

Mountain Sports

There are so many reasons to visit mountainous regions. Some people like to breathe in the clean air that comes from being away from the hustle and bustle of busy towns. Some like to admire the scenery, stopping at regular intervals to take numerous snaps of the picturesque view. Some like to walk through the mountain valleys, exploring local traditions and customs. Others, however, visit mountain areas with something different in mind: to try their hand at adventurous activities, to complete daring challenges or to participate in sporting feats which they can then tick off their life bucket lists.

So, what are these challenging sporting quests that people travel to the mountains for? Read on to find out about some of these adventurous sports. Perhaps you might find yourself travelling to the mountains on your next break away...

Mountain Climbing

Arguably, one of the most dangerous but varied sports within mountain regions is mountain climbing. By 'mountain climbing,' I am not referring to hiking up a mountain, wearily walking up a well-travelled path to the summit. I am thinking of those climbers who scabble up near-vertical rock faces, rope in hand as they work their way up the precarious terrain. Multiple groups of muscles are worked as these mountaineers rely on their strength to scale mountains. Mountainous regions often consist of a very mixed terrain and professional climbers may expect to navigate through rock, ice and snow, facing challenging conditions. Climbers must be wary of sudden rock falls, slippery ice slopes and sudden avalanches in addition to the dangers they face from the altitude of the mountains – a lack of oxygen and extreme weather conditions. Some mountains are so high that there is little oxygen near the summit. On Mount Everest, when the altitude reaches above 8,000 metres, climbers refer to this as 'The Death Zone.' Without enough oxygen, climbers experience difficulty breathing. If this isn't bad enough, the brain can start to swell causing sickness and the impairment of normal brain function. Climbers have been known to try to rip off their protective clothing, believing themselves to be overheating despite the cold. Others report hallucinations – chatting away to a friend that isn't really there!



Mountain biking

Many of us own a mountain bike. Perhaps you enjoy an exhilarating bike ride to the park or across the forest. But for some, mountain biking is an extreme sport where you actually do ride your bike down a mountain. Danny MacAskill is famous for his incredible mountain biking exploits. A film was even made of one of his daring challenges where he rode across the Cuillin Ridgeline - a range of rocky mountains in the Isle of Skye, Scotland. With sudden cliff drops and unforgiving terrain it would be a frightening experience for even the most confident rider.

Canyoning

Navigating your way down a fast-flowing mountain stream in a gorge, canyoning is an exhilarating sport that would definitely get your heart racing. With steep – often dramatic- drops down cliffs, adventurers travel down a natural gorge which is engraved out of the mountainside by the fast-moving water current. This adrenalin-inducing sport requires adventurers to have the heart of a lion as they navigate their way down the mountain. The experience is varied with a number of techniques used to travel through the course. When canyoning, you can expect to abseil down rocks, slide down waterfalls, swim through rock pools and jump from heights into pools of water – not a sport for the faint hearted!

RETRIEVAL FOCUS

1. What dangers do mountain climbers face?
2. Why might people visit the mountainous regions?
3. Why would riding your bike across the Cuillin Ridgeline be a frightening experience?
4. What metaphor is used to describe what adventurers need to have when canyoning?
5. What might you have to do when navigating through a canyoning course?

VIPERS QUESTIONS

V

What do you think is meant by the word 'feat'?

I

Why might you need the 'heart of a lion' to try canyoning?

P

Which sport do you predict is most popular? Why?

E

Which of these sports would you most like to try? Why?

S

What can happen in the 'Death Zone'?