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The Thrill of Falling: Skydiving, BASE Jumping, Caving Diving and More

Are You Nuts? The Basics of BASE Jumping

Quite possibly one of the most extreme sports, BASE jumping, has many enthusiasts all around the world. The world BASE itself is an acronym that defines the four fixed categories of leap off spots that a BASE jumper may choose from which to jump. "B" stands for "building", and pretty much refers to any man-made structure.

The letter "A" refers to the term "antenna" and designates structures that are, as opposed to building, uninhabited, such as antenna masts, large oil wells or other structures. The "S" stands for "span" and refers to structures that span a distance, such as bridges. Finally, the letter "E" means "Earth", and this simply indicates any natural jump off point, such as a cliff, ridge, or range. BASE jumpers will pick any of these spots and then jump from them with nothing but a parachute.

Even though BASE jumping has been a much-publicized activity as of late, it is not a new sport. As a matter of fact, as early as 1912 American Frederick Law made a daring jump off the Statute of Liberty. The early jumps, however, were merely daredevil stunts and usually not repeated. Furthermore, others did not seek to "one up" the jumper by choosing an even more daring leaping off point.

All this changed in the late 1970s when extreme sports aficionados suddenly realized the potential of this largely untapped competition. It is noteworthy that individual who came up with the BASE acronym, Carl Boenish, was a devoted jumping enthusiast yet his life was cut short during one of his own jumps in 1984.

Are BASE jumpers nuts? Well, it depends on whom you ask. Common sense would agree that this kind of sport is highly dangerous since any parachute malfunction or human error will most likely result in severe injuries or death. For this reason, enthusiasts will do well to check their gear and be aware of the different needs their sport of choice has. For this reason, follow these basic rules and you MAY live to do it again:

Use the right parachute. While this may appear self-explanatory, it is surprising how many BASE jumpers are not aware of the differences in gear when it comes to parachutes. Considering that the jump is made from a relatively low altitude, you will need a specially designed parachute that will open quickly. Adding to this the fact that at the time of opening, there is very low fall speed, your parachute needs to be designed to deploy at such a low airspeed.

If you do not purchase a parachute that is especially rigged for BASE jumping, you run the risk of using a skydiving chute, which is designed to open at a high air speed. Using this kind of gear will most likely result in your death, so do not skimp when it comes to purchasing the chute, and do not compromise on what you need.

Learn how to use a parachute. While this may appear to be common sense, it is surprising to see how many BASE jump aficionados get hurt simply because they do not know how to land with a chute. It is not enough to have the right parachute, you will also need to know how to deploy it, when, and how to make a safe landing with it. Practice makes perfect, and you may wish to do some skydiving jumps first to get you in the habit of parachute handling.

Granted, a skydiving jump and a BASE jump are not alike, but the knowledge of handling a chute and making some safe landings will help you in transferring that knowledge and hands-on experience to your BASE jumps. Just keep in mind that BASE jumps are a lot faster than skydiving jumps and you will have considerably less time to pull off a safe landing.

Find a safe jumping off point. Even if you have the proper chute, it will do you little good if a rock formation, or group of trees snags it. The result will be your getting dashed against the rocks or trees, and your chances of escaping serious bodily injury or fatal consequences are slim to none.

Learn how to fall. While it is true that those who go up must come down, the method of doing so is not always easy. Consider that a jump that would do your old swimming instructor proud will most likely cause you to make a tumble in the air, which is a deadly mistake when you consider that you only have seconds to open your chute.

If you are still tumbling, you will get tangled in your chute and odds are it will not open properly if at all. Similarly, if you get tangled in your chute because of the tumbling in the air you may run the risk of getting strangled during the fall.

Bouncing to the Extreme: The Basics of Bungee Jumping

You have seen them taking leaps from bridges, cranes and platforms. Diving headfirst into what appears to be a disastrous encounter with the ground and then being "saved" at the last second by the bungee cords attached to their ankles. You may have shaken your head and called them "fools", or worse, or you may have said to yourself, "Wow! I've got to try that!"

If you are one of those who is ready to try it yourself, ready to feel the rush, then you will be happy to know it's not that hard to get started. There are permanent bungee jump locations in many of the larger cities where you can go most any time of the year to 'take the plunge'. In addition, there are traveling bungee experiences that will eventually come near you.

