

ERCA UK ROPES COURSE CONFERENCE 2010

Presentations - 1st and 2nd Dec 2010

Note: To attend the conference please [register and buy a conference ticket \(Order-Code: CON01\)](#). Please refer to the training courses [terms and conditions](#).

Time Schedule

Date	Description	Time
1st Dec 2010	Trade viewing	From 10.00hrs
	Lunch	12.00 - 13.15
	"Introduction" – Valentin Kern	13.30 - 13.45
	"ERCA" – Frank Schweinheim	13.45 - 14.30
	"How A (UK) Adventure Park Manages Risk" - Jerome Mayhew	14.30 - 15.20
	Tea	15.30 - 16.00
	"The Use of Trees for Ropes Courses" – Steve Maros	16.00 - 17.00
	"Opportunities for non-statutory accreditation in adventure activities". The work of the Adventure Activity Industry Advisory Committee (AAIAC) and NGB.	17.00 - 17.45
	Trade viewing	17.45 - 18.45
	Supper	18.45 - 19.45
	Guest Speaker – John Lawrence	20.00 - 21.00
2nd Dec 2010	Breakfast	07.30 - 08.30
	The European Standard for Ropes Courses - facts! How safe does a ropes course really need to be? How to establish if an old ropes course is safe to use? - Nick Moriarty	08.45 - 09.45
	"The Ups and Downs of Suspension Trauma" – Ashley St John-Claire	09.45 - 10.30
	Coffee	10.30 - 11.00
	"Rescue Techniques" - Steve Woods	11.00 - 11.45
	"The Role of the Technical Advisor - Dealing with the 'Grey'" – Bob Timms	11.45 - 12.30
	"Closing Address" – Valentin Kern	12.30 - 12.45
	Lunch	12.45 - 14.00
Trade viewing closes	15.00	

European Ropes Course Association (ERCA) Frank Schweinheim

The European Ropes Course Association (ERCA) was founded in 2003 and represents the interests of ropes course builders, instructors, operators and trainers. It is open to all nationalities and currently has members from 21 different nations.

ERCA has a number of national “contact” people to ensure its members are best represented. This is important as there are invariably differences in legislation and culture.

ERCA has produced its own industry standards for many years. These include

- ✓ Ethical practices amongst members (they do exist!)
- ✓ Operations
- ✓ Construction standards for permanent and temporary ropes courses
- ✓ Inspection standards
- ✓ Standards for training instructors

Beyond the development of standards, there exists a vibrant community of people who exchange best practice and who work hard towards furthering their industry.

ERCA actively participates at a national and international level in the development of standards for ropes courses.

More recent developments include the setting up of certification systems for the inspection of ropes courses and the training of staff performing safety-relevant work at ropes courses. In addition, in 2009 ERCA drew up training curricula (syllabus) for all types of ropes course, resulting in standardisation and ensuring the quality of ropes course instruction in Europe. This talk will present ERCA and gives information on the accreditation of inspection and training bodies.

Frank Schweinheim taught from 1992 until 2002 at the Deutsche Sporthochschule [German Sport University] of Cologne in the field of didactics and methodology, focusing on sport climbing. He has published didactical and psychological studies on climbing and in 1996 published the textbook Sportklettern (sports climbing). An outing on the subject of experiential learning took him and his students to a high ropes course in 1999. Since then he has been closely associated with the medium as a process facilitator. He has been a member of the Managing Committee and the Editorial Board of the European Ropes Course Association since 2002. In addition to ERCA standards and publications by the Safety Commission, Frank has participated as an expert on Project EN15567 since 2004. As Executive Director, he co-ordinates the setting up of certification systems for inspection and instruction as well as the work of expert groups in ERCA.



Frank Schweinheim

How a (UK) Adventure Park Manages Risk Jerome Mayhew

Ropes Courses, used for developmental ends, may have been around for over half a century but it is only within the last few years that they have become recreational adventure “magnets” for the public – in their millions!

