

# Ultrarunning World

ROAD, TRACK & TRAIL MULTIDAY & ULTRA DISTANCE NEWS  
ISSUE 22







**ULTRA  
LONDON**

# **LONDON'S ULTRA MARATHON**

**RUN, JOG OR WALK  
AN ALL TERRAIN ROUTE  
AROUND THE CAPITAL**

**20 - 21 JUNE 2020**

**[ULTRALONDON.CO.UK](http://ULTRALONDON.CO.UK)**



It's that time of year again. Ultrarunning magazine have just announced the Ultrarunners of the Year for 2109 and the IAU have started the process for their top athletes. However Ultrarunning's UOTY is limited to US ultrarunners and it looks like only one runner participated in a 48 hour. The IAU will be selecting their Athlete Of The Year from a list of 40 ultrarunners, 36 of whom were automatic qualifiers from the IAU championship races and the remaining four spots have to come from IAU labelled races. It's a big project and something to think about for next year. To remind ourselves of what happened in 2019, here's a list culled from the DUV of the best multiday performances of the year.

Event	Women	Ctry	Performance	Venue
24 hour	Camille Herron	USA	270.116 km	Albi
48 hour	Sumie Inagaki	JPN	356.150 km	Taipei
72 hour	Charlotte Vasarhelyi	CAN	379.805 km	Beyond Limits Ultra Race
6 Day	Amy Mower	USA	729.863 km	Phoenix
10 Day	Annabel Hepworth	AUS	1192.156 km	Phoenix
1000 km	Harita Davies	NZL	251:18:48	New York
1000 miles	Harita Davies	NZL	396:12:25	New York
Event	Men	Ctry	Performance	Venue
24 hour	Yoshihiko Ishikawa	JPN	279.427 km	Taipei
48 hour	Michael Thwaites	AUS	389.041 km	Bruce
72 hour	Leon Leonard	USA	477.411 km	Lhotse 200
6 Day	Dan Lawson	GBR	920.140 km	Balatonfured
10 Day	Budjaergal Byambaa	MGL	1221.813km	New York
1000 km	Vasu Duzhiy	RUS	209:00:55	New York
1000 miles	Kobi Oren	ISR	354:00:34	Wychwood

## The House:

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- Marcella Dragan - Graphic Designer  
- Helen Hayes - Copy Editor

### • Correspondents

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- Wendy Whearity  
- Tim Hardy  
- Helen Pike  
- Helen Hayes  
- Sharon Gayter

### • Photos

- Front cover: Wing Yan Hui, Karen Tse, and Rouisa Tse Wing Yan from Hong Kong running along the Aletsch Glacier in the Swiss Alps 100. Photo by Jakob Herrmann

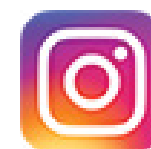
- Back cover: Dunes at the Ultra Trail de la Plage Blanche by Jose Santiago

### Ultrarunning World Magazine

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Send inquiries, original and previously unpublished race reports/articles to the above email address. Last dates for article submissions: February 1st, March 1st and April 1st. Adverts received will go in the next available issue. Please include a 40-50 word bio, some accompanying photos (if you have any) and a headshot for the contributors page along with your articles. More details on request. Thank you.

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A woman in trail running gear, including a white cap, sunglasses, orange arm warmers, and a backpack, stands in front of a large, mossy waterfall. She is holding a trekking pole and smiling. The waterfall is cascading over a rocky, moss-covered cliff, creating a misty spray at the bottom. The scene is set in a lush, green environment.

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# News Round-Up



Multiday races have been at the forefront of the news recently with a number of events that have been at the longer end of the spectrum. **The Running Festival Wychwood** just outside of Johannesburg, South Africa started on December 12th with 6, 10 and 20 Days the main features. Organised by Eric Wight the Wychwood Festival has become the flagship of multiday running in South Africa and the world's first 20 day race has raised the bar for the long multadays. Kobi Oren (ISR) (pictured right) covered 2130.500 km and Sarah Barnett (AUS) took second place with 1449.500 km. Several records were set including Don Winkley's 1000km 80-85 age group record of 18 days, 4 hrs, 37 min. More on this in the next issue. Dates have been announced for the Running Festival Wychwood March Edition.

From Friday 20/03/2020 at 18:00 to Saturday 28/03/2020 at 18:00.

- 6 Day starts Sun. 22/03 at 12:00 ends Sat. 28th at 18:00.
- 24 Hour every day starting Sat. 21/03 at 06:00.

- 12 Hour every 12 hours starting Fri. 20/03 at 18:00.
- 6 Hour races every 6 hours starting Fri. 20/03 at 18:00.
- 5/10km every hour from Fri. 20/03 at 18:00.
- 100 miler has a cut-off of 26 hours.

Visit [Wright Race Timing](#) for details.



The annual festival in Arizona at **Across The Years** has grown considerably since its move from Nardini Manor to Camelback Ranch, Phoenix and to the list of available events this year a 10 day race was added. The race drew a field off 55 entrants with Annabel Hepworth (AUS)

proceeding to dominate the event eventually finishing with the overall win and 740 miles (1192.156 km) surpassing Dipali Cunninghams 723 mile performance in 1996 at the inaugural Sri Chinmoy 10 Day race. Annabel has brought Australia back to the map in terms of multiday running with the world's leading performance in 2018 at 6 days and second in the world in 2019 with a great run at the Adelaide 6 day last October.

The **Montane Spine Race** in the UK drew to a close with 9 women and 54 men making their way to the finish line at Kirk Yetholm. Very little snow considering the time of year. First to finish was John Kelly (USA) in 87:53:57. John is a Barkley finisher. First woman was Sabrina Verjee (GBR) 5th overall in 108:07:17. Sabrina won the summer version of the race, the Spine Fusion, outright, in June 2019. This year's final finisher Thomas Legrain (FRA) also finished the summer version. 83 DNF's. [Live tracking](#).

The world's longest race began a few days ago in Athens with the start of the 5000 km event at the **Athens International Ultramarathon Festival**. The 24, 48, 72 hour and 6 day races have already taken place and the 5000 km race got underway along with the 1000 mile race on January 16th. The 6 day was won by Athanasios Stimoniaris (GRE) with 782 km (484.84 miles) with Rachel Pierce (USA) first woman with 486 km (301.32 miles). Currently





leading the 1000 mile race with 316 km is Mara Alexandra Guler-Cionca (ROU) with a 20 km cushion over William Sichel (SCO) after 58 hours. The 5000 km race is currently led by Nicolae Buceanu with 324 km (200.88 miles) with Pavel Zuk (POL) (pictured above) in second place. The 5000km race finishes March 16th. [Live results.](#)

**BACKYARD**  
6706 METER **ULTRA®** 4.167 MILES

There have been 12 **Backyard Ultras** since Maggie Guterl's World Championship victory in Tennessee with five of those offering Golden Tickets to the winners which include Simon Gfeller (SUI) who finished third this weekend in the 268 mile Spine across the Pennine Way. The next five races take place in Chile, India, UAE, Japan and Castle Ward in Northern Ireland on February 15th. More details on the [Backyard Ultra list.](#)



### 3100: Run and Become

The most elusive, mind-blowing multiday race in the world, the Self-Transcendence 3100 Mile Race, takes place in Queens, New York City each summer and in 2020 will start on June 14th. This race is held around a square sidewalk block (0.56 miles) and requires 59 miles a day for 52 straight days for a runner to complete the event. The Race promises personal expansion and, indeed, participants come from around the world to shatter their limitations and discover a deeper sense of self.

Sanjay Rawal has produced a movie that follows aspirants of the highest order from three cultures whose own narratives parallel that of two 3100 Mile Runners – a diminutive paperboy from Finland, Ashprihanal Aalto, and a female cellist from Austria, Shamita Achenbach-Koenig. These three heroic Aspirants (Shaun Martin-Navajo, Gaolo-San Bushmen, Gyoman-san-Monks of Mt. Hiei Japan) run not for glory but for spiritual enlightenment, universal oneness or because they simply have the responsibility to run. The film is being shown at various places around the UK and the next screening will be at the Watershed in Bristol, Sun, 8 Mar 2020, 11:00 am.

