

What the heck is TREC?

Some of you may have heard of Le TREC or BHS TREC as it is known in the UK. TREC is an abbreviation of its French name, Technique de Randonnee Equestre de Competition and has grown up quite separately from the mainstream equestrian disciplines, within the equestrian tourist sector.



Hannah Garnet and Carol Thomas, debating direction. GB Championships, Lake District, 2006

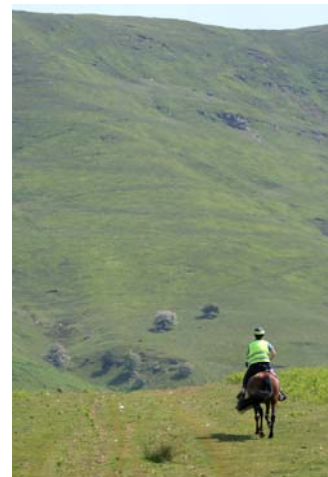
History

The sport began its development about 30 years ago in France where they have a highly organised equestrian tourist industry. A need to focus the training and development of professional guides working within the sector had been identified, and the concept of TREC was born as a suitable way to test their expertise.

The Competition

The competition is designed to test a horse/rider combination through a whole range of activities rather than focusing on one particular discipline. The competition combines the requirements of trail riding, jumping and flatwork. It tests the horse/rider's ability to find their way across country using navigation skills and to deal with all types of terrain; to show a safe degree of control and riding ability; and to deal with the sort of obstacles and problems that can be encountered by a rider on their own in the countryside. It helps you to perfect trail riding skills so that you can confidently pick up a map and set off into un-chartered territory! The competition is held at different levels, Level 1 being the easiest to Level 4 (navigation is more testing and distance longer) and split into 3 phases.

Phase One Parcours d'Orientation et de Regularite (P.O.R.) is navigation on horse back. Riders must follow a route on a map, at speeds predetermined by the organisers, it is not a race. They must be able (and equipped) to deal with most difficulties and mishaps on their own, although emergency procedures ensure the safety of riders and horses. The course can be up to 45 kms long at Championship level although generally the very high degrees of equine fitness associated with Endurance Riding or Horse Trials are not required. At some UK Championships there is occasionally a night section with the opportunity to test your skills in the dark.



Tot Wall heading for the hills. Welsh Championships 2006, Brecon Beacons

Phase Two Matrisse des Allures - control of paces. This phase is designed to demonstrate that the rider can exercise a degree of influence over the horse first in canter, then in walk, following a course 150 metres long and 2-2.2 metres wide. The concept is that the slower the horse travels in canter and the faster in walk, the greater the marks awarded.

Phase Three Parcours en Terrain Varie (P.T.V.). This final phase is the 'cross-country', and is seen as the most exciting and most popular phase with spectators. It has some cross-country jumping and a range of obstacles designed to imitate those that you may come across when out riding, many of which are executed unmounted.

Scoring The scoring is based on accumulating the most points, and one of the major appeals of this discipline is that if a horse or rider is unable to perform any part of the competition, they are not eliminated but lose points. It recognises that the demands of the competition are so wide and varied that not all riders or horses can be good at everything. Injury, cheating or losing equipment can result in elimination but in practice eliminations are very rare, giving the sport considerable appeal. If you don't enjoy jumping, can't rein back or can't mount on the offside, you just miss those obstacles out and forfeit the points



Julian Brown
GB Championships 2006
Lake District
Tackling a 'led step down'

Why become a 'TRECCIE'?

TREC appeals to all sorts of riders, with all sorts of horses. Basically, if you enjoy riding in attractive countryside, with a reasonable amount of challenge and a competitive element, you'll enjoy TREC. It has many attractions and advantages over other forms of equestrian competitive sport.

1. Its fun - and you can push yourself as hard as you like, or just take it easy and enjoy being a happy hacker.
2. It's inexpensive – entry fees may sound more but if you add up a pleasure ride, dressage test and hunter trial competition in one weekend, it is actually inexpensive in comparison and you have the social evenings tacked on with 2 day competitions, making it a great weekend away with you and your equine. Self-handicapping is optional by overindulgence at the social!
3. It doesn't require high quality horses, expensive clothes and tack or a high level of fitness (of horse or rider).
4. If getting lost on your own doesn't grab you, then why not compete as a pair. The BHS competitions office and competition organisers are very helpful and can generally find a partner for you if you don't already have one.

Could you be a 'Star Treccie' and represent your country?

With BHS TREC it need not be a distant dream. BHS TREC - even at national and international level - is not limited to riders of great expertise (or courage.) If you know which way up to hold an Ordnance Survey map then you are part way there.

The Young Riders European Championships is held every year. If you are age 16 to 21 and think you could rise to the challenge then why not start competing now? Last year the selectors only had a handful of Young Riders to choose from.

For those of you that are 22 plus, then set your sights for the Senior Team in 2008. The 2008 World Championships are being hosted by France. Selection criteria for both teams are on the BHS website.

For further details on BHS TREC, training and competitions look at www.bhs.org.uk and click on BHS TREC or contact Sharon at bruce@noverwood.freeserve.co.uk

Why not join in and be part of the fun?



Sharon Bruce riding Ogmore, hired from Trans Wales Trails. English Championships 2006, Wiltshire

Written by Sharon Bruce BHSII (regd), International TREC Judge, TREC Technical Delegate and TREC Advisory Group member for six years.

Extracts from the BHS website by kind permission of the BHS.

Photographs courtesy of Official TREC Championships Photographer Patrick Print at www.naturalexpressions.co.uk where numerous TREC photos can be viewed.