

# I WALK THE [SLACK] LINE

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We've all seen them before, usually in the park on hot summer days: Daredevils trying to keep their balance on crazily wobbly ropes suspended above the ground between two trees. What at first glance looks like a circus act is called slacklining. This very demanding activity requires the use of your entire body as well as a combination of balance, coordination and concentration. Originally brought to life around 1979 by climbers Adam Grosowsky and Jeff Ellington in the Yosemite Valley (USA) it has become highly popular across the globe in the last couple of years.

In 2005, slacklining began to blossom in Europe and has since infected many sports enthusiasts. One of them is Lukas Irmeler, who turned his passion into a successful career as a professional slackliner.

## INTERVIEW



Lukas Irmeler was born in 1988 in Dachau, Germany. Since becoming a professional slackliner in 2011, he has fully committed his time to the sport and the work as a professional athlete, artist and consultant. As of today, he holds two Guinness World Record titles, numerous longline records, and he was the first person to accomplish various tricks and combinations on the trampoline and highline. He has much experience in performing shows all around the globe and has been part of multiple TV productions.

**Lukas, how and when did you first come in contact with the slackline?**

The very first slackline I encountered was in my neighbour's garden. This was in 2006. Shortly after, I discovered a slackline behind the climbing gym I was going to and I had my first attempts on slacklining there. In the beginning I thought it wasn't for me, as I struggled a lot, but soon I managed to walk my first steps on the line.



## Culture & Lifestyle

**Since 2014 you have been giving lectures in front of various audiences. What are you trying to get across with them?**

Initially I started to give speeches about my travels, adventures and expeditions. Now I do a lot of motivational and inspirational speeches for companies and the wider public. I've found that slacklining provides many great metaphors for life and I learnt a lot in my ten years of slacklining that also translates into everyday life. I feel like I have a lot to give and I enjoy sharing my knowledge, strategies and experiences with an interested crowd.

## THIS FEELING OF CONNECTION THROUGH A COMMON PASSION GOES BEYOND BORDERS AND LANGUAGE.

**What has been the most enjoyable experience for you as a slackliner so far?**

I have travelled so much over the last ten years it's crazy. I have visited six continents and over 30 different countries. The slacklining community is a worldwide community and this feeling of connection through a common passion goes beyond borders and language. This is what I have enjoyed most in slacklining - a feeling of connection and belonging.

**In 2013 you were the world's first person to ever successfully complete the 'Luke Skywalker trick'. Where do you get the ideas for your tricks from?**

The idea for this trick was born out of failure, as so many great ideas are. When you lose balance on the highline and can't stop your fall by catching the line you fall into your safety rope, called the leash. There you find yourself dangling two and a half meters below the line. So at one point I had this idea: What if I jumped on purpose and tried to swing back up again? Well, in the end it wasn't that easy and took over five years from the first thought to the making. Many slackliners thought it would be impossible to get enough momentum to swing back up again. But with a little trick I finally managed to do it.

**Are you nervous before you get on the slackline?**

Every time! If I would not be nervous about stepping onto a one inch wide webbing going out into the void with thousands of feet below I would be in trouble. Being nervous is part of the game and the question is how well you can handle your emotions. There is nothing bad about fear, nervousness or being scared. These are all very helpful signals from your body. The important thing is that these emotions shouldn't dictate your actions, but that you control them.

**Last but not least: For whom is slacklining suitable - can everyone learn it?**

I think everyone can learn it. No matter what age, physiology or fitness level. Everyone who is fascinated by the dynamic of balance should try it! Obviously, kids learn it much faster, but for all the adults out there giving it a go, here's a piece of advice: Be patient and never give up!