[Book your tickets.](#)

# Ultrarunning World

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# Upcoming Races

On the horizon are a few winter races in North America starting with the **Arrowhead Winter Ultra** on the 27th of January. The 135 mile Arrowhead State Trail is a multipurpose trail extending from International Falls, Minnesota to the intersection with the Hwy 77 on Lake Vermillion (near Tower). Acknowledged as one of the coldest places in the US as the temperature can fall as low as -60°F. Runners have 60 hours to complete the distance by Bike, Ski or Foot. Course records were set in 2015 by Marcus Berggren in 34:20 and Sue Lucas 42:31. [Arrowhead Ultra website](#).



The 17th **Yukon Arctic Ultra** takes place from 30th January to the 7th

of February 2020 with 430/300/100 mile options. The race starts at the Eagle Plains Hotel in Whitehorse which is approximately 225 miles from the Dawson junction on the Klondike Highway.

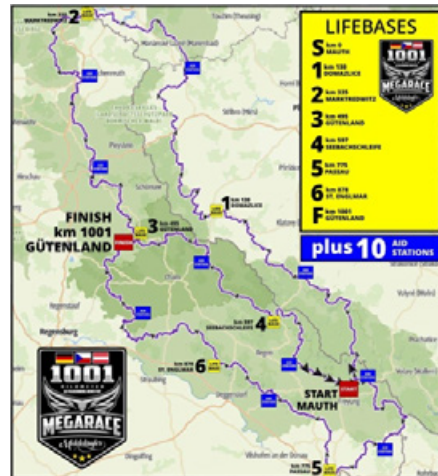
The course will follow the Yukon Quest trail, the trail of the world's toughest Sled Dog Race. The 100 mile racers will go from Whitehorse to Braeburn and the 300 mile racers keep on going to Pelly Farm and finish at Pelly Crossing. 20 participants in the 100 miler and 22 in the 300 miler, this is another serious test of endurance. Organised by Robert Pollhammer, the event has taken place every year since 2003 and draws an international crowd to this human powered footrace. Checkout the race website, [Yukon Arctic Ultra](#).



Also coming up at the end of the month in the South-west of the UK is the **Arc of Attrition** starting on January 31st. The 7th edition of this race organised by Mudcrew Events has proved to

be challenging in its own right. The Arc is a point-to-point extreme coastal race from Coverack to Porthtowan taking in a 100 miles of the Cornish Coast completing an Arc around the entire south west foot of Cornwall. The race has a 36 hour cut-off. [Arc of Attrition website](#).

A brand new event **The Megarace** 1.001 km non stop running in the middle of Europe. The course mostly follows the Goldsteig Trail and passes through Germany, the Czech Republic and Austria. The race has 10 aid stations where runners can take short rests and get food. There will be 6 Life bases where runners can stay up to 12 hours in more comfort and also get food and drinks. Drop bags will be moved from Life base to Lifebase. 105 runners signed up already with a quality field including the man who seems to be everywhere at the moment, Simon Gfeller.



The time limit is 327 hours/13 days + 15 hours which means an average speed of 3.06 km/h. Checkout the details at [Megarace.de](#)

In 2020, AdventureCORPS® - the organizers of the Badwater® ultramarathon races in Death Valley and across the USA, will host a six-day,

point-to-point, 160-mile (260km) trail running stage race in the Republic of Artsakh, located just east of Armenia, the **Artsakh Ultra™**. The inaugural race will be held August 30 through September 4 of 2020, and the event will be held annually thereafter. The Artsakh Ultra race will take place primarily on the Janapar Trail, a hiking trail network which stretches from adjacent Armenia into and across Artsakh mostly on jeep tracks, along with single track trails, some dirt roads, and about 10 miles (16km) of paved roads.

The race will be organized in a “stage race” format, in which runners will run a certain section of the Janapar Trail each day. Each day’s “stage” will be timed separately, and overall results will be calculated by adding all six days’ times together. The first stage will be 22mi / 36km; the next four stages will vary from 26 to 34 miles (42 to 55km), while the final stage will be 16mi / 26km. With a total distance of 160mi (260km), there is a cumulative total of 26,000 feet (8000m) of elevation gain along the route.

Chris Kostman, the race organizer said, “*I have never been more excited on both personal and professional levels: First, Artsakh Ultra features the hallmarks of all my AdventureCORPS events: 1) Challenging Route. 2) Beautiful Route. 3) A fantastic, off-the-beaten-track location. 4) An intimate event experience organized to world-class standards. But Artsakh Ultra goes even beyond my usual standards because of its focus on cultural immersion coupled with a close working relationship with the locals along the route and the very supportive Artsakh government. it’s an absolute thrill for me to merge my personal passions with my professional pursuits. Visit the [Artsakh Ultra™](#) for all the details.*”



## SRI CHINMOY MARATHON TEAM 2020

[www.srichinmoyraces.org](http://www.srichinmoyraces.org)

Ultra Races



### Sri Chinmoy Ultraraces worldwide

- 2 January Self-Transcendence 6+12 Hour Race Karaganda, Kazakhstan**  
Sri Chinmoy Marathon Team, Akbota Jumabaeva, Tel +7-777 429 28 20; +7-708 144 59 21  
[kazakhstan@srichinmoyraces.org](mailto:kazakhstan@srichinmoyraces.org) , Start (12h): 8 am, Start (6h): 2 pm
- 14 March Sri Chinmoy 6 Hour Race Nürnberg, Germany**  
Sri Chinmoy Marathon Team, c/o Gerig, Austraße 74, 90429 Nürnberg  
Tel +49-911 28 88 65, Fax +49-911 28 84 12, Start: 10 am, AD: 9 March  
[nurnberg@srichinmoyraces.org](mailto:nurnberg@srichinmoyraces.org) , <https://de.srichinmoyraces.org> , late registration (LR) + 5 €
- 20-22 March Sri Chinmoy 48 Hour Track Festival Canberra, Australia**  
Australian National 48 Hour Championship  
Includes 48 Hour, 24 Hour, 6 Hour, Marathon, Half-Marathons, 10,000 m, 3,000 m + 1,000 m  
track races, Sri Chinmoy Marathon Team, Prachar Stegemann, Tel +61-404 071 327  
[canberra@srichinmoyraces.org](mailto:canberra@srichinmoyraces.org) , <https://au.srichinmoyraces.org/events/48hour>
- 28 March Sri Chinmoy 6+12 Hour Race Riga, Latvia**  
Sri Chinmoy Marathon Team, Dubultu iela 4-40, Riga, LV-1029, Latvia, Tel +371-22 48 3 873  
Start (12 h solo): 7 am; Start (6 h relay): 13 pm, application deadline (AD): 25 March  
[riga@srichinmoyraces.org](mailto:riga@srichinmoyraces.org) , <https://lv.srichinmoyraces.org>
- 20-30 April Sri Chinmoy 6+10 Day Race New York, USA**  
Sri Chinmoy Multiday Races, Sahishnu Szczesiul, 150-47 87th Ave., Jamaica,  
NY 11432, USA, Tel/Fax +1-718 297 25 56  
Start (6 days): 24. April, 12 pm noon; Start (10 days): 20. April, 12 pm noon  
[scmtny@earthlink.net](mailto:scmtny@earthlink.net) , <http://us.srichinmoyraces.org/events/6-10-day-race>
- 2-3 May Sri Chinmoy 12+24 Hour Race Basel, Switzerland**  
Sri Chinmoy Marathon Team, PO box 76, 5420 Ehrendingen, Switzerland  
Tel +41-56 203 13 88, Fax +41-56 203 13 01, AD: 29 April, LR after 1 April + 12 €  
Start (24 h): Sat 12 pm noon, Start (12 h): Sat 24 pm midnight  
[12-24h-basel@srichinmoyraces.ch](mailto:12-24h-basel@srichinmoyraces.ch), <https://ch.srichinmoyraces.org>
- 10 May Sri Chinmoy 100 km+50 km Race Christchurch, New Zealand**  
2020 Athletics NZL 100 km national championship  
Sri Chinmoy Marathon Team, Vajin Armstrong, Tel +64-27 303 99 78  
[christchurch@srichinmoyraces.org](mailto:christchurch@srichinmoyraces.org) , <https://nz.srichinmoyraces.org/100km-race>
- 16 May Self-Transcendence 6+12 Hour+100 km Race Slovakia**  
Sri Chinmoy Marathon Team, Pranjal Milovník, Pod gastanmi 4F, 82107 Bratislava  
Tel +421-905 64 83 15, Start (12 h + 100 km): 7 am; Start (6h): 13 pm  
[scmt@scmt.sk](mailto:scmt@scmt.sk) , <https://cs.srichinmoyraces.org/6h-12h-100km>
- 16 May Sri Chinmoy 7 & 13 Hour Ultra Solo & Team Relay Race, Seattle, WA, USA**  
Sri Chinmoy Marathon Team, Daulot Fountain +1-206-353 50 99  
Start (13 h): Sat 6 am, Start (7 h): Sat 12 pm noon  
<https://us.srichinmoyraces.org/Seattle7and13>
- 23 May Self-Transcendence 6+12 Hour Race Prague, Czech Republic**  
Sri Chinmoy Marathon Team, Letovska 532, 19900 Praha-Letnany, Czech Republic  
Tel +420-603 177 566, Fax +420 22 52 77 400  
Start (12 h): 7 am; Start (6 h): 13 pm, AD: 1 May, late registration + 10 €  
[praha@srichinmoyraces.org](mailto:praha@srichinmoyraces.org) , <https://cs.srichinmoyraces.org>



