Extremely Fun Things To Do in Your Spare Time

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While the Winter Olympics were in Salt Lake City a few months ago, I was struck by the “extreme” nature of many of the events. Snowboarding, freestyle skiing, luge, short-track speed skating, and skeleton all seemed like risky sports—especially for a klutz like me. But it is precisely because of these risks that these sports are inherently exciting.

If you are even slightly interested in extreme sports, you are probably familiar with ESPN2’s television coverage of extreme events such as The X Games. Unfortunately, ESPN2 can’t spend all of its air time broadcasting such events, but the cable network has developed a web site that can help you get your extreme sports fix while ESPN2 covers more mundane sporting events.

EXPN (http://expn.go.com) features video clips, event updates, extreme sports news, and athlete profiles. In addition, EXPN has an active member community. For example, EXPN offers free web mail and hosts active message boards focusing on extreme sports. By browsing active message boards, I can find almost any information I need to know—or I can find a link to another web site that has the information I need.

Other popular extreme sports web sites include Extreme-Sports.com (www.extremesports.com), Bluetorch (www.bluetorch.com), and Sports3 (www.sports3.com). Each of these web sites provides a variety of information about extreme sports. For example, at Sports3, you can view action sports videos on demand, including surfing, skiing, snowboarding, mountain biking, and more.

One of the craziest sports around—in my opinion—is street luge. I thought that the luge events at the Winter Olympics were crazy. But when I started researching this article, I learned that street lugers were even crazier. Sure, careening down asphalt curves at death-defying speeds sounds fun—but what if you hit a pebble in the road?

You can learn more about street luge, also known as road luge and land luge, at Streetluge.net (www.streetluge.net). Here you can learn more about the sport, read articles about street luge, learn how to build a street luge, and participate in chats and message boards with other street lugers.

Of course, one of the most popular and oldest extreme sports is skateboarding. Skateboard aficionados have their own fashions and language (as do many other extreme sporters). To learn the basics, visit Skateboarding.com (www.skateboarding.com). You can also find the location of a skatepark near you. Skateboarding.com lists skateparks throughout the United States. You can search for skateparks by state, city, or park name.

Skateboarding.com is operated by TransWorld Matrix, which also features a web site devoted to extreme sports such as snowboarding (www.transworldsnowboarding.com), surfing (www.twsurf.com), BMX racing (www.bmxonline.com), motocross (www.transworldmotocross.com), and extreme freeskiing (www.freezeonline.com). At TransWorldMatrix.com (www.transworldmatrix.com), you can access links to all of these web sites, plus you’ll find news and articles about extreme sports.

If you want to bring the experience of skateparks home, you can build your own skatepark in your back yard. To get free, step-by-step instructions on how to build ramps, pipes, and launches, visit http://skatoramps.com. But be warned: You will need serious power tools!

GO TRIPPIN’

You can even plan a vacation around extreme sports. For example, Thrillseekers Unlimited (www.ThrillseekersUlimited.com) offers a five-day Ultimate Extreme package. During this vacation, you will experience firewalking, bungee jumping, rock climbing and rappelling, paragliding, mountainboarding or snowboarding (seasonal), indoor skydiving simulator, and a two-mile freefall skydive—plus you’ll receive photos and a video of your experiences.

Thrillseekers Unlimited also offers a five-day Stunt Experience where you can experience the life of a Hollywood stunt person. During the Stunt Experience, you will experience high falls, slide for life, air rams, ratchets, heavy weapons, bullet hits, car transfers, stunt driving and fighting, and pyro gags. Thrillseekers Unlimited is based in Las Vegas, Nevada.

Extreme Sports World (www.extremesportsworld.com/vacations.htm) can also help you plan your extreme getaway. You can find links to important vacation-planning resources such as resorts, gear rentals and sales, scheduled competitions, weather forecasts, and restaurants.

A LITTLE LESS EXTREME

If all of these sports seem a bit too—well, extreme—for your tastes, consider virtual extreme sports. You can play everything from PC video games to arcade-style simulations. For example, Activision (www.activision.com) offers video games that let you surf with professional surfer Kelly Slater, skateboard with pro Tony Hawk, go BMX racing with Matt Hoffman, or hit the slopes to snowboard with Shaun Palmer. EA Sports (www.easports.com) publishes Sledstorm, a snowmobile racing game. Infogrames (www.gamenation.com) publishes surfing, bike racing, and snowboarding games. No matter which extreme sport appeals to you, there is likely a video game that will let you experience the thrill from the safety of your own computer room.

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