

BUNGEE JUMPING: A FREE FALLING THRILL

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Abstract

Bungee jumping is nothing but extending your limits as an individual mentally as well as physically. Bungee jumping involves jumping from a tall structure while connected to a large elastic cord to stop them from hitting the ground. The first time when you are geared up for bungee jumping, the only thing that comes to your mind is what you are going to do and what is going to be the result. Whether you will be safe after the fall is the second question. However, once you are through with the ritual, you will find a great boost to your morale and your self-confidence. The sport got its first jumper around 1,500 years ago. Bungee can be classified in the category of sports, which, to put simply, is the name of courage under fire. Falling from a height of around 120 to 700 feet and bungee up and down is only for those who have no love lost for their life! The sport was commercialized in the mid-eighties, and within a few years, became quite popular in Europe and North America. In India, bungee jumping came in the early 1990s. Today, most of the Indian metros have bungee jumping sites and more and more people are taking to this adventure sports.

Keywords: Bungee Jumping, Adventure Sports, Cords, Harness.

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Introduction

Bungee jumping is an extreme sport in which people jump from higher ground such as a bridge with an elastic rope tied to their ankles to stop them from hitting the ground. It is an activity that involves jumping from a tall structure while connected to a large elastic cord. The tall structure is usually a fixed object, such as a building, bridge or crane; but it is also possible to jump from a movable object, such as a hot-air-balloon or helicopter, that has the ability to hover above the ground. The thrill comes from the free-falling and the rebound. When the person jumps, the cord stretches and the jumper flies upwards again as the cord recoils, and continues to oscillate up and down until all the kinetic energy is dissipated. The rope is designed to stretch, not break. When the rope has stretched all the way, the jumper bounces back up. When people jump they wear safety equipment like helmets and a harness.

However, what is particularly interesting in the following analysis of the physics of bungee jumping is that the jumper experiences a downward acceleration that exceeds free-fall acceleration due to gravity. This takes place in the initial part of the fall while the bungee cord is slack (i.e. not stretched).

The word "bungee" originates from West Country dialect of English language, meaning "Anything thick and squat", as defined by James Jennings in his book "Observations of Some of the Dialects in The West of England" published 1825. Around 1930, the name became used for a rubber eraser. The Oxford English Dictionary records the use in 1938 of the phrase bungy-launching of gliders using an elasticized cord.

History of the Sports

There are great debates among the bungee jumpers as to the origin of the game. Some of them say that bungee jumping started with the people of Vanatu in the Pacific who used to throw themselves down from the towers with their ankle tied with vines. The Oxford University Dangerous Sports Club took inspiration from this ritual and started few experimental jumps in the 1970s. A. J. Hacket (owner of the bungee jumping company by the same name) saw the video of these jumps and thought of developing it as an adventure sports. He tested the latex

rubber cords in the extreme conditions and jumped first at Tinges, France and a new game was born.

According to legend, the sports got its first jumper around 1,500 years ago. This happened when a tribal ran away from her enraged husband who tried to kill her. However, when she saw her husband gaining in speed, she climbed a tree and perched herself at the top. But the husband was behind her even there. As a last resort, she tied her legs with few vines and jumped on, thereby giving birth to a new and exciting adventure sports. There is nothing more adventurous than getting a high from falling from a height. Bungee can be classified in the category of sports, which, to put simply, is the name of courage under fire. Falling from a height of around 120 to 700 feet and bunging up and down is only for those who have no love lost for their life! However, on a realistic plane, there is only an iota of risk involved in this game as most of the organizations that hold such events maintain high quality of professionalism. And if you won't die of fear, you would be okay after all.

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Who Can Take Part

There's not much physical requirement in bungee jumping except ones mental strength. One should contact medical consultant for information on his or her current physical status and suitability for the sports. As for the basic information, one should not be an expectant mother, should not have high blood pressure, must not have any heart problem, and better if they don't have any orthopaedic problem. Several cases of blood vessel rupture of the eye have been reported from bungee jumpers. In most of the cases, the sight returns in a few days, but if you have any eye problem, you should avoid the Sports.

Any person is allowed to participate in the game if he thinks that he is physically fit. Minors below the age of 14 have to get a letter from their guardian while a person above the age of 50 needs to show a medical certificate that he is physically fit to participate in the game.

Gadgets Required

Cords

Most bungee jumping cords are made from natural rubber. The common bungee cords like Euro and Mil Spec cords stretch 2 to 4 times the original length and the jumper feels 2.5 to 3.5 G's. It is important to note that commonly mountaineering cords are used for bungee jumping, but they should be stronger as the stress on the cord is always more when you are participating in bungee jumping.