# Upcoming Races

- 30-31 May Self-Transcendence 24+12+6 Hour Races Chisinau, Moldova**  
Moldovan National Championships  
Sri Chinmoy Marathon Team, Ion Frunza, Florilor 30/1a, ap. 28, MD-2068, Chisinau, Moldova  
Tel +373-692 55 274, Start (24+6 h): Sat 10:00 am, Start (12 h): Sat 10:00 pm, AD: 27 May  
moldova@srchinmoyraces.org, <https://md.srchinmoyraces.org>
- 13 June Self-Transcendence 50 km+100 km Race Amsterdam, Holland**  
Sri Chinmoy Marathon Team, attn. Nitish Zuidema, H.N. Werkmanweg 17,  
2031 BA Haarlem, Holland, Tel +31-23 516 03 60, Fax +31- 23516 03 61  
Start (50 km): 12 pm noon, Start (100 km): 9 am, AD: 27 May, late registration + 5 €  
amsterdam@srchinmoyraces.org, <https://nl.srchinmoyraces.org>
- 13-14 June Self-Transcendence 1+3+7+13+24 Hour Race Perm, Russia**  
Sri Chinmoy Marathon Team, Konstantin Rybin Tel +7-912 887 1882, +7-952 659 8159
- 14 June - Sri Chinmoy 3100 Mile Race New York, USA**  
**4 August**  
Sri Chinmoy Multiday Races, Sahishnu Szczesiul, 150-47 87th Ave., Jamaica, NY 11432,  
USA; Tel/Fax +1-718 297 25 56; Start 6 am  
scmntny@earthlink.net, <http://3100.srchinmoyraces.org>
- 21 June Sri Chinmoy 50+100 km Race Paris, France**  
Sri Chinmoy Marathon Team, 9-13 rue Srebrenica, Apt. 48, 75020 Paris, France  
Tel +33-1 43 71 15 19, Mobile +33-630 19 16 39  
Start (50 km): 11 am; Start (100 km): 8 am, AD: 30 April, late registration + 10 €  
France@srchinmoyraces.org, <https://fr.srchinmoyraces.org>
- 22-23 June Self-Transcendence 24+6 Hour+100 km Race Nur-Sultan, Kazakhstan**  
Sri Chinmoy Marathon Team, Akbota Jumabaeva, Tel +7-777 429 28 20; Tel +7-708 144 59 21  
kazakhstan@srchinmoyraces.org
- 27-29 June Self-Transcendence 12+24+48 Hour Race Vinnitsa, Ukraine**  
Ukrainian National 48 Hour Championships  
Sri Chinmoy Marathon Team, Igor Mudrik, Tel +380-67-811 80 23  
Start (48 h): Fri 12 pm noon, Start (24 h): Sat 12 pm noon, Start (12 h): Sat 24 pm midnight  
info@races.org.ua, <http://races.org.ua>
- 17-19 July Self-Transcendence 24+48 Hour Race Kladno, Czech Republic**  
Sri Chinmoy Marathon Team, Letovska 532, 19900 Praha-Letnany, Czech Republic  
Tel +420- 603 177 566, Fax +420-22 52 77 400, AD: 1 July, late registration + 10 €  
Start (48 h): Fri 12 pm noon, Start (24 h): Sat 12 pm noon  
praha@srchinmoyraces.org, <https://cs.srchinmoyraces.org>
- 25 July Self-Transcendence 12+24 Hour Race Minsk, Belarus**  
Sri Chinmoy Marathon Team, Konstantin Glod, Tel +375-17 267 78 78, gostin@tut.by
- 26 July Self-Transcendence 6 Hour Race Kharkov, Ukraine**  
Sri Chinmoy Marathon Team, Gennady Ozerov, Tel +380-50 16 85 118  
Ukraine, Start: Sun 10 am, info@races.org.ua, <https://races.org.ua>
- 25 -26 July Sri Chinmoy Ultras 2020 Gatineau, Canada**  
6+12+24 Hour Race as well as 50 km, 50 mi, 100 km, 100 mi distances  
Sri Chinmoy Marathon Team, Utsahi St-Amand, Tel: 1-613-219-8703, AD: 22 July  
Start (24h): Sat 8 am; Start (12h): Sat 9 am; Start (6h): 10 am  
nstaman@uottawa.ca, <https://ca.srchinmoyraces.org/srchinmoyultras>
- 8 August Self-Transcendence 50+100 km Race Chelyabinsk, Russia**  
Sri Chinmoy Marathon Team, Andrey Vinogradov, Tel +7-909-072-10-27, Start: 9 am  
var40@yandex.ru, <https://ru.srchinmoyraces.org/chelyabinsk-supermarathon>



