



What is 'The Sea, Street, Summit Challenge'?

It's a three part challenge – swimming the English Channel, running a road marathon (in my case London) and summiting Mount Everest. It's a spin on the more well known 'Peak and Pond Challenge' – swimming the English Channel and climbing Mount Everest – which has been completed by 14 people (two women, including me). I'm the first woman to have done all three.

Tell us about the Channel, what compelled you to swim it?

My slightly cheeky answer is 'a lot of pain!'. During my 30s and 40s I went through a very difficult time in my life. I decided I needed to focus on something else. Swimming the Channel became it! I guess you could call it an attempt to swim my way out of sadness.

Have you always enjoyed swimming?

I enjoyed swimming as a child but I wasn't very good at it. I couldn't swim front crawl. But I did dream that one day I might swim the Channel. It was something I said to my dad when he was disappointed I didn't get a place in the school swimming gala. But it wasn't something I'd thought about again for 30 years until I woke up one day in my early 40s and thought: 'I'm going to swim the Channel.'

WHY I SWIM

JESSICA HEPBURN

Jessica became the first woman in the world to achieve 'The Sea, Street, Summit Challenge' – swim the English Channel, run a road marathon (London) and summit Mount Everest



Jessica is undertaking a challenge to swim in 50 new places

What has these years of adventure taught you?

They've taught me to respect and love the natural world. And that going on an adventure – whatever the outcome – will always change your life for the better.

What is your favourite type of swim today?

Even though I didn't enjoy a lot of my Channel training (it was so hard!) it changed my life for the better. Water has come to feel like home to me. It's where I

feel safe, held and happy. These days I try to get in the water at least once a week. I'm also undertaking a challenge to swim in 50 new places. Ponds, pools, puddles, I'm not fussy. A five minute dip or a few lengths is enough to replenish me now.

What advice would you give to those with endurance ambitions?

You have to know why you want to do it. It's tough. There are probably times where you're going to hate it. So knowing the reason you want it is vital. And

seek out people who have gone before you to ask their advice. I will be forever grateful to all the people in the Channel swimming community who helped me.

Which of the three adventures would you choose to do again, and why?

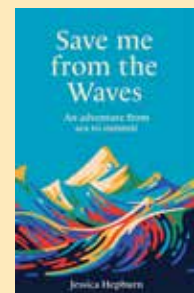
I wouldn't do any of them again! I love adventure. And one of my key definitions of adventure is doing something new.

How does exercise and adventure enrich your life?

I describe myself as an 'unlikely athlete'. I was the 'arty' one in school. Not the 'sporty' one. I actually hate exercise. I'm shit at sport (still!). But one of the things I loved about these challenges was all the food, booze and box sets I got to consume – guilt free – after training. Food is one of my greatest joys in life. I've eaten a lot of cake and carbohydrates. That has enriched my life endlessly.

Tell us about your new book and why we will love it!

Save Me From The Waves is about my journey from the streets of London to the top of the world. If you like female voiced adventure stories, as well as music and mountains (there are streets and the sea in it too) then hopefully you'll love it.



Save Me From the Waves: An Adventure from Sea to Summit (Aurum, £17.99) is published 7 March.