

TREC- A Sport For All Horses and Riders

TREC (short for the French 'Techniques de Randonnée Équestre de Compétition') originated in France as a way of testing and improving the skills of trail ride leaders. The sport was introduced to the UK in the 1998 and has gone from strength to strength ever since. TREC is a sport intended to test the skills of a horse and rider in planning and executing a long distance trail ride in unfamiliar countryside. TREC competitions usually consist of three separate phases; a mounted orienteering phase, a control of paces phase and a ridden obstacle phase, which can include a water crossing, bridge, opening a gate, a ridden corridor and other obstacles you may meet out riding. Competitors collect points throughout the 3 phases and the competitor with the highest score at the end of the competition wins.

TREC is an open access sport; any type of horse/pony and rider combination can compete. A limited amount of specialist equipment (eg. a compass, map case and an approved hard hat) is required and most types of tack and riding gear is permitted for use. Competitions are run over different levels starting at Level 1 and moving up to Level 4. Length of route and difficulty of navigation during the mounted orienteering increases up the levels, as well as height of jumps on the obstacle phase. It is possible for a complete beginner to go along and have a go at Level 1 (12km) and to have a successful weekend! Many competitions also offer pairs classes so it is possible to compete with a friend for a bit of moral support.

TRECGB (www.trecgb.com) is the governing body for the sport in the UK. The TRECGB website is full of information on what to expect when attending an event, an events diary, a downloadable rule book and lists of all the TREC clubs that exist around the UK.

Senior and Young Riders at the top level of the sport represent GB in annual European and World Championships in different locations across Europe. Caitlin Crossley and her Dales pony Adamfield Flashlight are part of the GB Young Rider Squad.

My name is Caitlin Crossley and I am 18 years old, and live in Malham, North Yorkshire. I have been riding since I was 8, when I began lessons with my instructor Zana Jackson. She did, and still does, breed Dales Ponies, which is why I fell in love with the breed and ultimately bought a Dales Pony as my first pony. I bought Adamfield Flashlight as a 4yo from his breeder, where he had been returned after becoming unmanageable in his previous home. He is a pure bred Dales Pony, who is about 14.2hh and black with one white foot. He was my first proper pony as a 13 year old, and he has always needed a job to occupy his mind- TREC seems to be that perfect job! We entered our first TREC competition as a L1 pair with Zana in 2010. We then competed 2 seasons as a Level 2 pair, and have been riding as an individual at level 3 and 4 for 4 years now. Flash is a very chilled out pony who takes everything in his stride, but there is nothing he loves more than exploring new places at speed! Dales Ponies are bred to have good stamina over long distances, so he is perfect for the 30/40km we have to ride. TREC was an especially helpful discipline for us to get involved in because I worked for Zana as an assistant ride leader and a lot of the skills learnt through TREC are transferrable to this. I think the independence of the sport is fantastic, it allows both you and your horse to show off ability across a wide range of skills, and demands a good partnership between horse and rider, something I have always been interested in. The people who compete in TREC are generally very friendly and encouraging, and the competitions become like a little holiday, where you meet the same people all over the country. We compete in TREC throughout every summer,

ending with the international competitions in the beginning of September. I have now represented the GB Young Riders TREC team for 4 years, and have competed in Belgium, Italy and Holland. I am now working towards competing in the World Championships of TREC which will be held in Madrid, Spain, in 2016. As TREC encompasses a wide range of skills, we train in cross country, dressage and endurance style riding. It is important not only to keep your horse fit in each of these disciplines, but yourself as well. My goal for these Championships is to finish in the top 10 for the POR (the long distance orienteering phase), which has always been my favourite and strongest phase of the three. This will require a lot of fitness training, and I am hoping to go out to Spain to compete in the area in May to get a feel for the maps. Flash is now 10 and I would like to end next year on a high before I leave for university to hopefully study Veterinary Medicine next October. Hopefully Flash will be following me to wherever I end up in the country, but the location might not be ideal for long distance riding!

To meet the other riders and horses aiming to achieve a place on the GB Team at the World Championships in Spain in 2016 check out www.trecgbinternationalriders.wordpress.com