- 8-9 August Self-Transcendence 3+6+12+24 Hour Race Kiev, Ukraine**  
 Ukrainian National 12+24 Hour Championships  
 Sri Chinmoy Marathon Team, Valentyn Ionov, Tel +380-974 27 23 95  
 Start (24 h): Sat 8 am, Start (12 h): Sat 9 am, Start (6 h): Sat 10 am, Start (3 h): every 3 hours  
[info@races.org.ua](mailto:info@races.org.ua) , <http://races.org.ua>
- 8-9 August Sri Chinmoy 6+12+24 Hour Race Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia**  
 Sri Chinmoy Marathon Team, PO box 46a, 613, Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia  
 Tel +976-98 90 56 52, AD: 4 August, LR after 13 August + 5 €  
 Start (6 h+24 h): Sat 10 am, Start (12 h): Sat 10 pm midnight  
[mongolia@srchinmoyraces.org](mailto:mongolia@srchinmoyraces.org) , <https://mn.srchinmoyraces.org/>
- 12 Sept Sri Chinmoy 6 Hour Race Munich, Germany**  
 Sri Chinmoy Marathon Team, An der Würm 28, 81247 Munich  
 Tel +49-89 12 02 15 13, Fax +49 89 12 02 15 29, Start: 10 am  
[munich@srchinmoyraces.org](mailto:munich@srchinmoyraces.org) , <https://de.srchinmoyraces.org> , AD: 11. 9., late reg. + 10 €
- 13 Sept Sri Chinmoy Canberra Trail 100, Australia**  
 Sri Chinmoy Marathon Team, Prachar Stegemann, Tel +61-404 071 327, Start: 6 am  
[canberra@srchinmoyraces.org](mailto:canberra@srchinmoyraces.org) , <https://au.srchinmoyraces.org/canberratrailultra>
- 19 Sept Sri Chinmoy 6 Hour Race Kingston, Canada**  
 Sri Chinmoy Marathon Team, Hladini Wilson, Tel +1-613 859 33 73, Start: 9 am  
[oneworld@kingston.net](mailto:oneworld@kingston.net) , <https://ca.srchinmoyraces.org/>
- 26-27 Sept Self-Transcendence 6+12+24 Hour Race Belgrade, Serbia**  
 Serbian National 12 Hour Championship  
 Sri Chinmoy Marathon Team, Kneza Milosa 68, 11000 Belgrade, Serbia  
 Tel +381-11 245 20 25, Mobile +381-63 113 97 27  
 Start (24 h): Sat 11 am, Start (6 h): Sat 11 am, Start (12 h): Sat 11 pm  
[scmt.rs@srchinmoyraces.org](mailto:scmt.rs@srchinmoyraces.org) , <http://rs.srchinmoyraces.org/>
- 26-27 Sept Self-Transcendence 24 Hour Track Race London, Great Britain**  
 Sri Chinmoy Marathon Team, Shankara Smith, Run and Become, 4a Eccleston Street, London SW1W 9LN, UK, Tel +44-(0)207-222 13 14, Mobile +44-(0)77 34 29 80 24  
 Start: 12 pm noon, [races@runandbecome.com](mailto:races@runandbecome.com) , <https://uk.srchinmoyraces.org/london-24>
- 3 October Self-Transcendence 6 Hour Race Amsterdam, Holland**  
 Sri Chinmoy Marathon Team, attn. Nitish Zuidema, H.N. Werkmanweg 17  
 2031 BA Haarlem, Holland, Start: 10 am, AD: 25 September, late registration + 5 €  
 Tel +31- 23 516 03 60, Fax +31-23 516 03 61  
[amsterdam@srchinmoyraces.org](mailto:amsterdam@srchinmoyraces.org) , <https://nl.srchinmoyraces.org>
- 3 October Sri Chinmoy 24+12+6 Hour Race Volgograd, Russia**  
 Sri Chinmoy Marathon Team Volgograd, attn. Galina, ul. Zorge 53-93, Volgograd  
 Start: 12 am, Tel +7-906 45 15 219  
[info@volgaraces.ru](mailto:info@volgaraces.ru) , [http://www.volgaraces.ru/12\\_24\\_hour\\_race](http://www.volgaraces.ru/12_24_hour_race)
- 14 Nov Sri Chinmoy 6+12+24 Hour Track Races Auckland, New Zealand**  
 2020 Athletics NZL 24-Hour National Championship  
 Sri Chinmoy Marathon Team, Simahin Pierce, Tel +64-21 298 74 98  
[auckland@srchinmoyraces.org](mailto:auckland@srchinmoyraces.org) , <https://nz.srchinmoyraces.org/races/auck/24hr>
- 31 December Sri Chinmoy 12+24 Hour Race Smolensk, Russia**  
**- 1 January** Sri Chinmoy Marathon Team, Mikhail Rodnenkov, Tel +7-920 668 17 75  
 Start (12 h): 11 pm, Start (24 h): 5 pm  
<https://ru.srchinmoyraces.org/events/Смоленск>



# Recent Races

These ultras and multiday events are organised alphabetically by country and feature 40 of some of the more popular, well known and interesting events on the calendar through November 2019.

### 16.11.2019 ARG 246km Ultra Desafio

The Ultra Desafio is set up as a tribute to the Greek Spartathlon. Runners have 36 hours to complete the 246 km road race and the winners receive a bowl in the Greek style. The event first took place in 2016 and this year's men's winner was German Cordisco in 31:46:19. German also won in 2018. First and only female runner was Betiana Pintener 4th overall, finishing in 34:33:07. 5 finishers. [Results on the DUV](#).

### 24.11.2019 BEL 69km Olne-Spa-Olne

Olne-Spa-Olne, is a 69 km looped challenge through trails, woods and meadows starting at the Olne Omnisport Hall in the Province of Liege, Belgium. The course has 2449m of gain and 3 points for UTMB. The event first took place in 1996. This year's winners were Sebastien Carabin in 5:22:37 and women's winner who is also the course record holder was Irene Kinnegim finishing in 6:41:16. Full results.

### 08.11.2019 BRA 48h Ultramaratona 48hs da Mantiqueira

Taking place in Passa Quatro, Brazil at the Pista de Atletismo Colégio São Miguel on a 400 m track, the event features 48/24/12 hour races and was first held in 2016. The 48 hour was won by Ana Luiza de Faria Matos with 355.2 km. First man was Jorge Cerqueira Souza Filho with 341.6 km. 34 runners. In the 24 hour race first place went to Andre Marafon with 198.40 km and first woman was Cristiana Uehara with 142.00 km. 13 runners. [Full results](#).

### 16.11.2019 BRA 50km Ultra Trail Chapada Diamantina

This race takes place in Chapada Diamantina National Park, a nature reserve in East Brazil starting in the town of Mucuge. The course consists of 85% very technical single track, and the event has a 10 hour cut-off. First man was Roque Herbet Novaes Silva in 5:08:07 and first woman was Ingrid Araujo Trindade in 7:04:44. [Full results](#)

### 26.10.2019 ESP 23h Spain Backyard Ultra

Taking place in Castro Caldelas, in the north of the province of Ourense in an area called the Ribeira Sacra. The course is standard size, 6.7 km and runners have an hour to complete the loop and be ready to start the loop again on the hour. Failure to do results in a dnf and the winner is the last person to complete a loop. Even though technically everyone bar the winner is a dnf, we will continue to regard

the last woman standing as first woman. The penultimate finisher is referred to as an assist and their distance is recorded with the possibility of being invited to the World Championships (Big's Backyard Ultra (BBU) in October in Wartrace TN) if the performance is worthy. Some events have been awarded Golden Ticket status where the winner gets automatic entry to BBU and this race was one of those events. The Golden Ticket was won by Simon Gfeller (SUI) with 23 loops, 154.1km. First woman was Monica Garcia da Silva (ESP) with 73.7km. 52 starters. Full results.

### 17.10.2019 WAL 250m Lon Las Cymru Ultra

A 250 mile non-stop race from Holyhead to Cardiff through the centre of Wales crossing several mountain ranges. A very difficult challenge provided by Cockbain Events with an 89 hour cut-off. Four finishers this year: Johan Bogaert (BEL) 76:38, Robert Dale (GBR) 78:50, Karl Shields (GBR) 83:35 and Tom Garrod (GBR) finishing in 83:56. Website: [Lon Las Cymru Ultra](#)

### 01.11.2019 GBR/WAL 227km Winter Rebellion 135mi Ultra Marathon

A cooler version of the Summer Rebellion, the Winter Rebellion follows the full length of Glyndwr's Way National Trail with a total ascent of just over 25,000ft (7700m). The route starts in Knighton looping through Machynlleth and then finishes in Welshpool. This year there were two finishers, Mark Thompson in 45:50:13 and Lizzie Rosewell in 64:21:15.

### 01.11.2019 GBR/WAL 125km Winter Thwarted Rebellion 75mi Ultra Marathon

A shorter version of its older brother and first held in 2017, the Winter Thwarted Rebellion is a 75 mile/120 Km Ultra in Mid Wales. It follows the first 75 miles of the Glyndwr's Way National Trail with a total ascent of just over 12,500ft (3810m) starting in Knighton and finishing in Machynlleth. The race was won by Frederick Levy (GBR) in 18:40:01 and first woman was Caroline Underwood (GBR) in 25:21:56. [Results on the DUV](#).

### 02.11.2019 GBR 100/60/30 miles White Rose Ultra

Taking place in Colne Valley, Yorkshire, the route follows sections of the Kirkstiles Way, the Pennine Way and other local tracks and trails. There were 12 finishers in the 101 mile event with Clark Hind first man in 19:58 and Sarah Sloray first woman in 29:53. The 60 miler was won by Tim Campbell in 11:19 and first woman was Siobhan Pascoe in 14:15 [Full results](#).

