It seems that everybody is interested in Adventure these days – Adventure Sports, Adventure Programs, Adventure Parks, Adventure Racing, Adventure Camps, and Adventure Classes, to name a few. Type the words “Adventure” and “Programs” into Google, and it will give you 98 million results, starting with Outward Bound and then listing outdoor adventure programs in your area. Sponsors vary and include schools, cities, colleges, scouting, health organizations, travel and sports companies, private enterprises, service organizations, and special interest groups. Programs range from activities for kids, to hardcore adventurers, to seniors.

Definition

Webster’s dictionary defines adventure as “an exciting or dangerous experience.”

According to dictionary.com, adventure is “A bold, usually risky undertaking, with an uncertain outcome.” A Wikipedia search for “Adventure Sports,” gets redirected to its page on “Extreme Sports” which is defined as, “...certain activities perceived as having a high level of inherent danger. These activities often involve speed, height, a high level of physical exertion, and highly specialized gear.” Activities such as skydiving, bungee jumping, rock climbing, whitewater rafting, and others are included in this group.

Topendsports.com defines Adventure Sports as, “Outdoor sports or activities in which the participant competes in a natural environment, more against themselves than against others.” They consider “Extreme Sports” as a sub-category of adventure sports. “An extreme sport is any sport featuring speed, height, danger, a high level of physical exertion, highly specialized gear, or spectacular stunts.” The high danger associated with the activities places the participants at high risk of injury and/or death in the case of an accident or mistake.”

But according to Alan Perlman, Editor and Lead Adventurer at NerveRush.com, “Adventure Sports isn’t about geographic location, or technical difficulty, or danger, or whatever your preconceived notions of adrenaline and adventure and extreme are all about. Adventure is that feeling you get, that state of emotional flow. Adventure is what happens when you step outside of your comfort zone. Adventure is about growth, about purpose, and about being at one with yourself.”
Adventure Sports for Parks and Recreation

In the parks and recreation industry, particularly in public agencies, references to adventure sports are usually in the context of adventure sports centers or programs featuring activities that offer excitement and risk while mitigating the danger. These activities might include climbing walls, rope courses, obstacle courses, canopy tours, and ziplines, to name a few. These programs enable the participants to let their hair down and live a little on the wild side. Common elements of these programs are that they are frequently outdoors in nature; they require moderate to challenging physical exertion; they often give the participant an opportunity to overcome their fears; and they offer fun, exhilaration, and fulfillment upon completion. Adventure sports often provide an adrenaline rush, help release built-up stress or tension, and help build a strong mental attitude. Usually there is a guide, leader, teacher, or safety person in charge of the course or activity.

In addition to creating publicly-managed adventure sports programs, municipalities across the country are also using these programs, as well as their outdoor recreational assets (both natural and man made) as a means of economic development. As the nation’s workforce continues to evolve into a culture of individuals seeking quality of life amenities first, cities and counties are leveraging desirable programs and facilities, such as adventure sports, to spur existing business relocation and new business development. GreenPlay Consultant, Michael Clark, CPRP, suggests “It’s important to have a solid, well thought out risk management and general operations plan, too” to get the most out of a program.

Adventure Parks and Camps

Many communities have added specialty parks. Golden, Colorado, developed their Clear Creek Whitewater Park for recreational canoeing, kayaking, rafting, river boarding, and tubing. One of the more popular parks in Boulder, Colorado, is the Valmont Bike Park, a 42-acre, natural surface cycling terrain park offering diverse amenities for several riding styles and abilities, including BMX freestyling, and Mountain Biking. Lee McCormick (leelikesbikes.com), a nationally recognized track designer and skills instructor, helped design this track. He stresses that it’s best to use experts when designing parks like this. “You’ll spend less time building and more time riding,” he says.

The City of Bellevue, Washington has built a challenge course and zip tour above its South Bellevue Community Center. The (rope) course is comprised of four elements that can be experienced separately or in combination:

- **Low Course** - A series of ground-level challenges designed to help teams improve performance, increase cohesiveness, and examine core concepts such as communication, problem solving, and collaboration.
- **Vertical Playpen** - A vertical high ropes course where larger groups form smaller climbing teams of up to three people at a time. These teams take turns gearing up and climbing together to meet goals while being belayed by their team members.
- **High Course** - An aerial obstacle course where teams spend an extended amount of time at height together examining and expanding their own capabilities and comfort zones, while helping others do the same.
- **Zip Tour** - A series of ziplines and suspension bridges that send you soaring as high as 80 feet through the canopy of Eastgate Park. The Zip Tour is designed to be an exciting personal experience as well as an enjoyable aerial outing.

