

Gearcheck

Roisin Finlay



Roisin Finlay is editor of *Outsider*, Ireland's adventure magazine — outsider.ie

With the weather starting to get chilly, here is some kit to keep the girls moving and cosy this autumn

Giant Liv Flourish 1

Giant's Liv brand is at the forefront of women's bike design. The Flourish 1 (€625) is a modern version of a lovely 'old fashioned' heritage bikes. The Mary Poppins style will appeal to those commuters who don't have far to go, yet aren't completely on the flat. Despite its old look, the bike has a lightweight aluminium frame and Shimano 7 speed internal hub gearing, ensuring many miles of trouble-free commuting. The Flourish comes with a rear rack and front basket (so you can bring your briefcase and lunch) and mudguards and a chaincover (to ensure you arrive clean). Dynamo powered lights and a cushioned spring saddle finish off this updated classic.

Available from or order through Giant Store Dublin, EP Mooney Retail Centre, Longmile Road, D12; Staggs Cycles, Lucan; Marrey Bikes, Ballinrobe, Co Mayo; O'Sullivan Cycles, Killarney, Co Kerry



The North Face ThermoBall Hoodie

The North Face ThermoBall Hoodie (€199.99) is a mid-weight synthetic down jacket and is perfect for those chillier days when you're just not sure if it's going to rain. It uses clusters of round synthetic ThermoBall insulation to trap and retain heat within small air pockets even when wet, so you won't be cursing your lack of a waterproof. It packs down to a tiny size, and is available in men's and women's styles.

Available from or order through Great Outdoors, Dublin 2; The North Face Store, Temple Bar; 53 Degrees North in Carrickmines, Blanchardstown, Cornmarket and Cork



Power Greens

If fitting in work, exercise and a balanced diet is proving a challenge, you might get some extra help from Power Greens supplement (from €10). Made by Irish company One Nutrition, this organic product is packed with vitamins and minerals from the brassica vegetable family (broccoli, white cabbage and kale) and super foods such as spirulina, wheat, barley grass and chlorophyll-rich chlorella. Available in capsule or powder form, you can mix them into a shake or juice, or pop one in on the fly.

Available from or order through naturalife.ie



Ocean's seven

Over nine months and nearly 40,000 miles, seven teams will face storms, cyclones, icebergs, whales and worse in an attempt to complete the Volvo Ocean Race, writes Yvonne Gordon

Welcome to Azzam, our new Volvo 65," says skipper Ian Walker, as he leans casually against the wheel of the 65-foot Abu Dhabi Ocean Racing boat, wearing shorts, a T-shirt and shades. "It's about 20 miles to Cowes and the breeze is about 10-15 knots."

It's a warm day and the sun is high in the sky as we set off from Gosport Marina in Portsmouth to spend a couple of hours sailing to Cowes in the Isle of Wight. The Cowes Week regatta is well under way and the horizon is dotted with white sails. As we near Cowes, some speedboats start following in our wake, taking photos.

It sounds idyllic – even a little glamorous – but this is nothing like what life is usually like on board a Volvo Ocean Race racing yacht. Ian Walker and his crew – which includes Cork sailor Justin Slattery – are preparing to take part in the recent Volvo Ocean Race which began last month in Alicante, Spain.

Over nine months and nearly 40,000 miles, they and six other teams will battle horrendous weather conditions – including

storms and cyclones – and extreme hot and cold temperatures, while avoiding obstacles such as icebergs, whales, wind farms and shipping containers.

They will eat freeze-dried food (real food weighs too much to carry), have no where to wash, and sleep in short shifts in bunks which will be shared by fellow crewmates. And all this while racing as fast as they can.

As I climb inside the hull and Walker shows me around the boat, I get an idea of how basic the conditions will be. The walls are black and along each side are six bunks. The galley (kitchen area) just has sinks and a burner for a single pot. In the compartment behind, there's a toilet, with no door or walls. There's no heating for the cold weather of the Southern Ocean; no air conditioning for the stifling heat of the tropics.

"It's very noisy down here," says Walker. "If you ease a winch it's like a gun firing. The motion can also be hard – we have to use grab ropes to move around."

This is illustrated a few weeks later when, during the Sevenstar Round Britain and Ireland race which started in the tail end of Hurricane Bertha, Justin Slattery



The Magazine's Yvonne Gordon at the

is thrown across the inside of the boat and lands upside down, injuring his ribs. Experienced crews afterwards described the race conditions as "brutal", and that competition lasted just a few days.

During the Volvo race, they will spend up to three weeks at a time at sea, but it's not just about surviving the conditions – this is a race, and there will be seven teams on the start line, all in the new one-design Volvo Ocean 65s. And it's not just for the boys either. Team SCA, the first women's team in many years to enter the race, has some serious sailing talent on its crew of 11.

"We're definitely all competitive people and we want to put in a good result," Dee Caffari says during a sailing training session off the coast of Puerto Calero in Lanzarote. British sailor Caffari is the first woman to have sailed solo

Get out there!

No matter what you're into, there are great outdoor and adventure events taking place this month. Here are three to whet your appetite

Junior Irish Lead Climbing Championships, November 15

Taking place at Awesome Walls, Finglas, this event attracts the top young climbers from all over Ireland as well as Scotland, England and Wales. Climbers compete in eight categories, depending on age and gender, with competitors aged between 11 and 19.



The Junior Irish Lead Climbing Championships, November 15

The competition begins with two qualification routes for each category. The higher climbers reach on each route, the more

points they score. The top six in each category go through to the finals. This event is great for spectators. Come along and



helm of Azzam, one of the 65-footers taking part in this year's gruelling Volvo Ocean Race

around the world in both directions and the first female to have sailed around the world three times non-stop, while Dutch sailor Carolijn Brouwer has competed in three Olympics and won ISAF World Sailor of the Year. Annie Lush, also British, has been Women's Match Racing Champion three times.