### 02.11.2019 GBR/ENG 24h Gloucester 24 hour track race



The Gloucester 24 hour race returned to Podsmead and the Blackbridge Jubilee Track for the first time since 2014 under the guiding hands of Paul Corduroy at Severn Valley Events. A good sized field saw Simen Holvik (NOR) put in an excellent performance of 253.140 km to take the win. First woman was Rebecca Mabelle (GBR) with 172.390 km. 53 finishers. [Full results.](#)

## **08.11.2019 GBR/ENG 84mi/3stage Druid Challenge Ridgeway Multistage Ultra**

The UK's oldest 3 day stage race is the Druid Challenge hosted by XNRG. Starting at Ivinghoe Beacon in Buckinghamshire and finishing at the Alexandra Hotel, Wroughton near Swindon, this event was first held in 2011. The course follows the Ridgeway, Britain's oldest road and is a National Trail. The race was won by David I'Anson (GBR) in an overall time of 10:25:43. Susan McCartney (GBR) was first woman in 13:16:31, 6th overall. 107 finishers. [Full results.](#)

## **16.11.2019 GBR 50mi Wendover Woods**

Organised by Centurion Running, the WW50 consists of 5 x 10 mile loops on forest trails, entirely within Wendover Woods. This race is the fourth and final event in the 2019 50 Mile Slam which also consists of the South Downs Way 50, the North Downs Way 50 and the Chiltern Wonderland 50. This years WW50 was won by Jon Ellis (GBR) in 7:26:17 and first woman was Sophie Amy Grant (GBR) in 9:23:36. 174 finishers. [Full results.](#)  
The 2019 Grand slam winners were Neil Martin (GBR) and Rachel Fawcett (GBR). [Full list.](#)

## **16.11.2019 GBR/NIR 61km Tollymore Trail Ultra Marathon**

The Tollymore Trail Marathon is a fully waymarked event and takes place within the confines of Tollymore Forest Park in Northern Ireland. The route is a 13 mile loop with one, two and three loop options. First man was Kenny Holdsworth (GBR) in 5:11:58 and first woman was Lou McLaughlin (IRL) in 6:23:57. 64 finishers. [Full results.](#)

## **17.11.2019 GBR/SCO 65/50 km Tweed Valley Ultras**

The venue for the Tweed Valley Ultras is the Glentress Peel Visitor Centre, nr Peebles, nestled in the heart of the Tweed Valley in the Scottish Border region. The 65 km race winners were Stuart Paterson (GBR) in 5:11:59 and Fiona Watt (GBR) in 6:28:19. The 50 km was won by Donald McPartlin (GBR) in 3:45:25 and Sophie Mullins (GBR) in 4:22:17, 3rd overall. 134/124 finishers. [Full results.](#)

## **23.11.2019 GBR/ENG 124km Hardwolds 80**

The Hardwolds 80 route follows the Wolds Way from Hessel to Filey passing through chalk landscapes with dry valleys, market Towns and ancient villages such as Wharham Percy, before arriving at Filey. Part of the Hardmoors Race Series,

the third edition of this event was won by Juhana Kirk (FIN) 15:25:32 and Charmaine Horsfall (GBR), fourth overall in 16:28:37. 79 finishers. [Full results.](#)

## **29.11.2019 GBR/JER 103km The C.I. 100K**

The Channel Islands 100k trail race starts at the end of St Catherine's Breakwater travelling along the North Coast of Jersey to Les Landes, St Ouens Beach, before reaching the turn around at St Brelaides Parish Hall, St Aubins. First person across the finish line was James Manners (IRL) in 11:26:05 and first woman was Leanne Rive (IRL), third overall in 12:33:35. 16 finishers. [Full results.](#)

## **30.11.2019 GBR/ENG 44m Coastal Trail Series - Dorset Ultra**

The Coastal Trail Series Dorset Ultra is a looped course with multiple options that start and finish in Lulworth Cove following the Jurassic Coast Path. The 44 mile event was won by Dan Parr (HKG) in 7:47:48 and first woman was Amelie Karlsson (SWE) in 08:26:18. 73 finishers. Full results.

## **15.11.2019 GRE Authentic Phidippides Run Athens-Sparta-Athens 490 km**

Inspired by the ancient runner Phidippides, the event begins in Athens Market and traverses ancient roads and cities to Sparta and back. 2019 saw the fifth edition of the race which was won by Lukasz Sagan (POL) in 69:22:17. Tina Andersen (DNK) was the only female participant and she finished in 98:57:20. [Full results.](#)

## **31.10.2019 IND 250km Ultra Run Rajasthan non-stop**

The inaugural Ultra Run Rajasthan was a 250 km non-stop loop from Ghanerao between Marwar plain and Mewar mountains via Kumbalgarh Fortress. The race was won by Emmanuel Lenogue (FRA) in 48:23:49 and the first woman was Veronique Messina (FRA) in 57:24:10. 26 finishers. [Full results on the DUV.](#)

## **01.11.2019 JPN 320km Tachibana Bay Coast km Ultra Marathon**

Tachibana Wangan Super Maranic (Marathon+Picnic) takes place in the westernmost hilly part of the mainland, Nagasaki. The event has a variety of distances from 55 km to 320 km. The 320 km event was won by Yoichi Ozaki (JPN) in 47:46:35 and first woman was Itsue Nakamoto (JPN) in 52:59:09. [Full results on the race website.](#)

## **16.11.2019 MON 7d3h No Finish Line**

Now taking place on a 1375m loop in and around the Marquee of Fontvieille in Western Monaco, this year was the 20th anniversary of the only 8 day race taking place in the world. The event is supported by the High Patronage of His Serene Highness the Sovereign Prince Albert II and it raises money for the Children & Future charity. For a few euros



# Recent Races

people can get a tracker and with registrations, donors and sponsors, for each kilometer traveled, Children & Future donates € 1 to support projects for disadvantaged or sick children. This year despite the event being curtailed due to atrocious weather conditions €351,151 was raised.

This years podium places were: Daniele Juan Alimonti (ITA) (804 km), Robert Miorin (FRA) (743 km), Patrice Loquet (FRA) (730 km). Women's podium: Mimi Chevillon (FRA) (682 km), Paola Coccato (ITA) (599 km), Annick Fouchard-djebli (FRA) (554 km). [Full results.](#)

## **02.11.2019 NED 210km LEO180**

This trail race is 90% off road and starts in Goirle, in the south of Holland passing quiet and remote nature reserves. The race is semi self-supported and has a time-limit of 36 hours. Each year since its inception the distance has increased by about 10 km. There were four finishers in 2019, first of whom was Berry Snoeren (NLD) in 31:38:00. No women participants this year. [Full results on the DUV. LEO 180 website](#)

## **23.11.2019 NOR 24h Bislett 24/12/6 hour indoor challenge**

Bislett 24 hour takes place on an indoor track underneath Bislett Olympic Stadium. First held in 2006 this event sells out early and draws a strong international field. This year's race was won by Torbjörn Gyllebring (SWE) with 246.227km and first woman, third overall was Therese Falk (NOR) setting a new women's course record 234.270 km. Therese is currently the dominant Norwegian women's 24 hour runner with 6 of the top ten distances covered. [Results on the DUV.](#)

## **16.11.2019 NZL 84km The Molesworth Run**

The Molesworth Station is New Zealand's largest high country station and is located in Awatare Valley the upper half of the South Island. The event runs from the Molesworth Cob Cottage to Hanmer Springs through the Molesworth Station. The race can be done as a Solo-runner, in a Team of 2 or in a Team of 4 runners. The event has a history that extends back to 2004 but this year there were only two takers, Jayden Anker (NZL) finishing in 8:16:06 and Shannon-Leigh Litt (NZL) in 8:28:57. [Race website.](#)

## **01.11.2019 USA 48h Save the Daylight 48/24/12Hour Race**

Based in Englewood, FL, Save The Daylight takes place on a course described as "a very fast, flat 3.3 mile shell/grass path loop". This year was the fourth edition of the event and it draws a lot of women - 2017 and 2018 saw more women finishers than men. This year the race was won by Jill Schroeder (USA) with 217.744 km. First man was Andrew Mathews (USA) with 211.145km. The 24 hour event was won by Bernard Etienne (USA) with 100.45 miles and first woman was Noelle Crooks (USA) with 94.3 miles. [Full results on UltraSignUp.](#)

## **02.11.2019 USA 24h Tideland 24 Hours**

The Tideland 24 Hour is held in the Croatan National Forest, Cedar Point, NC on trails. The course is 2.2 km/1.38 miles per loop and is USATF certified. First man was William Gunn (USA) with 195.113 km and first woman was Kelley Fejes (USA) with 152.986km. 60 finishers. Old friend Sanatan Curchak (USA) won the M70 age group with 86.47 km. 60 finishers. [Full results on UltraSignUp.](#)

## **08.11.2019 USA 24h KUS 24 Hour Ultramarathon**

The Kansas Ultrarunners Society have held the KUS24 Hour since 2013. The course is a 2.1 mile loop at Cessna Activity Center in South Wichita. The course record is held by Pete Kostelnick who ran 198.271km in 2014. The 2019 winners were John Kohler (USA) with 175.740 km and Jaclyn Long (USA) with 165.601 km. A 50/50 gender split among the 24 runners. Full results on [UltraSignUp.](#)

## **09.11.2019 USA 24h NJ One Day 24/12/6 Hour Race**

More fun at the Sussex County Fairground, Augusta, NJ, home of the 3 Days At The Fair event which takes place in May. The course is a 1.000 mile flat loop on pavement and crushed gravel. Several distance options including a marathon Boston Qualifier and a 50k. The 24 hour winners were Ryan Jones (USA) with 201.168 km and Rachel Belmont (USA) with 170.590km. 79 finishers. The 12 hour was won by Dave Gilbert (USA) with 111.044km and first woman was Lauren Longfield (USA) with 104.607km. 25 finishers. Full results.