The owners of recreational ropes courses are naturally focused on making a profit. In a largely unregulated industry this needs to be balanced against safety. What is the right balance and how is it best achieved?



Jerome Mayhew

Whatever people’s views may be on the recreational use of ropes courses (adventure parks), few would dispute that in little more than five years it is now a multi-million pound industry that has a remarkable safety record.

Most people that are involved in the outdoor industry will have heard of Go Ape! Fewer perhaps know that their managing director is Jerome Mayhew.

Jerome previously worked for 10 years as a barrister specialising in personal injury litigation. He is active in seeking to develop the regulatory framework within which the activity sector operates. He is a national and European expert on the recreational use of ropes courses and helped to draft the European standard.

The Go Ape vision is to create adventures and encourage others to live life adventurously. Jerome’s role is to make sure that the health and safety environment continues to allow the provision of adventurous activity.

The Use of Trees for Ropes Courses

Steve Maros MA; BA (Hons); NDip Arb; BSc (Hons) Arboriculture

The first ropes courses were built in trees over sixty years ago. There now exist more than 4000 thousand ropes courses in Europe and in the region of 20,000 around the rest of the world. The UK has in excess of 1200 ropes courses. Whilst many of these are built using poles a good proportion are still built in trees. The insatiable demand for recreational ropes courses (adventure parks) means that the use of trees for this purpose is unlikely to diminish.

With an ever growing public interest in protecting the environment, the way that trees are utilised is becoming increasingly significant. With several decades of relevant data to draw on, experts are now able to give advice on the most appropriate methods of construction and ways to help preserve the health of trees.

For many years, trees have been used as attachments for a variety of purposes. These have ranged from tree houses to hides, from notice-boards to ropes courses. In the past, many of these ropes courses simply consisted of wrapping ropes around trees and anchoring attachments to them. A lot of these trees, unfortunately, still bear the scars today. In essence, many were strangled to death or horribly mutilated. People generally have little understanding of how a tree grows and its requirements in doing so. The aim of this presentation is to try and address some of the issues, related not just to the use of trees for ropes courses, but also of trees in general and the need for owners of trees and local authorities to manage them in a proactive manner. In doing so, they are more likely to grow into old age and continue to add value to our lives.

Some of the topics Steve will cover will include:

- Trees versus poles
- Soil compaction
- Diseases and disorders
- Physiological problems
- Suitability of (certain) trees
- Bolting or wrapping around - the most current issue of debate!
- Legal Issues

Steve Maros is currently Dorset County Council's Arboricultural Manager. Previously he was the Head of Horticulture at Kingston Maurward College, where he specialised in teaching Arboriculture, Woodland Management and Forestry. He has 30 years experience of working with trees. This has ranged from forestry work in Cheshire to urban forestry work in Milton Keynes. He has also worked as an Arboricultural Officer in London. He is a well known guest lecturer in arboriculture at the National School of Forestry at Newton Rigg.

Steve has been working with trees in connection with ropes courses for approximately 20 years. He regularly inspects trees in England, Wales and Scotland. He has also carried out tree inspections in Northern Europe. As such, Steve has more experience on the affect ropes courses may have on trees than any other arboriculture expert in the UK.



Steve Maros

Opportunities for non-statutory accreditation in adventure activities

Iain Peter

The change in Government, the imminent outcome to Lord Young's review of Health & Safety and the introduction of the Learning Outside the Classroom (LOtC) scheme have all raised issues about the future of licensing and accreditation in the outdoor industry.

Sheriff Johnston's proposal, following the Barcaple fatality, only adds to this uncertainty. She has recommended: "A comprehensive review be undertaken by the Health and Safety Executive". She said the review should start as soon as practicable and should address the setting up of a single authority to oversee adventure activities. She also said it should look at widening the range of activities covered. This would therefore include activities that do not fall under the Activity Centres (Young Persons' Safety) Act 1995 and the regulations of 1996 and 2004 made under that act. Significantly of course this could include ropes courses.

