

**Assessment Date:** 1st March 2021

**Location:** Thornwick bay, Flamborough, East Yorkshire YO15 1BD

**Description:** Area stretching from Little Thornwick Bay to the most Southerly headland of the main bay.

**Activity:** Coasteering (Standard Coasteering session duration is 2.5 Hours)

**Organisation:** Scarborough Surf School at Cayton Bay Surf Shop.

**Hazards:** Coasteering involves a combination of walking, scrambling, swimming and low level traversing at the base of cliffs, with cave exploration and cliff jumping up to a maximum height of 30ft.

**There are various potential hazards involved in this activity which are as follows:**

- Slips, trips and falls whilst walking/climbing on cliff paths and rocks
- Impact or injury from jumps due to poor body position
- Potential for getting into difficulty whilst swimming
- Adverse weather/sea conditions (sun, wind, rain, tides, swell, water/air temperature)
- Vast tidal range affecting the different routes, potentially cutting off access
- Falling stones from cliffs above
- Marine life, most notable jelly fish/weaver fish stings

**Who's at risk?**

Everybody involved in the activity, including instructors and group leaders are potentially at risk from the hazards listed above.

**What we do to eliminate/minimise the hazards/risks:**

Our instructors hold current Beach Lifeguard certificates, advanced first aid qualifications and we have also trained with one of the national leaders in Coasteering in Newquay, Cornwall. In conjunction with trained paramedics and the RNLI to a high standard, to ensure we operate to the highest possible safety standards.

We also have a vast experience and background knowledge of the local environment and conditions from many combined years undertaking similar activities in the area. During all sessions our instructors will stop and explain the hazards and how to approach them, as well as providing demonstrations and coaching along the way.

**Conditions:**

Prior to each session we check weather forecasts, surf conditions and tidal activity for that day: We will make a decision on the day whether it is safe to proceed with the activity or not according to the conditions. Dynamic risk assessments are also carried out throughout the activity to ensure that safe practice is maintained at all times during changeable conditions. We can also adapt the activity and

route during the session, should conditions change. We hold the right to terminate the activity should the conditions become un-safe.

#### **Equipment:**

- Customers are provided with a full length 5/3mm wetsuit, neoprene boots with rubber soles, suitable water-sports, adjustable helmet, adjustable buoyancy aid and bright coloured rash vest for their protection.
- Our instructors will always carry 10m throw-lines and beach lifeguard certified rescue tubes for aiding swimmers in difficulty as well as tow lines.
- We keep a first aid kit and mobile phone in the vehicle we operate out of. We are never more than ten minutes away from this in line with current regulations.
- Our equipment is checked prior to use and throughout the activity, with demonstrations on how to wear and adjust it properly.

#### **Our requirements:**

All participants are required to be competent at swimming at least 50m and physically fit enough for the activity. For groups of children under the age of 18, a minimum swim ability of 25m is sufficient. This is assessed by our instructors before and throughout the activity, and the routes we take are tailored according to participants ages and ability.

There will always be a minimum of two instructors for up to 14 participants and for groups of more than 14 we increase the number of instructors to participants at a ratio of 1:7 to ensure safe practice.

#### **In Depth Risk Assessment - Thornwick Bay**

##### **HAZARDS:**

##### **Natural hazards:**

- Cliff faces surrounding bays (steep and unstable)
- Rocks on beach (slippery, sharp, some submerged at high tide)
- Tides (sections of bays can be cut off on an incoming tide and strong currents likely during Spring tides)
- Heavy Seas (potential for wave impact against rocks in near shore surf as well as breaking waves out to sea)
- Water temperature (ranging from 4-14 degrees Celsius)
- Marine life (seals, jelly fish, weaver fish, sea birds)
- Weather (heat, cold, electrical, wind, rain and the changing nature of weather)

##### **Man-made hazards:**

- Steep pathways and steps on both entry / exit points
- Some metal work near world war 2 Bunker

- Contaminants and associated containers and flotsam on high tide mark and possibly in water washed up or exposed ordnance

#### **People hazards:**

- Other water users - surfers, kayakers, other coasteer parties, personal water craft and boats
- People (intoxicated, criminal behaviour)
- Dog walking
- Climbing
- Walkers and runners
- Beach sports (football and cricket etc)
- Fishing

#### **In Depth Risks and Controls:**

**RISK: Being cut off by high tide at certain points.** Incoming tides can strand people on cliff with danger of drowning in big tides and heavy seas.

**Control:** Numerous exit points along routes, alternative routes to suit tidal conditions and the ability to swim into either bay and exit via the two main paths at any time.

**Risk: Climbing cliff faces or sitting below them.** Some unstable areas, dangerous to climb and sit under due to falling debris

**Control:** Helmets are worn throughout the sessions even during breaks, no need to climb cliffs due to suitable clear exit and access points. Suggest signage - Dangerous cliffs

**Risk: Heavy seas and breaking surf.** During small swells the wave action and rising / falling sea level can cause harm with wave impact and dragging up or down against rocks and obstacles.

**Control:** Due to the nature of the sport we are unable to operate during heavy seas therefore removing any potential risk. In very small swells full thick neoprene wetsuits, boots, helmet and lifejacket are worn to maximise safety and clients are taught the correct method of sculling feet first towards exit points to do so safely.

**Risk: Prominent rocks along North side of main Bay.** Danger of falling or slipping on wet rocks, or stumbling over loose stones. Also poses danger when partially submerged and difficult to navigate.

**Control:** Protective gear is worn to reduce any falls or impacts. High ankle supportive neoprene boots with tacky rubber souls also provide maximum grip. Due to the nature of the chalk cliffs and headland any boulders are rounded and smooth therefore reducing impact danger and improving grip where the correct footwear is worn.