## **09.11.2019 USA 100/50m Tunnel Hill**

The venue for Tunnel Hill is Vienna City Park, 302 E Vine St, Vienna, IL. This is where Zach Bitter (USA) set a world's best 100 mile time on trail, recording 12:08:36 in 2018. Camille Herron (USA) also set a new world record for women 100 mile (regardless of surface), finishing in 12:42:40 in 2017.

2019 saw Michael Bialick (USA) take his third win with 12:59:43. First woman was Loretta Tobolske-Horn (USA) in 17:21:56. [Full results.](#)

## **09.11.2019 USA 24h Azalea 24/12 hour**

First held in 2014 the venue for the Azalea 24/12 hour is the Ravine State Gardens in Palatka, FL, which was established and has been maintained as a state park since 1933. The course is 2 miles of paved road. 24 hour winners were Norbert Vakhal (HUN) with 167.371 km and Amy Guevara (USA) who covered 138.403 km. [Full results.](#)

## **16.11.2019 USA 50m Endurance Challenge - California Trail 50 Mile/Km**

Starting in Sausalito in the Marin Headlands, CA, and Chrissy Field, The North Face Endurance Challenge features a variety of distances over the weekend from Kids

races, up to the 50 k/m ultras. The 50 miler was won by Sebastien Spehler (FRA) in 6:27:15 and first woman was You Wang (USA) in 7:21:59. 465 finishers. In the 50 km race, first home was Nicholas Handel (USA) in 3:58:13 and first woman was Corinne Shalvoy (USA) in 5:00:14. 518 finishers. [Full Results](#).

## **16.11.2019 USA 24h The Stinger 24/12/6 Hour Race**

The third annual Stinger 24 hour is presented by Revolution Running and is a timed event with 6, 12, and 24 hour options held on an outdoor 400 meter USATF certified rubberised track at Hampton High School, GA. Top spots went to Tor Gudmundsen (USA) with 209.486 km and Sally Libonati (USA) with 197.958 km. Full results on [UltraSignUp](#).

## **17.11.2019 USA 60K NYRR Knickerbocker 60K**

A long standing fixture on the New York ultra calendar, the Knick has been held since March 1978. The only ultra hosted by NYRR, the race takes place in Central Park. This years top places were taken by James Gorman (USA) in 4:04:29 and Tiffany England (USA) in 4:47:23. 375 finishers. [Full results on NYRR.org](#).

## **18.11.2019 USA 72h Icarus Florida 6 day/72/47/24 hour UltraFest**

The 7th Icarus Florida 6 day UltraFest course is a 1.0408 Km paved loop in Snyder Park, Fort Lauderdale, Florida. It offers qualifying options for the World 24 hour Championships and Spartathlon. The 6 day race was won by Pablo Espinosa (ARG) with 652.540km and the women's race was won by Lorna Michael (USA) with 509.148km. 11 finishers. [Results on the DUV](#). The 72 hour race was won by Christian Marti (SUI) with 325.699km and Pamela Sanchez (USA) who finished with 192.043km. 5 runners. [Results on the DUV](#). In the 48 hour the women swept the podium, Lisa Devona (USA) triumphing with 327.919km. First man was Bradley Compton (USA), 4th overall with 242.495km. 9 finishers. [Full results on the DUV](#). The 24 hour event was won by Patrick Hrabos (USA) with 193.748km and Caryn Lubetsky (USA), second overall covered 180.149km. 14 finishers. [Results on the DUV](#).

## **23.11.2019 USA 24h Crooked Road 24 Hour Ultra**

The course is a cinder loop measured at 1.178 miles and takes place at Rocky Mount, VA. First held in 2011, this year the winners were Larry Huffman (USA) with 173.382km and Laurie Matecki (USA) with 161.413km. 170 finishers. [Results on UltraSignUp](#).

## **23.11.2019 USA 50mi JFK 50 Mile**

The JFK 50 Mile was first held in the spring of 1963. It was part of President John F. Kennedy's push to bring the

country back to physical fitness. The website says "Although open to the public, the JFK 50 Mile is in spirit a military race... the inspiration behind the event came from then President John F. Kennedy challenging his military officers to be able to cover 50 miles on foot in 20 hours." Starting in downtown Boonsboro and finishing in Williamsport, the route is run on roads, sections of the Appalachian Trail and sections of the C&O canal in Maryland. This years event was won by Seth Ruhling (USA) in 5:38:11 and first woman was Cecilia Flori (ITA) in 6:46:31. 867 finishers. Full results.

## **29.11.2019 USA 48h Fat Ox 48/24 Hour Run**

The website describes the event as "What started as an 'ultra-experiment' for young Nathan Coury's college thesis on fat oxidation and ultra running, becomes a 48 hour family fixed-time festival celebrating our season at Nardini Manor!"

Home to Across The Years before its move to Camelback ranch, the Nardini Manor course encircles the property and was built by Rodger Wrublik in 2003 and today hosts several events throughout the year as part of the Aravaipa Running menu. The 2019 48 hour was won by John Maroushek (USA) with 298.301 km and first woman was Senovia Baca (USA) with 236.238 km. In the 24 hour Thomas Polen (USA) was first man with 163.665km and Chrissy Parks (USA) was first woman with 130.131. [Full results](#).

## **30.11.2019 USA 24h Delirium Ultra 24/12 Hour Run**

The Delirium Ultra is held in Beaufort, SC. The course is a 1.5 mile USATF certified hard packed trail loop. There are 6, 12, and 24 hour options. A tent city for supporting crews directly on the course creates a fun atmosphere. The 24 hour race was won by Richard Vidinha (USA) with 114.3 miles and the first woman was Andrea Mehner (CHL) with 100.6 miles. Full results on [UltraSignUp](#).

## **30.11.2019 USA 28m Quad Dipsea Trail Run**

Whilst we're mentioning long running events the Quad Dipsea held its 35th edition of the race in 2019. The Quad Dipsea is two out-and-back trips along the Dipsea Trail starting and finishing at Old Mill Park in Mill Valley, California. Mostly single track the course has lots of stairs - 686 in the first three flights alone, some stretches of clean trail, and some stretches with a lot of roots and rocks and 9200 feet of climb/descent. First home were David Roche (USA) in 4:03:37 and Olivia Amber (USA) in 4:48:36. 274 finishers. Full results on [UltraSignUp](#).

## **07.12.2019 USA The Daytona 100**

The Daytona 100 is held in North Florida. The course runs along the nearest road to the ocean between Jacksonville and Daytona Beach. The winner of the 100 mile race was Lee Whitaker (USA) in 15:11:00. The first female was Lori Mitchener (USA) in 17:41:00. Results can be found at [Daytona 100 Ultra](#).



# The Severn Challenge

23<sup>rd</sup> – 27<sup>th</sup> May 2019

220 miles (Part 2)

Text by Sharon Gayter



### Day 4 – Sunday 26th May - The Severn Way Ultra - 60 miles

There were to be another couple of runners join us for the day. One was to set off later with Tom and another had planned to run with me as this would be his longest ultra ever run and was worried about navigation, that was Lucas.

