

The Discovery Of Bungee Jumping

The discovery of bungee jumping may have taken place back in the 1700s by European explorers, but it was not until the 20th century that bungee jumping really made waves around the world. The current public awareness and concept of bungee jumping stems from a BBC documentary that aired during the 1950s on the topic of the land divers from Pentecost Island in the South Pacific. This documentary really brought the subject to public masses for the first time since the discovery of bungee jumping several hundred years ago.

It was Sir David Attenborough (one of the BBC's best known broadcasters and writers) and his crew that recorded the first film footage of the land divers, or bungee jumpers from the island of Penetecost in the 1950s. The discovery of bungee jumping was so intriguing and original, that it sparked quite an interest in the modern western world. Most people had never seen anything quite like it, much less ever attempted such a feat. Seeing the young natives jump from seventy foot stick towers and hurl themselves at the ground was shocking. The fact that they were tethered to the tower with a jungle vine was almost unbelievable.

Because of the impressive nature of this primitive form of bungee jumping, the American show 'That's Incredible!' (which ran on the American Broadcasting Network from 1980-84) actually sponsored a jump from the Royal Gorge bridge. They filmed the event and aired it on their television show, which could be considered one of the original 'reality TV' shows of our times. In addition, an extreme sports group based on Oxford and London called 'The Dangerous Sports Club' began to practice the new sport of bungee jumping. Inspired by the BBC documentary, this group is credited with the first modern bungee jump. The jump took place in Bristol, England, from the Clifton Suspension Bridge in April of 1979. These events catapulted the discovery of bungee jumping into the full attention of the mainstream media and the public's eye.

Within a few short years, the world would see an onslaught of bungee jumping enthusiasts and clubs to cater to the excitement of this new and dangerous sport. Modern commercial bungee jumping operators perform and provide jumping services from a variety of mobile cranes, hot air balloons, bridges and other types of structures. Commercial operators utilize the most advanced techniques and equipment to ensure safety of their patrons. Despite the intrinsic danger involved, insurance companies now provide liability coverage for such endeavors, as there have been few fatalities overall.

Since the modern discovery of bungee jumping, millions of people world-wide have taken the plunge into this extreme sport. There have been many safety standards

and strict guidelines set up to protect the public from injury as much as possible. Many permanent bungee jumping sites have even been set up. The first such site was set up at the Kawarau Bridge in New Zealand. It can truly be said that the discovery of bungee jumping has brought an ancient religious ritual into the forefront of the extreme sports culture of the 21st century, and surely beyond.