

A small step for man

We look at the ever growing popularity of leaping between buildings and swinging from lamp-posts that is known the world over as Parkour.

To some it is a sport, to others it is sheer madness. Childrens Express reporter Connor Scullion looks at the ever growing popularity of leaping between buildings and swinging from lampposts that is known the world over as Parkour.

Le Parkour, which comes from the French meaning 'obstacle course' has taken a foothold in history, springing and leaping into Sports Encyclopaedia throughout the world for its mixture of running, jumping and freedom of expression.

Co-founded in France by Sebastian Foucan, who was influenced by the likes of Bruce Lee and George Hebert, and who wanted to become "fluid like water".

Foucan began with a group of friends on the initial journey of jumping between gaps in local parks to the present day leaping between high-rise buildings and soaring above sports stadiums.

What is perceived as a sport is actually a philosophy, a way of living. Imagine walking to work in London, Belfast, Bristol or Birmingham past buildings, railings, lampposts and subways and feeling the urge to swing from them or jump over and across them.

The railing is not seen as a structure but as a means to expression. A means of challenge or travel. Whilst most would simply sit happily at a computer desk or labour on a building site, the Parkour specialist is always intrigued about the next step.

The Armstrongesque "giant leap for mankind". Even the new Bond movie 'Casino Royale' will see 007 attempting some similar styled Parkour maneuvers. Although a sport and philosophical approach to life, Parkour differs in some respects.

'No violence, No competition, No Groups, No Chiefs,' is a motto which the organisers of the ever popular sport believe in. It does not involve the gruesome sliding tackles of football or scrums of rugby but it does involve physicality.

Watching a performance of the art of Parkour on the Internet and also the recent BBC television special highlighted the mesmerising eccentricity of the individuals that take part. They don't do it for pride or for a trophy.

They do it for fun, for the challenge and even as an indirect positive, the exercise. The participants train rigorously for the next step. Twenty minutes of sprinting a day, arm hangs, gymnastics, hopping and knee-to-chest walking are all essential for the amateur to turn 'pro'.

The dangers? For the average Joe Blogs on the street attempting to soar between building blocks without previous training is highly dangerous. However, within the professional network, there have been very few injuries. Cuts and bruises are the norm in this admirable activity.

The founders discourage people from participating if they aren't physically fit or have injuries or a fear of injury. Like in the movie 'The Matrix,' freeing your mind and being in perfect shape are crucial to overcoming the obstacles.

The positives and negatives are there. The initially small community of Parkour specialists has spread worldwide with merchandise and training centres being developed in the UK and the US. In Dublin, controversial Parkourists are trying to promote the sport in a society dominated by mainstream thought and sports.

Like BMXing and Skateboarding, Parkour still has an 'underground' status but without the professional training and implementation of the philosophy engendered by Foucan and his followers, dangers will be magnified ten-fold. Don't try this at home. It's much better outdoors.

About the team

This story was produced by Connor Scullion and edited by John Monaghan. It was published by [Reach for the Sky](#) website.

0 comments

- [Add a comment to this page](#)

Related Links

From the rest of the web

[Le Parkour](#) Sebastien Foucan's website

Built on [Cubik](#)

©2012 Headliners

Registered Charity Number 1043300. Supported by the [Department for Children, Schools and Families](#)