We left this quiet haven at 5:30am. The second Tom who had run the previous day greeted me in and got up to see us off, he was a very encouraging person. The day was not to be quiet though as Lucas loved to talk, unlike me that likes to be alone with my own thoughts. It wasn't long before I could not find the route and was left and right trying to find the way. "Where is your GPS pointing?" said Lucas, "through the middle of that building in front" was the answer. We made progress, albeit a little slowly and there was an extra checkpoint for this day, the distances being 6.4, 8.9, 9.4, 10.6, 14 and 9.8 miles. At the first checkpoint on a nice wide pavement next to the river Steve's wife was waiting for us. Lucas recognised her immediately. We didn't

hang around for long though as there was another long day ahead. My legs were not feeling that bad, no real niggles, just a little bit of stiffness as would be expected.

As the path narrowed and circled through a short patch of trees and bushes we crossed a footbridge and turned left. Shortly after I realised we were drifting off the GPS line again and I tried to figure out how to get back on the route. A cycle path seemed to be parallel that would join further down so I took this. I could not believe it when around 30-40 minutes later we arrived back at the first checkpoint and had done a full circle and were now at over 9 miles for the 6.4 mile mark. Another bad start to the day. I only have myself to blame for that and really needed to concentrate to get this right. Poor Lucas remained deathly silent for a good while until I spoke to him again, then he soon chirped up again. He was such a happy, likeable guy, the opposite to me and am sure he would love to have chatted the whole day but got lumbered with "the quiet one".

I was closely monitoring my GPS now and double checked every turning until we came to the bridge. Clear as day the path turned right over the bridge and not left, but at least we were going in the right direction. The path went around the docks, then back to the riverside paths and then abruptly came to a "footpath closed" sign with a diversion in place. We climbed up to the road and roundabout and I could see there was construction where the path should have gone. I could not find a path back down and wasn't too sure where the diversion was sending us. It appeared to send us down the road which would add to the distance, I decided this must be the way in absence of any other route. About a mile down the road a reassuring diversion sign had been placed so I knew we were still correct, but I was beginning to worry about the overall pace due to the extra distance covered. After a 2.5km diversion the path resumed the riverside route, only to find this was long grass, uneven underfoot and overgrown in many places. My only amusement was at the expense of poor Lucas. I don't think he had ever been stung by nettles. I heard the "ouch" followed by a few unrepeatable words aimed at the nettles. Soon after he asked which cream he should put on the bumps that appeared on his legs. He did not get a sympathetic answer and told him I had worse the previous day.

The path then backtracked up to the road and the second checkpoint where Steve was waiting. I was worried about





our slow progress. Lucas told me he had 18 hours to complete this ultra although I thought the time limit was less, Steve confirmed that as I was guiding Lucas there was a more generous time limit should it be needed. This was a great relief but I still wanted to finish before darkness.

The route continued on a riverside path again, reasonably easy to find now, but still overgrown in places that slowed the pace along with gates and stiles. Soon we arrived at Tewkesbury and as we hit the road I was aware we were heading off the GPS line again. I stopped to read the written instructions. No sooner had I read we were the wrong side of the canal than Steve was ringing, realising we had overshot the route and guiding us where to go, we were not far from the third checkpoint now and soon we arrived along a very pleasant track to reach Steve.

The next section on the riverside path was much less overgrown now, around ankle deep grass that was quite runnable in places and very pleasant. The odd shower came down every now and then, Lucas would stop and put his jacket on and off as appropriate whereas I decided it was warm enough to simply continue. Navigation was much easier now and it was good to make progress as there were still many miles to run and soon checkpoint 4 arrived, 35 miles into the day (although we had done a bit more than



that), so another 25 miles to go with the next checkpoint some 14 miles away.

It was here that Steve warned us that the next section had the worst stinging nettles of the entire route and it was probably best to cover up. I decided to tough it out while Lucas made sure his long socks were pulled up, his arms were covered and even put his gloves on. My GPS must have had sympathy for me as after around 100m of shoulder height continuous nettles it took me back to the road and we could see the Land Rover approaching. We were directed back through a gap into the nettles again. Poor Lucas was in agony, he did ask if the nettles didn't sting me as there was no reaction, I won't repeat the language I was hearing as he followed me through. I must admit my legs felt like they were on fire and Steve was correct, this was the worst bed of nettles I think I have ever been through, but all part of the adventure I suppose.



It was a relief to exit this section with a little respite on a road on the outskirts of Gloucester, my navigation was challenged again as we ended up in an industrial estate. I gathered the route was the other side of a massive wall and I needed to find a way to get there. I stopped to ask someone working if there was a path to the river. He directed us back along the path we had just been on, he did state the path was very overgrown. Much to my amusement Lucas was more than happy to show off his lumpy, stinging legs and say, "you haven't seen what I have just been through!" After retracing our steps I did find the overgrown path that I had not realised was a path and continued our progress.

Lucas had finally become quiet now and was lagging somewhat. This was the furthest he had ever run and he had ambitions for a 100 miler so he was stepping up the



# Race Reports



distance. The only conversation was when we saw cows ahead and he was worried about them attacking us. I was used to Lucas now, don't worry, you stay behind me, they will move, he was such a sweet guy, but he didn't appear to have much experience of the outdoor life. He had run a 100 marathons the previous year though.

The route was now much easier to find again, with the odd overgrown patch, mainly long grass with an uneven surface underneath, pretty flat. There were many gates to slow that section too. We were well into the evening and Lucas was asking where the next checkpoint was. It was hard to tell him the mileage. I knew it would be around 50 miles, with the extra miles done I was not entirely sure how much extra we had done and it was over 54 miles by the time we reached the last checkpoint. I was resigning myself that this may be a long walk to the finish, Steve said the right words to Lucas (whom he obviously knew quite well), insisted that we continue at Sharon's pace and he would have a Chinese meal waiting at the finish, the thought of his chicken fried rice perked him up.

The finish was about 2 miles away by road, but over 10 miles by the route we had to take which was the Severn Way. It was a lovely route though, circling round an embankment next to the river as the sun set even lower in the sky. I picked up the pace to run and it was great to see that Lucas was doing as instructed and stuck to my heels as this would reduce the amount of darkness time we would have. Lucas did ask if we would make it back in daylight. I knew it would be close to 11pm and that we would need our head torches. We made good progress, I was so pleased that I barely had to navigate as the path was easy to find. As the light finally gave way and a small breeze picked up I knew my temperature was dropping, so along with my headtorch I put on my waterproof jacket to keep the heat in. I was stumbling much in the darkness and had to walk in places. With about a mile to go I was looking for a path to the left to the finish point and still managed to miss it. Luckily Steve had walked out the last mile or so to find us



and guide us in. I was pleased he did. The finish was at Top Barn, another incredible place to stay. Gorgeous woodwork greeted us inside the barn. Table and chairs were set out and our meal was waiting for us. For the first time I was hungry and needed to eat first. It was nice to be inside as it was getting cold outside. I could not believe our little tents had been popped up inside the barn and only a few steps away from where I was seated. A lift had arrived for Lucas and he soon departed with his longest ever run in his legs. I bet he hopes for a more talkative partner on his next ultra, he had had a life lesson in stinging nettles that I am sure he will remember.



A start time was agreed for the next day, which was only a marathon now. At my bag my towel was sitting on top. I had left it out to dry on a fence the previous evening and left it there. Steve did a sweep of the site and knew it was mine (it was a blue one so it wasn't obvious). I sorted my kit and maps as normal and prepared for the morning before finally switching my head torch off at 1:30am. My watch had a distance of 65 miles, 620 feet of elevation and officially finished in 17 hours 40 minutes. I had 3 hours 50 minutes sleep, of which only 29 minutes was deep sleep.

## Day 5 – Monday 27th May – The Bristol Severn Ultra – 26 miles

The alarm was set for an hour later than previous. It awoke me up at 5:30am (I was usually awake before to turn the alarm off before it sounded) for the 6:30am departure. I marvelled at this lovely barn and took my time over breakfast before I realised what the time was. I was running late again, no excuses, just too relaxed. I was the only one starting as 6:30am as the extra runners were starting at 7:30am today along with Thomas Loe who was leading the event by a good few hours and doing an excellent job. I started about 6:40am and found it hard to get my bearings as I had finished in the dark. Back down to the canal were the instructions.

