

OUTDOORS



KIT OF THE WEEK

SKINS A400 Starlight

New for winter 2015 are SKINS A400 Starlight running tights in full length or three-quarter style.

These running tights feature highly reflective graphics for low-light winter activity.

They are made of Dynamic Gradient Compression fabric which helps to minimise the risk of injury in glutes, quads and hamstrings.

The long tights offer an additional protective design for the calves and Achilles tendons.

The SKINS A400 come in a range of sizes for men and women, priced £100 at www.skis.net



APPY SKI HOLIDAYS

Get fit for your ski holiday with a new app that offers easy-to-follow bite-sized workouts.

The SkiFit8 app's eight-minute sessions will fit in with busy schedules. SkiFit8 is fronted by physiotherapist and clinical expert, Neil Maclean-Martin, from ski haven Chamonix in France.

He said: "SkiFit8 will help you to develop strength and control, making your time on the slopes more enjoyable and with less potential for injury."

SkiFit8 costs £1.49, downloaded via iTunes or Google Play store.

ALL IN A GOOD PAWS

A fun run-with-your-dog event in Strathclyde Park, Lanarkshire, is raising funds for three charities.

Bark in the Park offers a choice of 6km or 12km routes and takes place on November 29 at 10am.

The event will support the Nicola Murray Foundation, Diabetes UK and Staffordshire Rescue Scotland.

The event costs £10 per person, which includes entry fee for one dog. Every dog will receive a goody bag.

To enter see www.entrycentral.com/Bark

RUNG LEADERS
Fiona and Gordon make their way up the metal ladders.



Taking adventure to new heights

Have you tried?



FIONA RUSSELL

Fiona takes us on a terrifying step-by-step journey up Scotland's Via Ferrata near Fort William. A fear of heights and wobbly legs were the only things between her and the top...

SCOTLAND'S VIA FERRATA

Looking up at the final wooden ladder at the top of the steep 150m cliff, I suddenly realised that I might not enjoy the Via Ferrata.

I'd thought the adventure activity, located in a huge waterfall gorge at Kinlochleven, near Fort William, would be a bit tame. I had also worried my partner Gordon, a keen climber, would be bored as he followed me up the series of fixed cables, metal rungs, ladders and bridges.

Yet the high-rise course in Scotland's acclaimed Outdoor Capital UK looked very scary – and perhaps even daring enough to keep Gordon happy.

Our group of friends was booked on a half-day Via Ferrata session with outdoor provider Vertical Descents.

Instructors Django and Steve showed us how to climb safely and taught us how to keep our harnesses clipped to the metal cables via two carabiners.

Django said: "You will always be safe because you're always clipped to a cable. You could slip off the metal rungs but your fall would be broken by the harness so you don't need to worry."

But I did worry. As we took our first step up the rungs my shoes felt too slippery and my legs wobbled with fear. I clung to the rungs above my head with tight, claw-like hands as I took baby steps up. Each time I was required to unclip a carabiner from one metal cable and attach to a neighbouring one I felt my



HIGH LIFE The group loved the thrill of climb and stunning scenery

stomach churn and my heart race. The ladders felt precarious, the bridges swung out too much and there were places where rungs gave way to bare rock.

I couldn't look down as I'm afraid of heights and looking too far up made me more anxious. Yet around me, my friends chatted excitedly, enjoying the thrills of the 500m traverse. I could also hear the rushing water of the Grey Mare's Tail, Scotland's third biggest waterfall.

One of only two Via Ferratas in the UK, the Outdoor Capital UK course opened last year.

It takes its inspiration from the popular Via Ferratas dotted across the Alps and Dolomite mountain ranges of Europe. Originally these "iron roads" were built as a supported climbing route for soldiers during war years. Today, they offer non-climbers the chance to scale steep and high routes for

the thrill of it. In the end, I did experience some of this thrill. Once I relaxed, I pushed myself to look at the setting. I marvelled at the fantastic waterfall and the incredible height we reached. I still clung on tightly and when I had to climb that rickety-feeling ladder at the top my mind reeled with worry. But I made it and loved the high I felt at conquering a tough challenge – and my fears.

Gordon said: "Climbing that route by traditional methods would be near on impossible yet the Via Ferrata makes it possible for almost everyone. It was great."

The details: Via Ferrata costs £65 per person although there are group discounts. It's available year-round and for children as young as 10 at least 130cm tall. You should feel physically and mentally able to be comfortable in this sort of outdoor environment. See www.verticaldescents.com

Advice and ideas

Join me on my adventures in Scotland's great outdoors by checking out my award-winning website at www.fionaoutdoors.co.uk – you'll find lots of great information about walking, cycling, running, other outdoor activities and kit reviews.