The program is facilitated by professionally trained staff members.
Communities, schools, scouting organizations, and private businesses frequently offer summer adventure camps, where kids can challenge their physical and mental fortitude with an exciting lineup of adventure sports. Program goals frequently include providing a wide variety of opportunities such as sailing, rock climbing, water sports, fencing, nature and wildlife experiences, paddle boarding, wind-surfing, fishing, etc.

Outward Bound is one of the original adventure camp organizations. They strive to “integrate intensive experience and skill-building into the fabric of education.” Its courses are designed to build confidence and develop the student’s ability to interact and work effectively with others. Its goals are to develop character, leadership and service. Project COPE (the acronym for Challenging Outdoor Personal Experience) is a program of the Boy Scouts of America. It consists of, “...group initiative games, trust events, low-course events, and high-course events meant to challenge the group, while developing individual skills and agility.” Participants climb, swing, balance, jump, rappel, and devise solutions to a variety of problems.

Physical terrain may dictate the type of activities a community can offer. There’s not much surfing in Colorado and not many opportunities for Mountaineering in Florida, but every locale offers opportunities for adventure. Getting a program started is usually a matter of resources and community desire. A well-conceived, adequately funded program could well be a money-making enterprise that enriches the area and draws adventure tourism.

**Adventure Playgrounds**

Adventure playgrounds (or wild playgrounds) embrace the theory that, “free, unstructured play is vital for children and offers an antidote to the hurried lifestyles, digital distractions and overprotective parents that can leave children few opportunities to really cut loose.” Eric Westervelt, an NPR correspondent, described a 9-year old boy who had built a “fort” upon which he was hanging a sign saying “Ethan was here.” “There’s a lot of things here that kids built,” Ethan explained, looking around the playground. “It’s not adults doing work; it’s kids doing work!”

Outward Bound is one of the original adventure camp organizations. They strive to “integrate intensive experience and skill-building into the fabric of education.” Its courses are designed to build confidence and develop the student’s ability to interact and work effectively with others. Its goals are to develop character, leadership and service. Project COPE (the acronym for Challenging Outdoor Personal Experience) is a program of the Boy Scouts of America. It consists of, “...group initiative games, trust events, low-course events, and high-course events meant to challenge the group, while developing individual skills and agility.” Participants climb, swing, balance, jump, rappel, and devise solutions to a variety of problems.

Physical terrain may dictate the type of activities a community can offer. There’s not much surfing in Colorado and not many opportunities for Mountaineering in Florida, but every locale offers opportunities for adventure. Getting a program started is usually a matter of resources and community desire. A well-conceived, adequately funded program could well be a money-making enterprise that enriches the area and draws adventure tourism.

**Accreditation & Training Programs**

- Association for Challenge Course Technology (ACCT) http://www.acctinfo.org
- Adventuresports institute at Garrett College
- National Outdoor Leadership School http://www.nols.edu

**GreenPlay**

GreenPlay provides consulting services for parks, recreation, open space, and related agencies by organizing innovative and fresh perspectives that address the needs of administrators and their communities. We utilize a proven set of tools to develop feasibility studies, funding and cost recovery analysis, partnering and sponsorship opportunities, strategic planning, programs evaluation, pricing studies, community outreach, management consulting, and staffing evaluations. Contact us to learn how we can help you achieve your goals.

**See our list of Adventure Sports on the next page...**
The following is a large list of activities that many people consider to be adventure or extreme sports. Based on the definition from Topendsports.com, an adventure sport is an “outdoor sport or activity in which the participant competes in a natural environment, more against themselves than against others.” These sports are often described as thrilling and exciting. An “extreme sport” is a sub-category of adventure sports. An extreme sport is any sport featuring speed, height, danger, a high level of physical exertion, highly specialized gear, or spectacular stunts. The high danger associated with the activities places the participants at high risk of injury and/or death in the case of an accident or mistake.

A sport is defined as, “1) a human activity involving physical skill and exertion; 2) usually governed by a set of rules or customs; and 3) undertaken competitively and capable of achieving a result,” according to Topendsports.com. There are many activities that are commonly debated whether they are sports, such as fishing, dancing, cheerleading, golf, equestrian, or motor sports, to name a few. The examples of golf and cheerleading easily fit the definition of sports when in the competitive form. Fishing and dancing for most people is a pastime and not a sport. However there are structured competitions for these activities, which make it a sport in that form. In the case of equestrian and motor sports, there is physical exertion by the riders, but the horse or car are primarily doing the work. On the other hand, there is plenty of skill involved, and they fit all the other criteria. There will always be activities that are borderline and debatable as to whether they are sports or not.

Our list of Adventure Sports is slightly skewed toward activities that might occur in municipal, state, or federal parks and open space.

Finally, every sport has a certain amount of risk. Soccer players frequently experience concussions. A baseball hit in the chest of a child can cause instant death. A golfer can get hit in the head with an errant golf ball. But these rare occasions are the exception, not the norm. Adventure and extreme sports, however, have a much higher degree of risk.

