

5 THRILLING *adventures* IN IRELAND

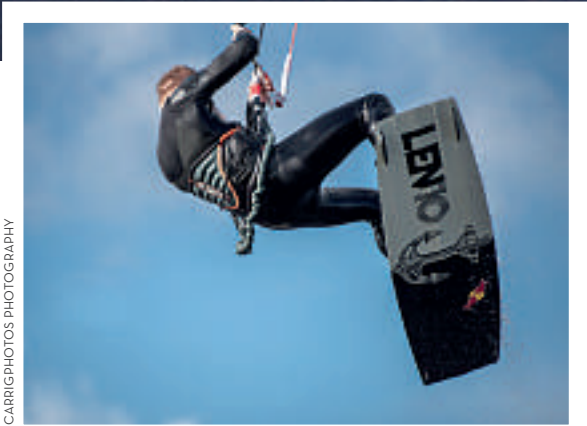
From gorge climbing to cliff jumping, **Yvonne Gordon** finds out how to become an adventure addict.



CLIMB A SEA STACK IN DONEGAL

The Slieve Tooley coastline in Co Donegal, running from Ardara right around to Slieve League, has the largest collection of sea stack climbs in a small geographical area on the planet, according to climbing guru Iain Miller. In his expert hands, take on anything from the 31-metre-high Dún

Briste sea stack to the more challenging Cnoc na Mara at 100 metres. You'll travel out by dinghy or kayak and the highlight is not the climb and standing on the summit, but the variety of wildlife seen on the way – anything from isolated bird colonies of fulmars, razorbills and gannets to seals and basking sharks. From €50; uniqueascent.ie.



CARRIGPHOTOS PHOTOGRAPHY

HARNES WIND AND WAVES ON ACHILL ISLAND

If you're going to try to harness the power of both the wind and the waves while learning to kitesurf, there are few more spectacular settings to do so than at the foot of Slievemore and Minaun Mountains on Keel Lake, on Achill Island, off Ireland's west coast. Kitesurfers use kites of various sizes to capture the wind, while attached by footstraps to a small board that skims across the waves. It takes a combination of skills (and a basic level of fitness) to get it right but Pure Magic say you should have the hang of it in about four lessons, when you'll be ready for the open sea. Lessons from €120; puremagic.ie.

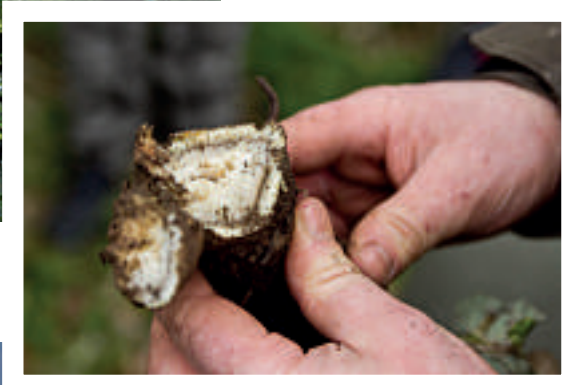


PHOTOGRAPHS, LEFT & MAIN, BY PATRICK MURTAGH PHOTOGRAPHY



LEARN BUSHCRAFT SKILLS IN CO MEATH

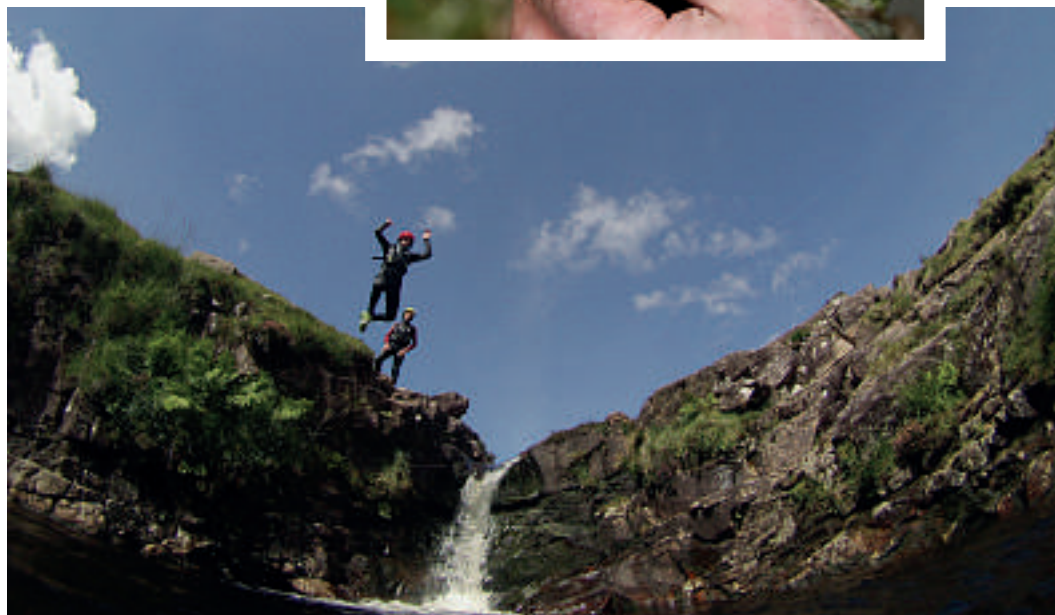
How long would you be able to live in the wilderness? Sign up for a bushcraft course in the Irish woodlands and you will learn everything about fire, water, shelter, food and craft – from how to find the right firewood and start a fire using flint, to finding and purifying water using a filter made from local materials such as grass, moss, sand and charcoal. On a weekend course, you'll also learn backcountry cooking techniques and how to harvest things such as leaves, berries and roots for cooking. Courses from €195; bushcraft.ie.



PHOTOGRAPHS BY THE LIVING WILDERNESS

SCRAMBLE UP A CANYON IN CONNEMARA

If you love everything to do with rivers and waterfalls and are curious to know what walking in a canyon feels like, then canyoning or gorge walking is for you. In Connemara, way out in Finney, Co Galway in an area called Maamtrasna, surrounded by windswept bogland and sheep-grazed plains, local adventurer Micheál Keane will lead you up the river gorge. Starting from the bottom, you'll climb up waterfalls, scramble over rocks and boulder up the sides of the canyon, all while working against the flow of the river. You'll also get to whizz down natural slides or try jumps of up to four or five metres high. €99 including Connemara tour and lunch; epicireland.com.





JUMP OFF A SEA CLIFF IN KERRY

The Ring of Kerry has some of the Wild Atlantic Way's most spectacular coastal scenery and what better way to truly get to grips with it - and enjoy the ultimate thrill - than to sign up for a coasteering adventure. Setting off along the coast from Coonanna Harbour near Caherciveen, you'll start with a 1.5-metre-high jump into the harbour, followed by a swim over to a rocky beach and a series of adrenaline-fuelled jumps of between five and nine metres. Other highlights of the adventure include exploring a sea cave, looking under water to see starfish, sponges and sea urchins and sometimes encountering curious sea lions. €50; moractivetours.com.

