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## The adventure continues



### Jumping and Rafting with Edge

### Adventure Gurus

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**MILLINOCKET/THE FORKS** – Maine is built for fun. Our backyard is the best backyard, hands down. There is always something to do, and unlike certain states where the season never changes, we have a love for our fleeting summer months that those folks from warmer climes who never hefted a snow shovel will never feel. We're lucky because less than two hours from Bangor you can enjoy some of the most adventurous activities that the state has to offer. I'm talking about white water rafting and sky diving.

For this year's Adventure Guru Contest we had two tiers of winners – the winner and a friend could hurl themselves out of a perfectly good

airplane and a winner and friend would be traversing the rapids of the Kennebec River.

## Free falling

Since I had twice hurled myself bodily from an airplane, it was decided that another Edge staffer would take the plunge. Guru Pat Shaw was more than up for the challenge.

"It was something I'll never forget and look forward to doing again. It was great seeing the other jumpers go out and then touch down and hear what they had to say about their experience," said Shaw. "The whole day was amazing, and the staff at Three Rivers [and Skydive New England] were a lot of fun and very professional. I felt safe at all times."



The winner for the skydiving was Trish Hansen, and she brought her friend Julia Munsey. When she found out she won, she said she was "surprised, of course, and intimidated. When I threw my card in the bowl at the Business Expo, I think I actually said 'a skydiving trip isn't something I would want to win.' I know skydiving is on most people's bucket lists, but it's always been something I've thought of and dismissed."

She said that she would always dismiss the idea in the past due to cost and intimidations. But winning the trip changed her perspective.

"However, when presented with the opportunity, at no cost, there was no way I could say no. I think that if something scares you, it's all the more reason to look that fear in the face and just do it," she said.

Hansen and her friend arrived early, but would be one of the last to take the plunge that day (around 4 p.m.), giving them the opportunity

to watch other people come in for a landing. The flight itself is in a small plane, crammed with jumpers.



"You've been in a plane that size, right? Five people in that space – it's cozy. I felt a little like a sardine, but not as smelly," she joked. "I was relieved when we were actually going – anxious. All in all, it was pretty surreal. The tandem jumpers make you feel very comfortable. They're professional, but also amusing, and for lack of a better word, fun."

Then it's out of the plane and into the great wide open.

"The free-fall was amazing," said Shaw. "You are just falling to the earth. You have a huge adrenaline rush and an incredible feeling. Also, not being the one to pull rip-cord, you really have no idea how long it's going to last or when your parachute is going to open."

Hansen had a similar experience.

"I liked the free-fall the best. And, it was not at all like I expected. I thought expletives would be flying out of my mouth like there was no tomorrow," she said. "Instead, I kept saying 'Oh, my God! Oh, my God!' I guess because it's so hard to believe what's happening and because the view is so incredible."



She said that as you free-fall, you reach speeds of up to 120 miles per hour for up to a minute.

"But it doesn't feel that fast or like it lasts that long," she said. "I think the most amazing part is the force of the wind. It seems like it might take your breath away and yet it really doesn't."

Once the parachute opens the whole fall takes on a new dimension.

"I thought one of the best moments is when the chute opens and you instantly go from hurling towards the earth to a slow, gradual fall," said Shaw. "It was one of the most calming moments I've ever experienced. All the adrenaline and nervousness of the jump is gone. You feel so calm, all you can do is just take in the sights."

Touchdown, and the crowd goes... quietly. Hansen said once she hit the ground she felt safe and had a better understanding of the reactions of jumpers who went before her.

"The landing was very smooth. I thought it would be a bumpy end to an exciting ride, but I was surprised at how gently I was placed on the ground. You just lift your legs and slide on in," she said. "I thought I would be way more jacked up than I was when it was over. I wondered why everyone else who returned from their jumps weren't hooping and hollering from the rush and the relief. But, it's not like that. It's just, for lack of a more expressive word, cool. So freakin' cool."