A number of opportunities exist for the outdoor industry. On the one hand the industry may consider that it is perfectly capable of regulating itself. Statistically, the HSE considers the industry to be remarkably safe. On the other hand, the Government, and all those involved in the outdoor industry, need to consider what the public expects and demands.

Iain Peter will look at the opportunities that exist for non-statutory accreditation in the outdoor industry.



Iain M G Peter

Iain Peter is a qualified Mountain Guide with over 30 years of mountaineering experience. He has climbed and explored in many of the world's key mountain ranges and has made many significant ascents including Eiger North Face, Cerro Torre, Choy Oyu (8,201m) and Gasherbrum 2 (8,035m). In 2007 he led a successful commercial expedition to the summit of Mount Everest (8,874m).

He has worked in the Outdoors for most of his working life; firstly as a Guide and instructor at Glenmore Lodge in Scotland and at the International School of Mountaineering in Leysin, Switzerland. He was executive Secretary of Mountain Leader Training UK with responsibility for all mountaineering training and qualifications in the UK for 5 years and a Training Officer with the British Mountaineering Council.

From 1997 until 2006 he was Chief Executive of the Mountain Training Trust, a ground breaking Charity which manages Plas y Brenin National Mountain Centre (in Snowdonia) on behalf of Sport England. He is a Trustee of The Outward Bound Trust, Outward Bound International and Chair of the OBT Risk Management Committee. He is co-author of the definitive mountaineering textbook "The Handbook of Climbing" and Chair of the Scottish Adventure Activities Forum.

He is a Director of Adventure Activity Associates Ltd where his responsibilities include consultancy advice to Local Authorities, government, the outdoor activity industry and schools on matters relating to health and safety, strategy, planning, best value and operation.

**The European Standard for Ropes Courses – facts to know!
How safe does a ropes course really need to be?
How to establish if an old ropes course is safe to use!
Nick Moriarty**

A European Standard (EN: 15567) currently exists for all permanent ropes courses. This covers the construction and operation of ropes courses and in the event of an accident will form an important source of reference for enforcement bodies.

A European standard is only reviewed after the first five years except in the most **exceptional** of circumstances. Due to the rapidly changing nature of the ropes course industry, the European Committee for Standardization (CEN) has considered it necessary to review the ropes course standard - and this after only two years since coming into effect. The presentation will address what recommendations the BSI are to make to the CEN and what impact this will have on ropes courses.

How safe does a ropes course really need to be? How safe is safe!?

Many ropes courses are now entering their second decade. They may have been built to the best industrial practices at the time but how can one establish if they are still safe to use?



Nick Moriarty

Nick Moriarty has had more than twenty years experience in the outdoor industry. Initially as a climbing, diving and off shore sailing instructor but more significantly in the field of ropes courses.

He was the founder of Ropes Course Developments Ltd (RCD) which has built over a 1000 ropes courses in 32 countries and has trained many thousands of instructors in the use of ropes course equipment. He has had twenty years experience as a ropes course trainer, inspector, constructor and designer.

Nick Moriarty has overseen the compilation of the UK Ropes Course Guide in conjunction with the HSE. He was elected co-convenor of the CEN committee for ropes courses and more recently as convenor for the forthcoming review of the European Standard. He is an Executive Board Member of the European Ropes Course Association.

“The Ups and Downs” of Suspension Trauma

Ashley St. John Claire

The term “suspension trauma” is one that has developed as a common parlance amongst many who work in the fall protection industry and outdoor industry generally.

It describes the situation of a person falling into suspension in a harness and then becoming unconscious. In such an instance the loss of consciousness is not due to any physical injury, but rather, it is thought that orthostasis, motionless vertical suspension, is responsible.