Harness

A bungee jumper uses two types of harness. One is leg harness, which is attached with the cord, and other is body harness to give the backup.

Big Equipment

This includes the equipment from which a bungee jumper takes his jump. It can be a mobile crane, a bungee tower, a river bridge, bungee platform of a building, etc.

Other Gadgets

- Jump Deck
- Rigging System
- Additional Requirements for Elevating Jump Decks
- Portable Hoisting Device
- Harnessing Procedures and Specifications
- Rigging Equipment and Hardware
- Carabineers
- Slings/Webbing
- Ropes
- Pulleys/Shackles
- Ascenders and Descenders
- Scales

- Retrieval Vessel
- Equipment Inspection, Testing, Maintenance and Replacement
- Bungee Cords
- Hardware
- Ropes, Cables and Webbing/Slings
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Major Destinations

All major cities in India like Delhi, Mumbai, Bangalore, Hyderabad, Chennai, and Goa provide bungee jumping facilities.

Best Time

No specific time except the bad time! Bungee jumping is one sport in which you can indulge fully without any compulsion of climatic conditions.

The Process

Bungee jumping is nothing but extending your limits as an individual mentally as well as physically. The first time when you are geared up for bungee jumping, the only thing that comes to your mind is what you are going to do and what is going to be the result. Whether you will be safe after the fall is the second question. However, once you are through with the ritual, you will find a great boost to your morale and your self-confidence.

The real action starts at the site of bungee jumping on the designated day. The first thing you are needed to do is to sign an indemnity bond stating that anything that happened to you during the process is your responsibility and not of the organizer. However, remember that if anything happens to the participant due to laxity of the organizer, the onus is his. You will be then weighed by the bungee personnel and assigned a particular weight category. The next step is to wear all your gears with maximum care and go up the bungee pad-it may be a crane, tower, River Bridge, or any other place. All the equipments will be checked again and you are ready to jump. Many thoughts may come to you at this point of time and blood will be racing through your body. You will be counselled about the final pre-jump procedure and then dispatched from the jump station. After your successful attempt, the personnel can retrieve you either in a boat (if

you are bungee jumping in a lake or river) or you will be pulled up by using a rope. After the successful jumping, you will be experiencing the post-bungee euphoria in different ways.

Government Agencies and Permit

All the state governments do have their tourism and fisheries department offices in the capital cities where you can ask for fishing permits. For angling in the restricted areas, restricted area permits are required. These permits can be had from the Indian embassies/consulates/high commissions, Ministry of Home Affairs of the government of India, Foreign Residents Registration Offices (FRRO), and state government officials of the respective states.

Common Human Fears

- Fear of Falling
- Fear of Heights
- Fear of Death

Precautions

Bungee Jumping may result in a wide range of accidents as well as other related problems. Most of the problems take place either due to faulty equipment, lack of experience of the jumper, and inefficient personnel manning the activity. There are some norms and conditions that you are needed to see before going on with your plans.

- First, see that you are physically fit enough to go in for the big jump. You need to be properly counselled by your doctor and organizers about possible dangers of participating in this sport.
- Enquire about the event organizers and their past record in maintaining safety standards.
- Check all the bungee gears thoroughly for their quality. Faulty cords and other equipments are the prime reasons for bungee accidents.
- Also check about the experience of the bungee masters and whether they are qualified enough to conduct such events.
- Bungee site should be proper and free of any hindrance that may create problem during the bungee process. Enough space should be provided for the bungee jumping process.

- First aid and rescue equipments should be handy and the personnel must be qualified enough to handle any accident.
- At the last moment, if you think that you do not have the courage to go down, tell this straightaway to the bungee master.

In India bungee jumping is available in major metros like Delhi, Bangalore and Goa. In Delhi, Wanderlust has set up a mobile crane for bungee jumping at the Jawaharlal Nehru stadium. In Bangalore, Ozone has set up their jumping pad at Kanteevera stadium and in Goa, Gravity Adventure Zone has set up a permanent tower for bungee jumping. But a free-fall over the river, enthusiasts will tell you, is an experience to relish and cherish. Besides building, bridge or crane, you can bungee from a hot air balloon or helicopter, but these facilities are not offered in India as yet. With the Indian adventure sports tourism business pegged at \$2billion, bungee jumping is surely set to hit a new high.

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