## Raging rapids

The winner for the rafting trip was Roxanne Meek, who brought along her husband, Bob. Both are nature enthusiasts who had recently started up their own photography business. This was Roxanne's second rafting trip, but Bob's first, and he had a few reservations about it before he started.

"I was very nervous. I wasn't sure what to expect. I thought I might fall out and I worried if people could pull me back in. I was afraid of hitting rocks. It's the unexpected is really what it is," he said. "I always wanted to do it. But I was always putting it off for 'someday.'"



But then that "someday" became "today."

"I was really excited and really happy I was going rafting again," Roxanne said. "I really wanted Bob to have a good time."

By the time I had arrived to meet them at The Inn by the River, Roxanne and Bob had already explored Moxie Falls, and invited me out to try to catch sight of a moose after we had a scrumptious dinner at the Inn.

As we got ready to hit the water, Bob was still nervous, but definitely warming up to the idea, helped by the professionalism of the staff and the excited buzz of the fellow rafters.

"I don't think it could have been better. The people were great, they were very professional and did a great job," he said. "They knew their stuff – where to go and how to have fun. It was super."

The day was a little overcast, but the water was warm and utterly amazing. Riding the river is akin to strapping yourself into a roller coaster where you have to do a lot of the work, but you still don't feel

in control. You're rolling up and down into huge swells of surging water that crashes over you and can push the raft around like a bath toy. But in a fun way, honestly enough. As you break through a set of rapids into calmer waters, you feel exhilarated and want to hit more almost immediately – even as your arms are aching from overuse.



After the raging river, a hearty lunch/early dinner was served up by the same people who rafted. And to say that the food was good is an understatement – especially after that trip.

Roxanne was impressed with how hard the staff worked to make sure everyone had a good time.

"They were serving out meals in their wet suits; they worked very hard," she said. "It was definitely worth the trip. Everybody should go. I was amazed how many people went, and it was so fun!"

For me, one of the most interesting things about rafting is meeting people. Along with myself and the Meeks, our crew was also composed of two other small groups: a father and two sons and a pair of jocular men looking for adventure, with Nanook as our guide for the trip.

Nothing makes friends faster than riding a river and knowing that the person next to you may be the one who hauls your butt back into the boat should you fall out.



Nanook Tuefferd, our fearless guide, is also the bank manager at Skowhegan Savings Bank, and has been guiding people down Maine's three rivers for more than four years and rafting a total of five. He tries to make sure that everyone has a good time on the trips and eases people's fears as much as reasonably possible (after all, this isn't a Disney ride).

"I try to talk to them and make it [the rafting trip] not seem like a big deal. I try to get them to talk, I joke and ask questions," he said. "I try to remember what it was like for me the first time. It's OK to be nervous. It's really cool when people come through their first rapids and say, 'I wanna do that again!'"

But this trip no one went overboard, though I think all of us got knocked around a bit by the mighty Kennebec.

"It's amazing to win a trip like this. It was a fabulous time, it really was," said Roxanne.

"It gave us an opportunity to go on a trip that we otherwise wouldn't have been able to go on," added Bob.

Whenever there is a high-water release, the party at Boatman's kicks up a notch. But Maine has more than one river, and none of them are the same. The Dead River offers the most continuous white water on the east coast, with 16 miles of rapids. There are still three release dates left for you to check out.

Then there is the mighty, mighty Penobscot. This is where you'll find the only class five rapids in the state. This is serious rafting, and has a minimum age requirement of 14 and minimum weight of 110 pounds.

Make sure you listen to your guide.

If you're feeling hardcore, you can also jump AND raft in the same weekend, a la the aptly-named Jump and Raft. Skydive New England handles the jump and Three Rivers the raft, and you have two awesome and extremely different ways of taking in the views around Millinocket.

Three Rivers offers fun on white water into October, so don't let the nay-sayers fool you. Summer lasts well into September, and even if the air does cool off some, that just makes the water feel warmer.

For more information about Three Rivers and Skydive New England, check them out at <http://skydivenewengland.com> and <http://www.threeriverswhitewater.com>. You can also follow them on Facebook.