Once you get connected with the place, you may be surprised how easy it is to take your first jump. Bungee, for the casual jumper, does not require a lot of knowledge of the sport or any personal equipment. All it requires is the courage to jump. The operators of bungee concessions are trained professionals who know the equipment. They have done the "math" and can tell exactly how long a bungee cord needs to be for each individual jumper.

Your 'training' will be quite short, just a simple explanation of the procedures and you will most likely be required to sign a disclaimer that explains the parks responsibility, their limits of liability, and acknowledge that you have no known medical conditions that disqualify you from

bungee jumping. Your height and weight will then be recorded and you'll be attached to the proper length bungee cord (depending on your size) by a harness.

Depending on the bungee concession, you may get a choice between harnesses. There are two basic types of bungee harnesses to choose from: the ankle harness (both ankles are normally harnessed) and the body harness. Jumping with an ankle harness is what might be considered 'classic' bungee jumping (in almost every case you will also have some type of body harness as a backup but the actual jump and the bounce(s) back up will be by virtue of your ankle harness.

If you are pulled back up or lowered to the ground, the body harness will be used). The body harness (without an ankle harness) will no doubt be less stressful on your ankles and legs and will 'feel' safer for most novices. The body harness may have the bungee cord attached at your stomach or at your back. Then at the end of your free fall, when the bungee cord starts to exert its pull, you will need to be facing up or down depending on where it is attached. Not to worry, the jump operator will carefully explain this procedure to you before the jump.

The bungee concession will, no doubt, have rules about 'how' you are allowed to jump but just for your information, here are some of the various types of jumps:

The "swallow dive" is accomplished by leaping away from the platform with your arms stretched out like a bird.

The 'back dive' is much like the back dive you would perform off the high dive at a swimming pool. Jump back and gracefully go into a nose-dive.

The 'bat drop' is something you will never be allowed to do at a bungee concession but just for your information, it is a maneuver where you get yourself hanging upside down (like a bat sleeps), hanging from your toes or having a couple amigos hold your ankles and then just drop straight down.

The 'elevator drop' is a feet first jump -- you maintain the feet first position until the harness takes over. Warning: If you are jumping with an ankle harness, the 180-degree flip (when the bungee cord takes over) could exert a lot of force on your ankles and legs and could hurt you).

The 'pogo' is really a dangerous maneuver to be used by only the most experienced jumpers. Using an ankle harness, you jump feet first (the elevator drop) but you are holding onto the bungee cord, near the ankle harness. Ideally, when the bungee cord is fully extended, you will still be in an upright position and will "pogo" up and down a few times. The reality is, this maneuver makes it very easy to get hurt (and besides, the bungee concession operators ask you to never touch the bungee cords with your bare hands.

Dive Right In: Different Extreme Diving Sports

This article will look at several different types of extreme sports in the diving arena. Please remember that all extreme sports are not to be entered into lightly and can cause life-

threatening injuries and possible loss of life. With that said, here is a look into the exciting world of extreme diving.

Dividing With Great Whites: When you go cage diving with great white sharks in Africa, you will have to start very early in the morning. The boat is specially equipped for cage diving with the great whites. You throw fish overboard to attract the sharks and then you enter the water the moment the shark or sharks arrive. If you are looking for an extreme adrenaline rush jump into a cage only breathing with a snorkel and have a great white come and show you their teeth up close and personal.

Space Divers: If you have never heard of diving from space, it is diving from the very edge of our atmosphere. For those of you interested in space diving consider this visual: on your climb to the edge of space the temperature drops to around 94 degrees below zero and you still have not reached your destination. You will be sucking down oxygen while you climb closer and closer to the exposure to ultraviolet radiation. While you are continuing your climb, you begin to wonder if your space suit will hold up or spring a leak.

As you pass 43,000 feet and climbing, you look at the curvature of the earth and the darkness around you. You will actually reach the peak of your ascent at 102,800 feet above the earth – this is called the edge of space and it is now time to jump. Once you reach Earth's gravity you are propelled to 614 miles and hour, which is nine-tenths the speed of sound.

Scad Diving: If you are interested in this type of diving experience you will get an adrenaline rush because you are dropped from 164 feet in the air free falling with no bungee cords or parachutes into a suspended safety net reaching speeds in excess of 56 miles per hour.

Arctic Scuba Diving: Offers the diving enthusiast the opportunity to go ice diving, diving with whales, or open-water diving. In this surrounding, you can experience diving under the arctic ice among ice stalactites or inside glacier pools. You could be diving beside looming walls of ice or exploring ice caves that are in icebergs. You may wind through hundreds of passageways under the ice.