The Health and Safety Executive claims that there are no documented cases of suspension trauma occurring during industrial use of fall protection. Furthermore, they “confirm that no change should be made to the standard first aid guidance for the post recovery of a semi conscious or unconscious person” – even where extended suspension in a harness has occurred.

Clearly the majority of ropes course use is not industrial. The type of PPE and its use is different. Many people appear not share the view of the HSE and their advice may be at odds with practice elsewhere in Europe.

UK operators are compelled to follow the advice of the HSE; however, is “Suspension” something we can ignore? How serious can it be? What measures can be taken to help prevent it occurring?



Ashley St. John-Claire

Ashley St. John-Claire is an experienced First Aid trainer with twenty years experience teaching in the outdoors. As a mountain instructor, ropes rescue expert and with military experience to boot he is well qualified to lecture on this contentious and emotive topic.

Rescue Techniques

A practical demonstration and explanation

Steve Woods

It is well known that most accidents on ropes courses, like other outdoor activities, occur as a result of human error. Human error is most likely to occur when people are under stress and when they are unfamiliar with a required skill.

Ropes course rescues are skills that most instructors learn as part of their initial training course; however, all too frequently it is something they rarely do again – until they have to.

Evidence has also shown that a disproportionate number of accidents occur during ropes course rescue practice.

There is currently a lot of debate over whether a rescue process should involve one rope or two and whether or not ropes should be cut. In addition to a practical demonstration of the techniques most commonly used in ropes course rescues, Steve Woods will also address rescue techniques in the context of statutory regulations.

Ropes courses are now used by millions of people in the UK every year. Undoubtedly, rescues can expose the instructor and the casualty to higher than normal level of risk. What is the best way to minimize the risk whilst still performing an efficient rescue?



Steve Woods

For 10 years Steve Woods has been at the forefront of Instructor Training in the UK and Europe. Steve has worked with a range of clients from all sectors of the ropes course industry; including, adventure parks, training companies, outdoor centres, military units, schools, and holiday companies. Steve has successfully trained thousands of instructors to use ropes course equipment.

Steve Woods is an accredited ERCA trainer and has a depth of relevant knowledge and experience that is unrivalled in the UK. He is passionate about the outdoor industry and is a committed rock climber.

The Role of the Technical Advisor – Dealing with the “Grey” Bob Timms

Almost every ropes course these days relies upon a “technical advisor”. Frequently they are Mountain Instructors or European Ropes Course accredited instructors. They may however be people with relevant experience that, in the course of their wider duties, are asked to advise on ropes courses.

There are infinite ways in which a ropes course can be designed, constructed and operated. Furthermore, the ropes course industry is developing at a startling rate. An enormous responsibility therefore falls on the shoulders of any technical advisor.

Bob Timms will address the complexity of advising owners and operators on their ropes courses. This will include striking the right balance between safety and obtaining desired outcomes. Outcomes may be set by owners or trainers and it is the technical advisors responsibility to ensure that these can be achieved in relative safety.

Bob will explore the difference between a technical “boffin” and a technical advisor!

Like most instructors, Bob Timms began his career working in commercial outdoor activity centres in the late 1980s. Following a two year spell on the assistant instructor scheme at Plas y Brenin, his employment revolved around the outdoor industry. He has been the coaching development officer for the Welsh Canoeing Association, activities manager to seven French activity centres, technical advisor in mountain and canoeing activities, assessor of ropes course instructors and has worked as manager of the National White Water Centre. He has also acted as an expert witness.



Bob Timms

In the early part of the new millennium, Bob returned to Plas y Brenin as a full time instructor specialising in mountain and paddle-sport NGB awards. In December 2004 Bob left the UK for the Southern French Alps where he started his own business – this included work as a technical advisor.

His diverse career in the outdoor industry has spanned 22 years and ranges from skiing to sea kayaking and ropes courses to canyoning. He has worked at national centres, universities, colleges, schools and with additional needs groups.

