

Ropes course tests physical, mental strength



Gabriella Thompson, 6, flies through the air at the ropes course in Tahoe City. Photo Copyright 2014 Carolyn E. Wright

By Kathryn Reed

TAHOE CITY – A cable to walk on that is no bigger around than the diameter of an average finger, balance beams swinging a hundred feet off the ground, bridges swaying even without the wind, ropes that turn climbers into spiderpeople. These are just a few of the contraptions of the ropes course at Granlibakken.

“I’m like Indiana Jones,” 8-year-old Jace Smith of Vancouver, Wash., says as he scampers along a bridge. His parents are below with cameras and words of encouragement.

His friend, Gabriella Thompson, 6, of Corpus Christi, Texas,

is all smiles as she whirs through the air on a zipline.

They are on the Flying Squirrel course, which is designed for kids as young as 5. Apparatuses are closer to the ground and the safety equipment is different than what it is used on the adult course. But big kids can go on this one, too.

Bridges is a loosely used word by designers. It's really some contraption to get from Point A to Point B. And never is it a solid bridge in the traditional sense, where one feels secure and doesn't think twice about crossing it.

These bridges are tricky. They all move. Sometimes the only thing to hang onto is your harness. Steps can be at angles or much farther apart than is comfortable. Ropes to grasp sometimes feel out of reach.

One "bridge" is really a snowboard suspended in air that requires hanging on like you're water skiing.

And the ground, well, it's always quite a ways down.

Some of the courses have ziplines going from one platform to another. These are brief opportunities to catch your breath, or take a look around at the incredible scenery. But that's assuming ziplines don't take your breath away.

All the stations are tucked into the woods.

The whole thing is like an adult jungle gym.

These ropes courses are not for people who like staying in control and in their comfort zone.

Ricki and Mark Viray came over from Marysville for the day to test their agility in the Monkey zone. There are five options – one beginner, three intermediate and one advanced. It's possible to do all five in the time allotted.

Even though Mark Viray has a desk job, it's in the military,

so he has more practice doing things like this. His wife shows off her balancing skills by not holding onto ropes or her harness as she cautiously puts one foot in front of the other.

Carolyn Wright of Zephyr Cove is thanking her Pilate's instructor for building up her core muscles.

Balance and a bit of upper body strength, along with the mindset that fear of heights is not going to cause paralysis, are helpful.

"Fear of heights is such a common fear. I don't think you overcome it, but you learn to manage that fear," Jesse Dessens, president and CEO of North Tahoe Adventures, told *Lake Tahoe News*.

Besides friends and couples who want to challenge themselves, the courses are often used by families and as team building excursions by companies.

Twenty people can go in a group, with groups starting every hour.

This will be the third summer North Tahoe Adventures has operated the ropes courses at the Tahoe City resort. Their Squaw Valley operation has existed for 16 years.

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Notes:

- North Tahoe Adventures runs the ropes course at Granlibakken. More info is online.
- Phone – 530.581.7563
- Cost – \$50 for 13 and older; \$40 ages 5-12. Sessions are 2½ hours.
- Maximum weight – 260 pounds.

- Open year-round.

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