Extreme Sky Diving: There are many different skydiving adventures available for the spectator to watch or the extremist to try. Those of you who enjoy skydiving will love the thrill of jumping from 15,000-feet overlooking the Kennedy Space Center and this provides a beautiful scenic view of the Atlantic Ocean. This is the highest altitude you will find in the State of Florida.

Extreme Cave Diving: Extreme diving is named such because it can be life threatening. Experienced cave divers know how to handle situations that may cause injury or death. When they are past 200 meters and run into trouble the simple maneuvers that they would use to free themselves actually may exhaust them and they could pass out and perish in the dark, depths of the cave.

Extreme cave divers are a small group driven by the desire to push the limits of gravity through diving into the dark, unforgiving waters. Diving into caves adds another element of danger because if you were to have a problem you are unable to "shoot straight" up to the surface and that could be tragic for the diver.

Extreme Cliff Diving: If you are looking for an extreme adrenaline rush, diving off cliffs with rocks on either side or a narrow pool of water as your target may just be for you. Often cliff divers also have to consider navigating exactly where they will land in the pool of water because there are rocks underneath the water that cannot be seen except as shadows in the water below. Many cliff divers enjoy the heights of 80-feet or more. In California, cliff divers from all over the world enjoy the challenges of The Punch Bowls, which has several waterfalls and you have to jump away from the falls.

Free Diving Not for the Faint of Heart

If you love water and have a yearning for an extreme sport, then free diving may be for you. There are a number of different kinds of free diving, from the tranquil snorkeling, to free dive photography, to the competitive apnea dive. All of these activities have in common the idea of diving without the help of a breathing apparatus.

Yet while snorkeling is a rather low stress activity, after all, you will be swimming very close to the surface of the water and are able to breathe through a short rubber tube, apnea diving is the extreme fringe of the sport. Essentially, in the extremes, the idea is to dive as deep or long as possible on one breath of air.

There are about three categories that are recognized within the confines of free diving competitions:

The static category refers to competitors simply being timed while holding their breaths. This can be done in shallow water or even a swimming pool. Highly accurate time measuring devices are employed since many contestants are only split seconds apart.

The depth category has many facets. Some competitions will seek to determine who can dive deepest without the help of any gear, such as weights, lines, fins, or other diving helps. Other competitions may allow fins. Still others will permit a line along the descent but not allow any fins.

Another kind of depth category competition will permit the use of weights on the descent and then will allow for the diver to ascend with the help of a lead line. Quite possibly the most dangerous form within the depth category is referred to as "no limits" competition where divers may use any kind of weight to dive deep and then enlist the aid of buoyancy helpers to ascend.

Another more tame kind of competition is the dynamic apnea trial, where divers compete while swimming underwater. She or he who can swim the longest underwater on one breath of air wins. Sometimes fins are permitted, but not always. Since this is an activity that can be held in a swimming pool it is particularly popular inlands.

While this activity may appear at first glance to be safer than other extreme sports, such as BASE jumping or bouldering, it is important to note that it does have its own host of problems that are unique to the sport. For example, many divers have drowned in the attempt to compete in the depth category. Either they go too deep or run out of air before they reach the

surface. By the time someone realizes that the diver has gotten into trouble, cardiac arrest has usually already set in and it is too late for the competitive diver to be revived.

However, there is another danger that may lurk in even the shallow end of the pool. A medical term "shallow water blackout" refers to the occurrence when an otherwise healthy, experienced swimmer suddenly passes out (or blacks out) even in shallow waters. Usually this happens when divers will practice holding their breaths under water. At fault is an overriding of the breathing reflex, which happens when oxygen in the blood is depleted before carbon dioxide levels have to the point of triggering the reflex.

The result is that the swimmer does not realize her or his desperate need for air and instead simply loses consciousness. When the breathing reflex is then engaged, water fills the lungs and cardiac arrest and brain death occur.

In order to keep safe during free diving, follow these steps:

When you practice holding your breath, never ever practice alone. Have a spotter there with you can jump to your aid at a predetermined time period. While this is not a foolproof system to stay safe, it greatly increases your chances of being revived should you succumb to shallow water blackout.

Talk to your doctor and listen to her or him. If she or he advises you that the depth of diving or constant breath-holding are causing damage to your heart or other body system it is time to quit.