**Risk: Hypothermia or drowning due to cold.** Prolonged exposure to cold water and wind temperatures can seriously impede a persons physical and mental ability making the simplest of tasks very difficult if not impossible

**Control:** Full 5/3 winter weight suits issued as well as insulated helmet and lifejacket to reduce the loss of heat and aid buoyancy. Clients will be assessed throughout the sessions for any signs of cold.

Anyone suffering from cold can be escorted back to either the vehicles or on site cafe with thermal blanket if required and warmed up asap

**Risk: Strong currents and rip tides.** More apparent during heavy surf but lateral rips during large Spring tides can make swimming difficult with the potential to sweep people out to sea.

**Control:** Coasteering sessions will not be run during heavy seas. Lateral rips moving with the tides can be clearly seen and predicted. Therefore we always work with the tides not against them with the tidal state governing the routes used on any given day. All of our instructors are also experienced surfers and have an in-depth knowledge of the sea and our local conditions allowing them to adapt sessions as and when necessary.

**Risk: Effect of weather on people.** Hot weather risk of heat stroke, cold weather risk of hypothermia (see above), electrical storms risk of being struck, sea mist risk of getting lost (land or sea) or falling off cliffs, rain and or wind making cliff faces and rocks more slippery

**Control:** Due to the nature of the sport and our local climate heat stroke is highly unlikely, sun cream is recommended as is drinking plenty of fluids on hot days. Helmets protect the head from excessive heat. Hypothermia (see above). Adverse weather may well either halt or postpone a coasteering session. We would not operate during such conditions and should they arise both clients and instructors would exit the water asap and take shelter. In the case of mist (which arises gradually and can be foreseen) instructors would lead and follow up with clients in-between arm outstretched holding life vest of the person in front, using only the main safe exit points to return to base.

**Risk: Injury from marine life.** Seal bites (extremely rare but risk of disease), jelly fish / weaver fish stings (danger of anaphylactic shock in rare cases), sea birds attacking (very uncommon).

**Control:** All our instructors are advanced first aiders and we carry full first aid kits stored at our base never more than 10 minutes away to fall within current code of practice. Full protective gear is worn head to foot to ensure maximum safety at all times. Certain routes during breeding season of birdlife are avoided to minimise impact and human interference.

**Risk: Rubbish left by visitors or washed up on shore.** Could be sharp, causing cuts or infection. Dog fouling on beach and footpaths being a major source of infection.

**Control:** Protective footwear and wetsuits protect the feet and body, there will always be an instructor leading and looking out for any harmful substances or items that commonly get washed up or found along the coastline. We would also use bins provided to remove of any form of rubbish that was safe to touch and inform police if anything such as hypodermic needles were spotted for safe removal and disposal.

**Risk: Ordnance either washed ashore or exposed by land slips and erosion.** Very dangerous could explode.

**Control:** Our instructors always lead and will be looking for anything out of the ordinary. We carry mobile phones so are able to raise the alarm should any such devices be spotted. Clients would be **moved as far away as possible**

**Risk: Water sports.** Swimming, surfing, kayaking, boats, jet ski etc, could collide with other water users causing injury

**Control:** Due to the nature of the bay there is no launching of any craft other than lifeboats for a great distance. Kayakers and swimmers do frequent the area and we would only partake in activities such as traversing, swimming and jumping where it is safe to do so and there is no conflict between activities or danger to any parties.

Risk: Intoxicated people. either clients or general public

**Control:** We will reserve the right to refuse instruction to anyone we deem to be under the influence of drugs or alcohol as they would pose both a threat to themselves and others. Any public seemingly intoxicated would be avoided where possible and authorities notified should there be any potential risk to either instructors or clients, or to the person / people in question.

**Risk: Dog walkers.** Risk of dogs attacking beach users and dog waste causing health risks.

**Control:** Signage warning of bylaws and dog waste bins provided.

**Risk: Fishing.** Submerged lines and hooks can pose a serious threat as well as larger washed up nets. As can people casting into areas used for coasteering.

**Control:** Any obvious risk would be firstly avoided and subsequently removed where safe to do so either by instructors after the session or the relevant authority. We have numerous routes to use to avoid any fishermen who are already set up on our arrival as to avoid any unnecessary risk. We would always approach first and discuss alternatives and make sure lines were removed if we had no choice but to past people fishing.

#### **Protective Equipment at Thornwick Bay:**

- Emergency Phone
- VHF Radio
- Phone at Thornwick cafe (within season)

#### **Additional Equipment Carried by Instructors:**

- Fully equipped first aid kit
- Mobile phones
- High strength sun cream and drinking water
- 10m throw-lines
- Beach lifeguard certified rescue tubes
- Tow lines
- High visibility rash tops
- Many years experience, surfing and coasteering locally

#### **High risk groups are:**

- Elderly

- Children
- Groups of youths (particularly males)
- The intoxicated (drugs and alcohol)
  
- Disabled people

Due to the physical nature of the sport fitness as well as swimming ability are factors. We can tailor sessions to suit different parties such as stag do's, families, children etc...but there will always be certain constraints and times where we would deem it either inappropriate or unsafe to run a coasteering session.

**Beach Safety Summary:**

Many risks along the coastline will alter daily. Sand levels are continually changing, burying or exposing rocks and other objects which may well be covered during certain stages of tide. Coasteering at Thornwick Bay, just like any other on the East coast, will have its risks, but with the correct equipment, planning, preparation and knowledge of the area we are able to minimise this risk. Through safety measures and suitable equipment, our qualified instructors / lifeguards, with extensive knowledge of conditions (and the ability to forecast them), can ensure both water users and coasteering participants can enjoy the coastline in a safe and enjoyable environment.