The following list is based on the above criteria:

- Abseiling (Rappelling)
- Adventure Racing
- Backpacking
- Backcountry (skiing/snowboarding)
- Heliskiing
- Ballooning (hot air ballooning)
- Base Jumping
- Bicycling
- BMX/Freestyle and Motocross
- Body Boarding
- Bouldering
- Bungee Jumping
- Canoeing
- Canyoning
- Caving/Spelunking
- Coasteering
- Cross Country Skiing
- Cycling (Road)
- Dog Sledding
- Flow Boarding
- Free-Diving
- Hang Gliding

From the The LEADING EDGE Newsletter — Spring 2016
Email: info@greenplayllc.com
List of Adventure Sports, continued...

Hiking/Trekking/Glacier Hiking
High Lining (tightrope)
Horseback Riding
Ice Climbing
Inline Skating/Roller Skating
Kayaking (whitewater)
Kayaking (sea)
Kite surfing/Kite Boarding
Knee Boarding
Long Boarding
Marathons (Endurance Racing)
Mountain Biking
Mountain Climbing
Mountaineering
Mud Runs
Obstacle Racing (course)
Paddle Boarding
Paintball
Paragliding
Parasailing
Parkour
Poweriser
River Boarding (Sledging)
Rock Climbing
Roller Derby
Sailing
Scuba Diving/Deep Sea Diving
Skateboarding
Skiing/Snowboarding
Sky Diving/Parachuting
Slacklining
Snorkeling
Snow Shoeing
Snowmobiling
Spear Fishing
Street Luge
Surfing/Tow-in Surfing/Big Wave Surfing
Trail Running
Triathlons (Iron Man)
Ultra-Marathons
Unicycling
Wakeboarding
Waterskiing
Whitewater Rafting
Wing Suit Flying
Windsurfing
Zip Line
Zorbing (Bubble Balls)

Not included on this list of Adventure Sports:

- Most Motorized Sports: Four-Wheeling, Jet Skiing, Helicopter Flights, Motorcycle Motocross, etc.
- Most Organized Sports and Team Sports like Baseball, Soccer, etc.
- Martial Arts and Boxing
- Swimming and Diving
- Fitness Sports such as Jazzercise, Zumba, Spinning, Yoga
- Weight Lifting, Bodybuilding
- Leisure Sports like Kick ball, Bean bag toss, Bocce
- Golf
- Cheerleading
- Flying, Micro light Flights, Gliders
- Fishing, Deep Sea Fishing
- Rodeo Sports
- Rowing (crew) or watercraft racing
- Hunting, Shooting, Archery
- Track & Field Sports like Shot Put, Discus, High Jump
- Net Games, Racquet games, Paddle Games
- Kooky Sports: i.e. Extreme Ironing, Synchronized Lawn Chairs

Please feel free to send us your ideas and comments. New sports and technologies are being developed every day.

From the **The LEADING EDGE** Newsletter — Spring 2016
Email: info@greenplayllc.com
References:

- www.merriam-webster.com
- www.dictionary.com
- www.Wikipedia.com
- www.Topendsports.com
- www.Livestrong.com
- www.OutsideOnline.com - 12 National Park Adventures Off the Beaten Path
- www.LookingForAdventure.com
- www.Secret Compass.com
- www.adventuresportspodcast.com
- www.acctinfo.org (Association for Challenge Course Technology)
- www.humankinetics.com
- http://news.discovery.com/adventure/extreme-sports
- http://www.cityofgolden.net/play/recreation-attractions/clear-creek-white-water-park/
- https://bouldercolorado.gov/parks-rec/valmont-bike-park
- www.outwardbound.org
- https://www.rei.com
- https://www.adventureprojects.net
- Popular Social Science: The Psychology of Extreme Sports: Addicts, not Loonies, Joachim Vogt Isaksen

- www.alpinist.com - The risks of adventure sports, Erik Monasterio
- Chicago Tribune - Road to adventure takes detour through high school gym classes, Keren Mellen
- National Geographic - Fear Factor: Success and Risk in Extreme Sports, Brian Handwerk
- The Atlantic - Inside a European Adventure Playground, Kasia Cieplak-Mayr Von Baldegg
- The Atlantic - The Overprotected Kid, Hanna Rosin
- http://www.abajournal.com/magazine/article/extreme_sports_are_more_popular_than_ever_prompting_questions
- New York Times - With the Thrills Come Extreme Risks, Jane E. Brody
- Multiple motives for participating in adventure sports, Kerr, Mackenzie. School of Kinesiology, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, Canada
- Canadian Family Physician, 2013 Dec; 59(12): 1311-1313. Burr, Montelpare, Shephard. Do adventure sports have a role in health promotion?
- BBC News - Extreme sports: What are the risks?