







## Highliners sleep in hammocks suspended over Italian Alps

Not everybody would feel as relaxed lying in a hammock strung thousands of feet up in the air between mountains.

But then these thrill-seekers high up in the northern Italian Alps aren't just anybody. They are members of a group of extreme athletes who have travelled to take part in the International Highline Meeting in Monte Piana, Italy.

The inaugural meeting took place in 2012, when Monte Piana was identified as a great place for the sport, easily accessible and with a glorious past and a fairy tale atmosphere.

The highliners came together for a week to practice their sport in harmony with nature and without mutual showdown, and it was such a success that now the meeting takes place annually.

There are seemingly no end of daredevils who like nothing better than to take up the challenges posed by highwire walking.

From natural geographical features such as waterfalls and gorges, to man-made objects such as skyscrapers and suspension bridges, tightrope walkers have attempted to walk across them all – with varying degrees of success.

It's a physical accomplishment which is not for the faint of heart. Not at that altitude anyway.

Perhaps they are secretly trying to emulate that great high wire walker Jean Francois Gravelet, alias Charles Blondin, of France, who made the earliest crossing of the Niagara Falls on a three-inch rope 1,100ft long and 160ft above the Falls in 1859.

Blondin thereafter made each crossing of the Falls in a different manner: blindfolded; trundling a wheelbarrow; on stilts, once with a man on his back, and once and sitting down halfway to make an omelette.

These guys look like cooking a few eggs while they chill out in hammocks wouldn't be far beyond them.