Know your limits. While it is tempting to hold on for just a split second longer, it is not worth it to be awarded a record posthumously. Safety comes first!

Getting to the Drop Zone: Skydiving Down to the Basics

Skydiving can be a fun sport and with the proper training, one of the safest of the "extreme" sports.

Typically, skydiving is done from an airplane at altitudes of around 10,000 to 13,000 feet. However, skydivers (the professionals) have been known to jump from balloons and helicopters. After freefalling for one or two minutes, during which you'll see some great aerial acrobatics, they deploy their parachute and guide themselves into or near the intended landing zone. When the parachute is open, the parachutist controls the direction of his or her descent with cords called "steering lines." The steering lines are attached to the inner surface of the chute and allow the jumper some limited navigation.

Most novice skydivers make their first jump in a tandem arrangement with an experienced and trained instructor. The instructor and student are strapped together with a harness and use a single chute. The advantage of this is that the novice requires very little instruction before actually experiencing a jump. Before a student is allowed to jump solo, the student must go

through a significant period of training, both in the classroom and in a mock jump zone (jumping from a tower).

There are four basic sets of skills that the novice is required to learn: skydiving safety, free falling, operating the parachute and how to land.

Under the heading of safety, the student is expected to know how to check the parachute and harness, what to do in an emergency, how to exit the plane, what not to do when freefalling, what to do if the main chute fails to open and what not to do when landing.

The most important aspect of the freefall instruction is learning how to maintain the 'stomach down' position that allows maneuvering while maintaining the perfect position for chute deployment. When freefalling you are traveling toward the earth at approximately 125 mph, so knowing what to do and when to do it is critical.

The timing involved in deploying the parachute is critical. The jumper needs to be high enough to be able to react if the chute does not deploy properly. Every skydiver has a reserve parachute that is used (and hopefully never needed) for this emergency situation. In the US, this reserve parachute is a requirement. By law, the reserve parachute is packed or folded by a person certified by the FAA.

They also routinely carry both visual and audible altimeters to help maintain altitude awareness. The lowest recommended altitude for deploying the parachute is 2,000 feet and it's not unusual to see skydivers deploy their chutes at elevations up to 5,000 feet.

Skydivers are normally trying to touch down as close as possible to a particular location, but more importantly they are attempting to land safely. The rule is if you can't land where you are supposed to land, land in the safest available spot.

If the skydiver lands properly, he or she will land on his or her feet, on the run (like jumping off a San Francisco trolley). Just before touching the ground, pulling both of the steering ropes will "flare" the chute and assist a soft, stable touchdown.

The novice skydiver has a long 'row to hoe' and they are not considered safe (by the experienced skydivers) until they have completed 50 to 100 jumps.

Considered even a worse safety hazard is the jumper who has between 100 and 500 jumps to his credit. This person is considered dangerous because he or she has gotten over the fear of jumping, but may not have developed sufficient respect for the danger of the sport and, as a result, may act foolishly.

Speaking of safety, there are 10 "Golden Rules" in the world of skydivers that are worth noting:

Golden Rules

1. Descend and land safely.
2. Land safe even if you don't land close to your target.

3. Be ready for anything to happen
4. Know what's supposed to happen next
5. Always plan ahead
6. Never give up skydiving
7. As you are falling, know your altitude
8. Don't ever jump unless you are ready and the situation is right.
9. Don't make low, sharp turns.
10. Know your gear, and check it.

It's a Bird! It's a Plane! No--It's a Sky Diver!

Skydiving comes in many forms and from several distances. You have your professionals, teachers, novices, and spectators. The draw of skydiving for many sports enthusiasts is the prospect of flying without a plane. This unique experience allows you to soar through the sky and feel nothing but the air you are gliding through.

When you jump from the plane, you begin to accelerate toward the earth gaining speed with every second you are falling. As you are gaining speed the resistance of the air increases. When you reach the point of gravity, the skydiver will no longer continue accelerating at this point. This is what is called terminal velocity.

There are several positions the skydiver can take. I am sure you have seen pictures where they are tucked in a ball or in a spread eagle position, or in the position where it looks like they are diving straight towards the earth. Each of these positions affects the air resistance on the skydiver. If the skydiver uses the spread eagle position, they will reach the terminal velocity slower than another position because the resistance of the air is greater.

An Austrian skydiver became the first person to sky dive across the English Channel. He wore a jumpsuit with a carbon fin strapped to his back and an oxygen tank so that he could breathe along with a parachute when he landed at his destination. When he jumped from the plane he reached speeds of 220 miles per hour when he first began, then for the most part, he was soaring at 135 miles per hour.

