



"Walking the line - about a foot off the ground!"

Slackfit

What is it? A variation on Slacklining, Slackfit is where you walk, balance and do tricks (from poses to flips) along a 3in strip of reinforced fabric, suspended between two points at a height dependent on your ability.

Laura's verdict: "When I see the slacklines, if it wasn't for the photographers with me, I'd probably do a runner. Instead, I find myself warming up with instructor, Harry, while he talks me through the benefits of Slackfit. Apparently, as well as improving your balance, the constant little movements you make while on the line provide a double workout - exercising both your bigger 'type one' muscles (abdominals, quads and deltoids) and the smaller 'type two' muscles, which help speed up your metabolism and burn fat faster.

I start by getting used to the slackline - so called because it has less tension and more movement than a tightrope (apparently this is a good thing) - walking up and down using Harry as a support and focusing on a fixed point. After a few horrific minutes where the line bounces around uncontrollably, Harry instructs me to tighten my core and pull my shoulders down. Like magic, the line goes still and I can walk up and down

with relative ease (and Harry's continued assistance).

From there we try out some of the more complicated, yoga-based poses, before I attempt an aerial squat - and I end up making friends with the mud. To finish, I try to stand unaided - which I manage for less than a second. Apparently it takes around two hours to be able to walk support-free and eight to master the advanced poses.

But even so, I can feel the benefit in my core and legs, and I'm also feeling pretty happy - focusing so hard on staying upright helps to put everything else out of your mind. In fact, I'd go so far as to say I'd do this again."



Keris says: "Slacklining is not so much about calorie burning, but more testing your core and strengthening the structural muscles in the body to improve your posture and avoid injuries. Slacklining is a skill that has to be mastered so it's great for people who prefer to use mental focus when exercising."

■ **Slackfit sessions cost £3 and are run in the Midlands by Trisport and Fitness. Visit www.trislacklining.com for more info.**

Aquazumba

What is it? A pool-based version of the popular dancercise class.

Laura's verdict: "OK, so dancing underwater might not sound like the most natural concept in the world but, as I slip into the pool for Aquazumba, I'm feeling pretty positive. Whether it's the relaxing nature of the water or just the fact that I'm not being suspended in the air for once, I'm not sure, but I'm soon splashing around with the best of them.

While regular Zumba is all about working up a sweat, here you're kept relatively cool in the pool,

so it's more about the natural resistance of the water making the movements harder, and working your muscles more. Admittedly, as we shift from the warm-up into the main cardio section of the class, the contrast between instructor Patricia's movements poolside and my own less-than-graceful efforts is huge, but I keep going. As the class progresses, building in squats, lunges and step combos, I think I'm getting marginally better.

After some partner work, where we do twisting movements

and hold positions in the water, we spend the last section using foam 'noodles' (long, thin floats) and dumbbells to perform some more adventurous exercises. From standing on the noodle (harder than it sounds - these things are insanely floaty) to doing underwater arm curls and leg swings, they really engage your arm and leg muscles - when they don't end up wriggling out of your grasp.

While I'm not sure I've hit the optimum 400 calories (although I must have burned a good few from laughing) my arms are excitingly shaky afterwards, which I'm taking as a good thing. And I'm not out of breath either."



Keris says: "This is great for people who need to avoid high-impact exercise, as the buoyancy

of the water protects your joints. It's still a total body workout, with the water providing added resistance, so you can burn up to 400 calories in each workout."

■ **Aquazumba classes cost £6 or are included in membership at many gyms across the UK (ours was with Patricia Day at St Dunstan's Sports Club, Catford, www.sdsports.co.uk). Visit www.zumba.com/aqua for more info.**



"Hands up if you love Aquazumba!"

PHOTOS: 25SHOOTERS.COM HARRY WORKS FOR MAVERICK SLACKLINES, WWW.MAVERICKSLACKLINES.CO.UK