

Ropes course a test of strength, balance



Eileen Fingerhut takes her time crossing moving logs.
Photo Copyright 2014 Carolyn E. Wright

By Kathryn Reed

Snake Bridge nearly bit Pete Fingerhut as he carefully swung between the logs and held on to the thin ropes.

Vertical logs are linked together five at a time, then three. And just when you have your rhythm, there are five single logs that test upper body strength, timing to step from one log to the next and agility to grasp the ropes.

London, a guide at Heavenly, described this feature as one of the more challenging ones. No wonder it is listed as black. (Elements are green for beginner, blue for intermediate and black for advanced just like ski runs.)

While this was Fingerhut's first go-round at the Discovery

Forest ropes course at Heavenly Mountain Resort, he and his family are now well versed at the resort's courses. The week before he and his wife, Eileen, and daughter, Sydney, had done the Black Bear Challenge Course.

They split their time between Meyers and Moss Beach.

"This course was more challenging," Fingerhut said at the end of the nearly two-hour session. "The other one is a lot of fun. It's funner than it looks."



Pete Fingerhut channels Spiderman for this feature. Photo Copyright 2014 Carolyn E. Wright



Sydney Fingerhut has no problem navigating the moving logs. Photo Copyright 2014 Carolyn E. Wright

Heavenly this summer opened three ropes courses at the top of the Gondola to complement other activities in the area.

“All three have a spectrum of difficulty,” explained Liesl Kenney, Heavenly spokeswoman.

This is just the start of what resort operators hope will be widespread on-mountain entertainment that goes beyond skiing and snowboarding. The South Shore resort is in the process of seeking environmental approvals for future expansion.

The plan is to have the courses open in the winter.

“The only time we can’t run them is in high winds or there is moisture on the features,” Kenney told *Lake Tahoe News*.

Two guides escorted the six of us. Groups max out at 16 people.

“I liked having the guides there to ‘show us the ropes’ and watch to make sure that all were safe. They were nice guys and

fun,” Carolyn Wright said.

And while London and Kyle were nice and informative about what to expect or how to tackle a feature, the constant oversight on the one hand is great for feeling safe, and on the other hand seemed a bit overkill. (Skiing seems to have more inherent risks; there aren't nearly the same number of employees on the slopes as there is on the ropes coursed compared to guests.)

Still, the features – at least in the Discovery Forest – are varied, fun and challenging.

Sydney seemed to have little problem keeping up with her parents. Her biggest problem at times was securing the cables to the guide wire. Part of her issue was height related. But my friend and I were having issues at times with getting it locked or unlocked.

From each platform there were multiple options. This cuts down on the waiting, and gives those who are looking for differing challenges the option to play side-by-side without peer pressure. Plus, if there is a feature that is particularly fun, it can be done over and over again.

It allows people to customize their experience instead of being on a set route.



Liesl Kenney demonstrates her balancing skills. Photo Copyright 2014 Carolyn E.

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Something always seems to be moving. Everyone seemed to struggle on the rolling logs.

“It’s really hard,” Eileen Fingerhut said once she reached the platform.

At one point she was nearly fully extended, more horizontal to the ground than vertical. That’s because the logs spin, so it is hard to stand upright while trying to walk. And, of course, all of this is while you are well above terra firma.

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Notes:

- Starting in September the ropes courses will be open weekends only. The gondola will close for regular maintenance in October. The resort opens for ski season Nov. 21.
- Weather will dictate if courses are open in winter.
- Must be at least 5 years old, weigh between 20 and 250 pounds, and be 42-inches tall.
- Prices:
 - o Discovery Forest Course plus gondola ticket: \$89 adult, \$78 teen/senior, \$68 child.
 - o Discovery Forest Course: \$60 with season pass or lift ticket.
 - o Black Bear Ropes plus gondola ticket: \$79 adult, \$68 teen/senior, \$58 child.
 - o Black Bear Ropes: \$50 with season pass or lift ticket.
 - o Boulder Cove Ropes plus gondola ticket: \$79 adult, \$68 teen/senior, \$58 child.
 - o Boulder Cove Ropes: \$50 with season pass or lift ticket.