Accelerated Freefall: If you enjoy skydiving, you will revel with the adrenaline rush you receive when you begin a course in accelerated freefall. This course is a six-hour course that will teach you the fundamentals of freefalling, safety procedures, and parachute flight. You will also fly within no less than two instructors at least 11,500 feet about the earth. Once you have

completed the different levels of this course you will be licensed and able to jump and perform accelerated freefall whenever you get the rush.

Static Line Jump: This jump is the traditional method to learn how to skydive. The way this is performed the student does a parachute jump during which the deployment of the parachute is started by a static line attached to the aircraft. The beginning skydiving student will never feel like they are left alone or not know what the next step is the instructors are always around showing technique and preparing them for their first static line jump.

If you want to learn to skydive but are not quite sure if you are ready to commit to this sport you may want to consider experiencing a wind tunnel called SkyVenture. This is a state of the art indoor wind tunnel where you can safely experience skydiving. Several of the world's best skydivers use this as a form of training for their skydiving adventures.

Some questions that you may have regarding skydiving:

If you take a skydiving course, how do you know that you are doing everything correctly? Many courses offer debriefings after the jumps as well as video footage of your jump. You will hear from your instructors as to what you did and what needs to change and then review your jump via video.

What does it feel like to freefall to the earth? You may think that freefalling is much like freefalling on an amusement ride but it is quite different. Freefalling while you are skydiving feels more like you are floating on a cushion of air similar to the feeling of floating on water except with a great adrenaline rush.

While I am skydiving what happens if I cannot open the parachute? Opening the parachute is not as difficult as you may think that it is but if you were to have a problem or simply forget because you are enjoying the skydiving adventure, the instructors would open the parachute for you via computer devices. Each parachute is equipped with a computerized activation device, which will open the parachute for you if for some reason you were unable to. This makes skydiving safer than some people may think.

Look Out Below: Bungee Jumper Heading Down!

It may seem, to the casual observer, that bungee jumping is a relatively new sport, but it actually goes back to an ancient tradition of vine jumping, originated around 1500 years ago and still practiced (mostly as a tourist attraction) on the Pacific Ocean island of Pentecost (an island in the Vanuatus group, formerly New Hebrides).

Originally performed as a coming of age ritual, the islanders would erect towers and then select the strongest vines to use as their equivalent of the modern bungee cord. There are no statistics related to the survival rate or the number of injuries, but apparently the Vanuatus still have a population.

The modern version of bungee jumping, using the rubberized cords now known as bungee cords, took its first plunge in 1979 when four members of Oxford University's 'Dangerous Sports Society' took a simultaneous jump from the Clifton Suspension Bridge in Bristol, England. From that day to today, an estimated two million daredevils have jumped from every imaginable structure -- some few to their death, but the majority come out of the experience with no more than minor headaches and dislocations.

As you can imagine, there is much more to this sport than just grabbing a bungee cord, tying off and jumping. Physics and math are required to 'design' the jump so that the jumper's head comes within a foot or so of terra firma, while at the same time, the bungee cord has reached its maximum extension and starts to pull the jumper back up. Beyond the physics and math, it is highly recommended that the jumper be in great physical shape and either be an expert at setting up the jump or be closely supervised by an expert.

Initial indications are that bungee jumping is a relatively safe sport. Of the over two million people who have taken the plunge, there have only been 4 or 5 deaths and not too many serious or permanent injuries. In cases where death or injury resulted, it was either because of a poorly designed or poorly executed (amateurish) jump or because the jumper had some pre-existing medical problems they might or might not have known about.

The most common complaints from first-time jumpers are dizziness, blurred vision (from the sudden shift of the fluid in the eyes at the nadir of the jump) and various aches and pains in joints and muscles. However, almost all of these symptoms seem to pass in a matter of a few days. However, it is important to note that the majority of those who bungee jump with any regularity are relatively young (mid-20s) and have, therefore, not been doing it for that long. There is an as yet un-quantified (and logical) possibility that over the long-term the regular bungee jumper might have a painful old age.

The beauty of bungee jumping and its advantage over sports like parachute jumping or even competitive sports like pole vaulting is there is no real impact. The elasticity of the bungee cord slows the descent and absorbs the gravitational forces that the jumper is subjected to during the free fall (before the bungee cord is fully uncoiled and able to slow the descent). So powerful is the experience that the adrenalin rush that accompanies the jump is said to stick around for several days.

