



## KIT OF THE WEEK

### MOUNTAIN HARD WEAR GHOST WHISPERER JACKET

Claimed as the world's lightest full-featured down jacket, the Mountain Hard Wear Ghost Whisperer jacket is perfect for chillier autumn weather.

Tipping the scales at less than 8oz, the jacket is packed with water-resisting Q.Shield Down 800-fill for amazing warmth. Features include stealth elastane binding inside the cuffs to seal out moisture and a toggle hem for easy adjustment.

The jacket stuffs into its own pocket for easy storage. There are male and female Ghost Whisperer jackets in a range of sizes and colours.

■ Priced £230 at [www.cotswoldoutdoor.com](http://www.cotswoldoutdoor.com)

## CHARLIE LEADS WAY

Greenock walker Charlie "Chic" Kavanagh has totalled 4800 miles walking the West Highland Way an amazing 50 times.

The 53-year-old is believed to be the first to reach this 50th milestone and has walked the 96-mile trail twice a year on average, starting in 1991.

In honour of his achievement, the Loch Lomond and Trossachs National Park, which promotes and manages the WHW, awarded him a special silver medal.

The WHW, between Milngavie and Fort William, is walked by more than 50,000 people each year. Chic has said he will keep going and plans his next walk in the spring.



## NEPAL AID WATCH

A new Nepal Edition Suunto Ambit3 Peak GPS watch has been launched.

For every watch sold, Suunto will donate €25 to the ongoing Red Cross aid work following the devastating Himalayan earthquakes earlier this year. The target is to raise €250,000 by the end of next July.

The limited edition Suunto Ambit3 Peak Nepal Edition is priced at £255.

■ See [www.suunto.com/ambit3peaknepaledition/](http://www.suunto.com/ambit3peaknepaledition/)

**ON CREST OF A WAVE** Autumn has some great swells for surfing and it's not as cold as you think



PICTURES: [www.tonymarshphotography.com](http://www.tonymarshphotography.com)

# Have a swell time in autumn surf

Are you?



**FIONA RUSSELL**

There's no need to hang up your surf board just because summer is fast becoming a distant memory. This season brings the best conditions off the Scottish coast thanks to water temperature and stronger waves.

## SURFING IN AUTUMN

### Why should I?

Autumn is considered to be one of the best times to go surfing off the Scottish coast.

It's when water temperatures remain relatively high, compared to the air temperature. This time of year is also associated with lower atmospheric pressures, which often create stronger and more consistent waves.

Sam Christopherson, a former champion surfer who now teaches surfing across Scotland, said: "The summer is warmer generally but surfing people are concerned more with air and water temperature differences.

"So while the sea will be about 17C in the summer and about 12-13C in autumn, the colder autumnal air makes the sea feel warmer. Of course, it's all relative but it's perceptions."

Sam also explains why atmospheric pressures make a difference to Scotland's coastal waters. He said: "In very basic terms, in autumn and winter we tend to experience lower atmospheric pressures, which create larger sea swells.

"This makes the surf bigger and more regular. For surfers, the waves are generally easier to ride although if they become too big they are only for the experts."

Sam, who owns Coast to Coast Surf School in East Lothian, also reckons east is best at this time of year.

He said: "I'll be accused of being biased but almost every



**ALL ABOARD** Surfing is particularly good during autumn

year in autumn, the east coast records the best surfing conditions. I have found there is far less chance of the wild conditions more often associated with the west coast.

### Tell me more:

Vastly improved wetsuits keep surfers warmer for longer in cold water nowadays.

Sam said: "Wetsuits and accessories, such as boots and gloves, are so much better than ever before.

"The technological advances, such as thicker wetsuits, innovative designs and fur-lined gloves, offer improved warmth in the sea.

"And prices are far more attractive than even a few years ago so good kit is available to a wider number of surfers."

### Anything else to know?

Surfing in Scotland has been fast-growing in recent decades.

Sam said: "By the 1990s, there were a few hundred surfers. Now there are more than 12,000

surfers in our waters annually. Surf schools, shops, online promotion and televised events have helped to grow the sport.

"In addition, the kit is cheaper and more readily available.

"People have also realised that our waters are not cold and inhospitable but beautiful and great fun to surf."

### Who is it for?

For all ages and abilities. Head along to a surf school for lessons and to hire the full kit.

### Anything else to do?

Join in with a club or watch the Gathering of the Clans Championships on October 24-25.

It's hoped the event will take place at Belhaven, East Lothian. If the weather doesn't suit, the champs will move somewhere along the east coast. See [www.c2csurfschool.com](http://www.c2csurfschool.com)

**Contacts:** See [www.visitscotland.com/see-do/activities/watersports/surfing/](http://www.visitscotland.com/see-do/activities/watersports/surfing/)

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](http://www.fionaoutdoors.co.uk) – you'll find lots of great information about walking, cycling, running, other outdoor activities and kit reviews.