Contributions to the industry have included co-reviewing the International Mountain Leader syllabus for the MLTUK, writing and contributing to the BCU UKCC Awards, acting as the Training Officer for the British Association of International Mountain Leaders, and countless contributions to magazines and books. Bob holds the Mountain Instructors Certificate, International Mountain Leader Award and is a Level 5 Coach with the BCU.

Bob continues to live in France but now works full time for PGL Travel as their lead Technical Advisor within their Safety and Standards Department. He acts as the technical advisor for a number of activities including all of PGL's rope and off ground activities. This includes some 27 centres, 343 ropes course elements and approximately 1200 staff. He was responsible for almost 3000 individual assessments in 2010 alone.

JOHN LAWRENCE – Key Note Speaker

A remarkable man and a fascinating and highly amusing orator

Oxford University Graduate

Eskdale and North Carolina Outward Bound Instructor

Royal Marine Commando (experimenting with zip wires – death slides!)

Climbing on all 7 Continents (with many first ascents)

Mountain Instructor and Guide

Ski Patroller and Lift Evacuation Specialist

Mountain Rescue Adviser

Antarctic Research Leader

Principle Advisor United Nations



John Lawrence is currently Adjunct Professor of International Affairs at Columbia University, New York.

Born in England in 1938, educated at Oxford University, he served for 11 years in the Royal Marines and then with the Royal Marine reserves as an amphibious assault specialist.

After two years as an instructor at the Eskdale Outward Bound Mountain School (1963 / 1964) he travelled overland through Europe, the Middle East and Central and Southern Asia, via the Himalayas. He then spent four years working in Australia, New Zealand and Antarctica.

He immigrated to the US, and received his MSc and PhD from North Carolina State University in Industrial/Organizational (HRD) Psychology. He was Senior Research Psychologist at RTI International, and then Principal Adviser and Deputy Director of the Social Development Division at the United Nations Development Program in New York.

For the last eight years he has taught public policy and management at Columbia University.

He is known for his work in international development with education, labour and health sectors, and consults regularly for governments, the United Nations, The World Bank and regional banks and other multilateral organisations, as well as for bilateral development agencies.

He has experience in more than seventy countries in all world regions. Between 1988 and 2001, he was responsible for re-orienting UN approaches to sustainable livelihood, and for writing four of the UN Secretary-General's Reports to the General Assembly on Human Resources Development which proposed a general revision in national HRD approaches towards a broader, more sectorally integrated policy framework for how individuals can be assisted in their livelihood choices. He also led initiatives to bring e-technologies into the global policy arena.

His interests include policy analysis, public policy for sustainable human development, and use of information technology as instruments for social and economic progress. He has published more than one hundred articles, book chapters and technical reports in his field.

As a noted mountain climber, instructor and guide, he had many years experience in paramedical and mountain and water rescue, was qualified as Red Cross instructor in four countries, as well as adviser to the New Zealand Air Force Mountain Rescue.

In 1966-7 he was appointed leader of a New Zealand Antarctic Research Programme expedition to Victoria Land, Antarctica, exploring and mapping a region of the Trans-Antarctic Range. The Lawrence Peaks were named after him by the New Zealand Government (as noted in Wikipedia!).

In addition to exploring/climbing (with many first ascents) in mountain ranges on all seven continents, he was part of the team which built the North Carolina Outward Bound School and was involved in pioneering rock climbing in the Linville Gorge and western North Carolina, as well as major expeditions to Alaska (Mt McKinley) and Peru (Cordillera Vilcabamba). He served as senior patroller and advisor on technical Lift Evacuation for the National Ski Patrol over twenty years, receiving several awards, and keeping current through required annual recertification in NSPS paramedical training in winter emergency care.

His keen interest in back country and wilderness experience has continued with kayaking, windsurfing, cross country skiing and mountaineering. He is happily married to his wife of almost 40 years, has two children, a grandson, and occasionally plays the fiddle!