Now that you are ready to run right out and find a place to try bungee jumping for the first time, it is only fair to warn you that you might not find a place too close to home -- the sport is constantly growing, but is still not big enough to support an abundance of locations. When you do find a location, you will be carefully weighed and the bungee cord will be adjusted for your exact weigh -- this is a vital step because the more you weigh, the more you will stretch the bungee cord. Remember that the people who operate the bungee jumping locations are experts and know exactly what they are doing, so there is no need to be too nervous but an "xtreme" need to follow their directions.

There are different types of harnesses used (the harness attaches you to the bungee cord). The most common, and the type that holds the least risk for dislocated joints, is the body harness. With the body harness and the bungee cord attached to it you will soar like a bird and will be

able to do aerial acrobatics that would make an eagle jealous. You are almost guaranteed to have the 'time of your life.'

The Ultimate in Water Sports: Cliff Diving

Those extreme athletes who enjoy cliff diving will be the first ones to tell you to beware of the risks involved and to take this sport seriously. The risks are real and some can be life threatening in nature. Cliff diving is not a sport to enter into lightly and with each turn, the diver knows it could always be their last. Cliff divers exceed 60 miles per hour in less than three seconds.

Regardless of the flips and turns they do before entering the water when it is time to plunge, they do so feet first hoping to avoid head and neck injury. When they are entering the water feet, first they are doing so with the bodies perfectly still and rigid. Anything else could cause life-threatening injuries if not death. To understand the seriousness of this, consider what would happen if the diver were to fall at the wrong time or judge incorrectly their landing. It would be equivalent to falling from a four-story building, head first; you are not going to recover from that type of fall.

Cliff divers love Acapulco and the La Quebrada cliffs. When the spectator's view the distance the divers make from the cliffs, it looks as if there is a very narrow finger of the ocean that comes in to where the cliff divers take their plunge. In this city, they have been diving off cliffs for more than fifty years. It is an amazing extreme sport to stand upon the cliffs and look down at a very thin slip of water that has a cliff on one side, sharp rocks on the other, and commit to dive into the middle.

Jamaica is another favorite place for cliff divers who enjoy the limestone cliffs of Negril's West End. The only charge that applies for these extreme sports enthusiasts is adrenaline. There is a café for spectators, located 40-feet to 70-feet on the edge of the cliff.

California has some great places that draw cliff divers.

Gibraltar Dam in the Los Padres National Forest has a great place to cliff dive. Divers have their choice from 40-feet to 85-feet to dive from with various hazards attached if they so chose.

Box Canyon has cliffs that range from 15-feet to 65-feet with varying degrees of difficulty and is beautiful. There is also a 90-foot jump but the area to run in order to get a good jump is covered with brush.

Santa Paula Canyon Falls also known as the Punch Bowls that extreme cliff divers flock too. The jumps here range from 10-feet to 80-feet. This area is a complex of three waterfalls. These bowls are located in a very narrow canyon that rests in a sandstone gorge.

Hawaii hosted the Red Bull Cliff Diving World Tour Final where the finalists performed their magic jumping from 82-foot cliffs into a beautiful ocean below. The cliff diving sport in Hawaii dates back to the 1770s.

Monte-Carlo provided an opportunity for those who visit as well as live there to see the 16 best cliff divers of the world. They held a competition for the first time in more than 300 years of cliff diving history. The cliff divers who are the best of the best have a personality that is very charismatic and who put their lives on the line with every jump, flip, and aerobatic maneuver they create.

A professional among cliff divers, Dustin Webster, has been doing this sport for more than twenty years. Now if you are wondering exactly how high extreme cliff divers dive from consider the highest Olympic level and times it by three and you then have the distance that cliff divers jump from.

Once a diver begins their jump, they have two seconds to perform any stunts they have designed. In that two-second window, the divers feel emotions that are on the opposite ends of the spectrum from excitement to fear to relief that they are still alive. Concentration and perfect calculation of the dive is a priority or the diver could receive a fatal if not life threatening injury. To understand truly how extreme this sport is there are no more 150 professional cliff divers in the world!

Two's Company with Tandem Sky Diving

Have you always been interested in skydiving but not sure you want to take your first dive solo? You may want to consider tandem skydiving. This is a great way to experience the thrill of skydiving to determine whether this is a sport for you or possibly a wonderful gift idea for the sports enthusiast in your family. What exactly is tandem skydiving?

