

The Sport Of Bungy Jumping

Three decades before bungy jumping began to come into the public eye as a new sport, the well-known broadcaster Sir David Attenborough encountered people on the Pentecost Island who demonstrated their courage by tying vines around their ankles and diving from tall platforms. Shortly after, Chris Baker of England devised an elastic rope for attempting a similar feat. In 1979, members of the Oxford England's Dangerous Sports Club jumped from the 250-foot Clifton Suspension Bridge, marking the first attempts at bungy jumping as it is known today. Bungy jumping was slowly but surely gaining the public's interest as a potential sport.

In 1986, A. J. Hackett of New Zealand did his own first jump. To promote widespread interest, he bungy jumped from numerous structures, including the Eiffel Tower in France, going on to start up one of the world's largest bungy jumping companies. The A. J. Hackett Bungy company has expanded to locations in Macau, Mexico, Indonesia, Germany, the United States, Australia, and France, in addition to his original New Zealand location.

Not only was A. J. Hackett successful in spreading the word about bungy jumping, in creating his company he began to make this new sport much more widely accessible to those who wished to try it. While the Macau location boasts the highest commercial bungy jumping in the world, all of the other branches provide a nearly-equal degree of excitement for all who elect to participate in this sport.

The basic bungy jumping equipment consists of latex strands which are made into shock cords. Some companies and customers prefer to use plain ankle attachments, but in the interest of the jumpers' safety body harnesses are often used also. Although sites vary in their means of retrieval, the most common method is with the use of a mobile crane which can quickly and accurately lower the jumper to the ground. The variations of retrieval methods generally depend on the types of jumping platforms that are used.

In addition to the basic form of bungy jumping, there are some variations to this sport. In a Decelerator Descent, the jumper is able to slow down to a safer and more comfortable landing speed; the Macau Tower site provides for this style of bungy jumping, and is the world's highest facility for this style.

The Catapult version is actually bungy jumping in reverse, as the jumper begins on the ground and, with the aid of a crane, shoots up into the air. The Twin Tower variation is similar, but the jumper uses two cords.

The two other most popular variations are quite different from the usual type of

bungy jumping. In Bungy Running, the person races along a track to see how far he can go before he is pulled back by the bungy cord. On a much more tame scale than regular bungy jumping, the person wears bungy cords while using a trampoline, thus giving him the ability to jump much higher than with normal trampoline jumps.

The popularity of bungy jumping has been increasing. Whichever form of this sport you develop an interest in, you will be able to find exactly the one you're looking for.