During our training session off Lanzarote, it's sunny and warm, but it won't be like this when the boat hurtles through the stormy waves of the Southern Ocean, avoiding icebergs and other obstacles. Once we put the sails up, the boat heels on its side and takes off at speed, and when I take the helm, I feel its incredible power.

However, even as an experienced sailor, I find getting around the boat difficult. The climb up onto the windward rail is almost vertical, the only thing to grab onto are giant winches. The foredeck

seems vast. I can't even imagine how the crew are able to do a job when there are powerful waves crashing across the deck, putting them in danger of being washed overboard. It was so wet during the round Britain and Ireland race, the crew wore ski masks on deck and snorkels on the bow.

Team SCA have spent 18 months training from their base camp in Lanzarote, starting their days with gruelling 7am gym sessions – I watched the girls pump 42kg while I meekly lifted 15kg beside them – followed by full days of on-the-water training, with everything logged, from their weight to what they ate. Three of the crew – Sam Davies, Carolijn Brouwer and Abby Ehler – are mums and leaving family and friends behind is another big challenge they all face.

However, for one Irish crew member, it will not only be

about leaving family behind, and surviving the tough physical and psychological conditions, but capturing the best images and stories from the boat and transmitting them to a worldwide audience. Brian Carlin, from Tralee, Co Kerry, is the onboard reporter on Danish entry, Team Vestas Wind, and despite the conditions, he relishes the challenge of his job.

"It's the ultimate job in our industry," he says. "It's wet, loud, very cold, very hot. It's a challenge. But this has been a dream all my life."

To follow the above teams, see teamsca.com, volvooceanraceabudhabi.com or teamvestaswind.vestas.com. TG4 is showing live coverage of leg starts and in-port races, plus weekly highlights on Fridays at 9.50pm (repeated Saturdays at noon)



Head for the hills in the Run the Line race on November 29

cheer on Ireland's top young climbers from the balcony. mountaineering.ie/climbing/competitions

Great Ethiopian Run International 10k, November 23

Walk, run or jog 10km through the streets of Addis Ababa. This is a high-altitude run

and Africa's biggest road race attracting 37,000 participants. It's fast becoming one of the best-known running competitions on the continent and has attracted high-profile athletes like John Treacy, Paula Radcliffe, Tilahun Regassa and Wude Ayalew.

ethiopianrun.org

Run the Line, November 29

Aimed at both the seasoned hill-runner and those runners who want to give the hills a try, Run The Line offers two route choices. Take your pick from an 11km or 26km course, but with either you can be sure that there will be plenty of climbs and varied surfaces as you move through the Dublin Mountains.

This event, which starts out from Lamb Doyle's Pub in Sandyford, is a fundraising event for the much deserving Dublin Wicklow Mountain Rescue Team. runtheline.ie

Róisín Finlay

Snow report

Catherine Murphy



Crystal Ski Holidays' social ski programme in Val d'Isère will give you the chance to get away from it all

Social ski

Each week for the coming ski season, our resident ski expert, **Catherine Murphy**, will be giving hot tips for the cool climate in our new ski-watch column

Val d'Isere

The legal row over ski guiding has led some tour operators to introduce alternative services for their guests in France. Last winter, we sampled Crystal Ski Holidays' social ski programme in Val d'Isère.

The social ski idea is a simple, but invaluable one, especially in a resort like Val d'Isère where there's lots of terrain to explore.

Part of Espace Killy, Val d'Isère is linked to Tignes. It has two glaciers, two snow parks and 300km of slopes connected via 88 lifts. Sixty per cent of its runs are above 2,000 metres. Many of the resort's pistes are aimed at strong intermediate or advanced skiers and boarders, so it's good to know where you are on the mountain.

If you're holidaying alone or skiing at a different level to your family and friends, social ski is a good way to see the mountain while getting to know other holidaymakers.

Last season, Crystal used Evolution 2 ski school to show guests around the mountain. Instructors were paid to guide, in keeping with the 2013 legal ruling. There would be no instruction, just a complimentary introduction to the best slopes in the area, the best time to ski them and above all, the best way to get to La Folie Douce for après-ski.

In an area where a cup of tea can cost more than a beer in a mountain restaurant, getting directions to reasonably priced venues can also be massively helpful!

Instructor Valerie Pesas took a

group of six or eight guests who booked in for the morning session on a first-come, first-served basis.

Showing us around proved difficult because conditions were terrible; every time we got off a lift, we faced into white-out and bitterly cold howling winds that threatened to blow us down the slopes.

Pesas knew the area like the back of her hand and skied carefully, keeping a close eye on nervous skiers in the group. Having her lead us in difficult conditions made us feel we were in safe hands.

Her calm attitude also influenced our attitude to the inclement conditions; where we might have bailed out much earlier in the day if skiing alone, we stayed out on the slopes and were thankful we did when the weather improved.

Later in the week, Valerie's husband Marc Pesas took another social ski group for an afternoon. An instructor with many years of experience both on and off-piste, let's just say that Marc actively encouraged us to be the best skiers we could on the day. One or two useful technique tips might have been mentioned along the way.

During the afternoon, we also managed to find out that La Baraque, Le Coin des Amis and Salon des Fous are among the bars/restaurants favoured by locals in Val d'Isère. It was a thumbs-up from us for social ski.

Catherine Murphy travelled to Val d'Isère courtesy of Crystal Ski Holidays; crystalski.ie