The definition of tandem skydiving is when you are harnessed to the front of a licensed instructor. In other words, when you are falling to the earth your instructor is on your back. You jump usually from around 13,000 feet, although you could choose a lesser distance if you wanted.

The instructor knows the exact time to exit the plane and jumps. You will then fall for one minute at the rate of 120 miles per hour (mph) and then pull the cord and your parachute will deploy. Then you will have approximately five to seven minutes of floating and breathtaking views as you descend to the earth.

Tandem classes normally consist of an hour (more or less depending on where you take your course) of class time where you will learn basic freefall skills and how to maneuver the canopy. You will have one jump connected to your instructor. After your jump, you will receive a First Jump certificate and logbook along with discount coupons so that you can come back with friends and enjoy tandem skydiving again. Many courses also offer a video of your jump at an extra cost if you desire.

If you think about it, there are not that many people who are willing to skydive. There are only certain types of people who are willing to jump out of an aircraft and freefall to earth at speeds of over 120 miles per hour for only a few minutes of heart pumping action. If you are one of

those individuals, you probably have experienced tandem skydiving on more than one occasion and have most likely coaxed your family and friends into the adventure with you. Of course, with tandem skydiving, you have your choice of the altitude you want to start your jump. You can begin as low as 9,000 feet or as high as 15,000 feet.

Free falling anywhere from 30 seconds to 60 seconds is pure adrenaline pumping action. When you choose to experience this pure mind-bending thrill, it is because you have overcome several mental blocks to get you up in that airplane. Skydiving can definitely change how you perceive life and that is true with most anything that challenges you to step away from your comfort zone.

You can find locations to tandem skydivers nearly all over the world. If you are planning a vacation family or otherwise and you have an itch to try skydiving, consider booking your vacation where a tandem skydiving facility is located. Chances are that if you try tandem skydiving once, you will be back for more. Many times, those who learn are likely graduate to jumping out of the plane alone or even possibly becoming a tandem instructor. It might be fun to continue and encourage others to enjoy the same rush that you do.

New Zealand offers a tandem skydiving package for the first time skydiver or the experienced skydiver. As you enjoy the pure adrenaline rush of tandem skydiving, you will also experience the breathtaking beauty of New Zealand as you glide to your targeted landing. After your brief lesson learning the ins and outs of tandem skydiving, you will then take to the skies and are on your way to your destination.

You will enjoy magnificent views of snow covered mountains and crystal clear lakes prior to your jump. Once you have reached the altitude you have chosen for your jump, your picture will be taken prior to your jump from the plane. Then, if you have chosen the package that includes video, there will be a camera operator recording your tandem adventure so that you can relive the moment day after day once your first flight is completed. It is a good idea to choose the package that offers a video of your first jump for the simple reason you will never have a first jump again and that is a moment that you truly do not want to miss.

Top Five Places That Take Your Cave Diving Experience to the Extreme

What separates a cave dive from an average experience, if there is such a thing, and an extreme experience? What makes one cave better than another? Would it be the depth you have to travel to get there or maybe what you find once you're there? Could it be the actual destination and the preparation that it will take to make the dive in the first place? Certainly the answer is as varied as the caves there are to dive and the number of cave divers there are in this world. Here are five caves that are a must on any extreme divers list.

Yucatan Peninsula in Mexico offers you hundreds of caves to choose from. From the striking stalactites and stalagmites this complex cave will bring a sense of exhilaration as you traverse its maze and depths. With caves this beautiful it is easy to get caught up in the rapture of the beauty that surrounds you and stray from the line, which would be a perilous decision. Another

concern is the sediment on the floor and at times above you. This sediment is white and if you are not paying attention to your line, you could easily lose it.

So while you are enjoying the beauty these caves, remember to keep track of your line. Yucatan cave diving will provide you with a magical experience. The cenotes here have undergone literally hundreds of years of environmental change that have wrought them with magnificent appeal.

If you are looking for a dive that requires more expertise and challenges for your experience, consider cave diving in the United Kingdom. Their caves are relatively few and of the ones that are accessible visibility is greatly limited. You will need to have the utmost confidence in your skills as a cave diver because you will be called upon to use all of them to experience the exhilaration the United Kingdom has to offer.

If you have not done so before donning a helmet is preferable as you are guaranteed to hit your head a few times! Do not expect to see beautiful views of anything in particular because the caves are narrow, cold and dangerous. However, if you are looking for the satisfaction of a difficult dive – this is the place for you!

