remember all this often resulted in spectacular wipeouts and being pinned underwater, but just occasionally, I worked, and then Winter would be the first to say - whooping from the shore and hawking the waves on his video.

The lessons were exhilarating, but they had the desired effect. In the second ses-

sion, at Patal beach, I took a fair beating as I wave after wave smashed over my head as I tried to make it beyond the breakers. But when I did catch one in, with half a curve in turn along it as he'd coached, I could not remove the dazed grin from my face. By the end of the two days, it is fair to say - in the parlance of surfers - that I was stoked. Being "stoked" is the phenomenon of being deliciously happy after a spell in the water, a story heard not to smile after catching a wave. The mood-enhancing properties of surfing are so established that it is now being trialled as a way to combat depression. Patients are offered one-to-one surfing lessons in a pilot project paid for by the Cornwall Primary Care Trust led by the NHS.

Catching waves also helps to reduce stress. Lee Stanbury, author of *The Complete Guide to Surf Fitness*, says: "Surfing is a high-intensity exercise, which is a huge benefit. Any exercise lowers stress, but you get a huge amount of endorphins released riding a wave - that's why it's so addictive. If you manage to go regularly, you'll have good fitness and core strength on top of that feeling."

Like thousands of others who love the sea but see stick in the city, part of my motivation for surfing is escaping. If you are standing on a wave under a cloudy sky, misty rain and darkness are quickly forgotten. By the end of a weekend of intensive coaching, even my dreams were about standing on waves - a sure sign that all the exertion had made for a mentally relaxing weekend.

Tom Erwin, the co-author of *It's by Louyer* because a winter (and fall time) surfer's is a better wave of well-being. "When you have catch a wave, any care or worries you're at one with the world. It won't be terribly happy, but it's true."

For details on surf coaching, see www.russellwinter.co.uk. For details on flights to Newport, see www.airmshwest.com