Cave diving at the Nullarbor Plain in Australia should definitely be one you make in your lifetime. If you do you will have had a unique and thrilling adventure that you will not soon forget. Within this cave structure lies mummified and fossilized remains from years past. There are many caves and tunnels that have yet to be explored due to their isolation and difficult accessibility.

While you are still in Australia, another cave worth exploring is the Cocklebidy cave. After you have exerted great energy getting your equipment to the opening, you will find the experience as if you were on another planet. The entire system is void of any life forms whatsoever due to the high concentration of salt. Another option while you are in Australia is an experience that will shock the senses right out of you.

Dive into a Black Hole! No, this is not about boarding a spacecraft to find a black hole and dive into it – if that were possible – this is all about a vertical cave system found in the Bahamian islands. When you experience this, you will think you have found the bottom of the cave floor only you did not and your body will go through the thick, black murky water like something of a science fiction movie.

Cave diving in Saudi Arabia? When you think of Saudi do you think of water? Probably not. However, beneath the sun-baked surface of the desert, you will find caves that are flooded with water that has been flowing for thousands of years. These caves are known as the Dahl Hith caves. These caves will bring out the best in you. Their beauty is unmatched and the effort it takes to begin the dive will be richly rewarded with what you will find within. Any of these caves will offer you an extreme cave diving experience that you will not find anywhere else on the world.

Cave Diving: One of the Least Talked About Extreme Sports

What image comes to mind when you think of cave diving? Do you think of the shows you watch on the educational channels where they go into dark, murky caves with a string so they can find their way out and come back with treasures? You may think, "Wow, that looks pretty cool". What exactly is extreme cave diving?

Cave diving exposes you to risks that you would not encounter on a recreational dive (open or ocean dive) and risks that could be life threatening if you are unprepared. Cave divers are not concerned with injuries, as they are fully aware that the only injury that could occur, death is permanent. This is a big reason why cave diving is considered an extreme sport. You can't get much more extreme than the possibility of death.

Pushing to the depths of the watery darkness when you are told you can only go this far is a great draw to the daredevils of extreme sports. Part of being extreme is being told the limits and not only moving past them, but also pushing past them. For most, that usually does not occur on the first try. There are several tries and possible injuries before this is accomplished. What happens when that boundary has been claimed? You start all over again to push it even farther.

Cave diving in its extreme, is the knowledge that you may be the first one to either go to a particular cave or find something no one else has. In addition being the first to accomplish anything has an adrenaline rush all its own. Cave diving presents the challenge of testing the boundaries of your skills and making sure that you have the highest technical advantage to survive the elements. Cave divers find unique elements that you will not see in normal ocean diving or underwater diving such as the formation of stalactites and stalagmites along with possible archeological finds.

Another aspect of cave diving that makes it extreme is not only the perils of the dive, itself but also the return. A cave diver has to be prepared for many unknown elements. One is the ability to keep their senses when everything around them is telling them something different is happening. Another is learning the depth of the dive. Yet another is the return that can be quite long and complicated, as their body has to readjust to breathing air and not mixtures of oxygen and nitrogen.

These thrill seekers like the sensation of gravity as they return to solid ground. If this were not enough to excite the senses, the sheer fact that nature has the ultimate control, can send the adrenaline soaring. A wrong step taken along any part of this dive can have perilous consequences – hence the reason cave diving is extreme.

Extreme cave diving is done in a passageway that has no overhead air pockets and is flooded. If the equipment should malfunction, you can't simply stop. You have to continue the dive and return to the surface, which means you are still underwater. This is one of the reasons you have to be master over your senses. They body has a way to override reality when it perceives a threat of any kind and it takes great control to convince your body that what it is experiencing is not the true reality.

Cave diving is not performed with a direct descent, but rather what is called penetration diving. This means that the diver has no space to simply do a vertical ascent to reach breathable air if they were to have a complication with the dive. Cave divers are trained in technical diving, but this does not lessen the rush they get from going beyond the limits.

Extreme sports of any kind are popular for the sheer fact that you have gone into unknown territory and survived and not only survived, but completed the task more confident in yourself and your abilities. This self-confidence spills over into all other areas of your life as well. You faced the unknown, you did what others thought could not be done and you came out a better person for it. For the cave diver what could be more thrilling than looking death in the face and conquering it?

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