I reached the canal but I could not figure out which side I should be on and I didn't want to get stuck on the wrong side as there seemed to be a path on both sides. My GPS did not determine which side and so I stopped to get the maps out of my pack and it clearly showed the other side. It was a cool, but sunny morning and knowing the wide mouth of the Severn was ahead I guessed it could be pretty breezy so opted for a long-sleeved shirt and was pleased that I did. I really didn't put pressure on myself at this event and probably should have because I was taking it too easy and really could not get myself going that morning.

I stopped and started with little things that were niggling me and realised I needed to get going as there was still a marathon to run. After about 90 minutes or so I seemed to perk up and get my running legs back. The path was along the canal, a lovely surface to run and absolutely no navigational problems and before I knew it, Steve was ahead. The next mile or so of the route had changed slightly from what was on my GPS, I followed instructions back to the riverside. There were only 2 checkpoints for day 5, the first at 7.8 miles and the second after 10.7 miles. The route mainly followed an embankment to the second checkpoint, with a few fields and small overgrown section that turned inland by a power station.

The headwind was blowing with intermittent sunshine as I reached the last checkpoint before the finish at Oldbury-on-Severn as one of the day runners caught me up and chatted for a bit. With around 8 miles to go I thought it

was almost done and I would have no further problems as I continued down the embankment with the Severn Bridges getting closer all the time. The embankment gave way to a stony beach area and a path went off to the left up the cliff side path. I pondered on my GPS now thinking I don't want to be the wrong side of the cliff. The path on the left went to a motel and my GPS was pointing directly ahead, it looked like a path climbed alongside the motorway to reach the bridge. I clambered over the stones until I was underneath the bridge. According to my GPS the path should turn left and go to a footbridge across the motorway. There was no such path. I retraced my steps and then thought maybe I didn't go far enough. Eventually I gave up and took my pack off to read the instructions. I was losing too much time wandering backwards and forwards and could not find the route. The instructions were clear, that path I saw that went to the motel was the one I should have taken. I would now have been at the top off the cliff and not the bottom. There was no way out other than to head back. The phone rang. Steve was tracking me and realised something was wrong. Thomas had now finished and tried directing me. I continued retracing my steps, aware that I was now holding them up as they could not leave until I finished. I was still retracing my steps when the phone rang again, apparently I had retraced my steps too far and overshot the path again. I could only see the cliff face still and continued to backtrack. I was very frustrated at myself for wasting so much time here. Once at the path to the motel there was a sign, it did fork away from the motel which was what I should have observed. I held the instructions in my hand to guide me for the rest of the route, it was easy now.





# Race Reports

After the footbridge over the motorway I went under the second Severn Crossing and the beach was now 1750m away, or so the sign said. With just 200 metres to go, the rain came in time to drench us all and spoil the finish. No great fanfare, just quickly to the Land Rover to avoid the rain and the event was done. The statistics for the last 7 years were a 26% finish rate, so 3 in every 4 do not finish. Well I beat the odds and finished and was content with my training, although I probably did take it too easy, I felt happy that I finished with no niggles. I had managed to create a couple of blisters on day 4 due to having wet feet for most of the day, my legs were tired but fine. My watch recorded 28.2 miles and 414 feet of elevation gain with the official time of 8 hrs 12 mins.

Steve took us to the services for something to eat and a cup of tea before returning to Worcester where we had set off from and my van was waiting for me. This trip for me had been all about having long runs out during the day and reducing my sleeping hours to mimic what lay ahead on my next challenge. It had been absolutely perfect for that and I was pleased that I only rested for 4 hours or so between the long days. Every day finished with a different medal, which when put together mapped the course of the River Severn and joined together in the form of a jigsaw puzzle to make one extra large medal. The first four days I got a buff and the last day a t-shirt (I even got a ladies one!) All finishers received a finishing trophy. My official time for the 220 miles was 56 hours 54 minutes.

As with all long races and adventures, there will be highs and lows on the course. The mountains were beautiful, the riverside and canal side paths lovely and tranquil, and the overgrown paths awful, all joined to make a great route along Great Britain's longest river. The campsites were brilliant, far better than many I have used and very unique. The organisation detailed precisely the facilities and food available along with distances between checkpoints which were well detailed in advance and everything that should have been supplied was supplied. Kit bags were taken between campsites, individual pop up tents were put up for us and taken down afterwards. I had a thoroughly enjoyable trip, met some lovely people and even though this was a small, low key event, these are the events I prefer rather than mass participation events. I like to be out on my own with my own thoughts and enjoy being at one with nature and camping.

The statistics sound tough, the route itself is not that undulating, the route follows quite close to the river much of the way which I thought would be easy to find, in reality the paths were often hidden where local councils had not kept them clear. I can guess this will vary much over the years depending on the weather conditions and when the council tackle the overgrown paths. I never really went far off route, I wasted a lot of time in trying to find the correct way out of fields. The long grass with an uneven surface



underneath was also a big slowing factor for me as this was a training run and I didn't want to risk falling or turning an ankle so I was more cautious than normal. These were the factors that made the event challenging for me. As always, it was a great adventure, I did enjoy taking part and having the full experience of running from the source to the mouth. A great way to prepare for longer ultras.

The shoes I wore for this were the AltraTimp 1.5. I also wore the gaiters designed specifically for Altras which worked a dream. After many tangles with long grass and overgrown paths there was not a mark on these shoes proving that the uppers are pretty tough. The gaiters did their job and kept all stones and debris out of my shoes and not once needed adjusting. My feet were wet for most days 2-4 due to dew or rain and running in wet grass. I did manage to find 2 blisters on my right foot, this was probably more due to having wet feet for so long and uneven paths. These shoes have now run over 600 miles and can still probably do another 600 miles. They have spacious toe boxes to allow for expanding feet on these long runs, good cushioning, perfect grip for the surfaces encountered on this event and are very tough, durable shoes.

*The photos of runners were courtesy of Ultra Running Ltd, the source and mouth were from winner Thomas Loe, the other two were mine.*





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# How To Run 800 Km? A Journey Through Camino De Santiago

Text & Photos by Agnieszka Pamula



### HOW ABOUT RUNNING IT?

For the last two years my goal was to run the famous trail, Camino de Santiago in under 10 days. I learned about the Camino's most popular route, the French Way, a few years ago. A friend told me about how she was walking this route, in stages over several years. At that time I was a beginner in ultrarunning but there was a flash in my head, "800 km ?! - it would be great to run it," that's how this idea came about.

Camino is a pilgrimage route and has many versions. The French route is the most popular. It starts in the French

town of St. Jean Pied de Port, in the Pyrenees, several kilometers from the Spanish border. Then the road goes along almost all of Spain, up to the Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela. According to the official source, which is the diploma issued in Santiago by the Pilgrim's Office, the route is 779 km long. I had GPX uploaded with the route in the 812 km version. These differences may be due to the fact that in some places the route had options to choose from. Whichever one you chose, it was still the Camino trail but they certainly differed in length. I adhered to my GPX without considering other options. After all,

these 30 km make no difference to the ultra-runner, right?

### START AND THE FIRST DAYS

I started this amazing adventure on my birthday, July 14 at 07:00. Two weeks before departure, I felt a growing nervousness, this well-known to all long distance runners, a mixture of excitement and joy, with a little pinch of fear. The day before, I went to the French Pilgrim's Office to get the first stamp into my pilgrim's passport. I will write about it more when going through logistics. On the day, together with my husband Marek, who was my support on the route, we went to





the bridge, where everyone officially begins their journey, we counted from 10 and ... zero. Off I went.

The beginning of the route goes through the Pyrenees. Beautiful views of the majestic mountains, the ringing of bells hanging on the necks of sheep, the sound of the wind, just freedom. Pilgrims with heavy backpacks slowly climb up the hill, step by step. Everyone focused on their way. I was also focused on my goal to complete the trail in less than 10 days. Sometimes someone looks curiously and says, "Buen Camino," have a good way. I answer the same and keep going.

The first three days passed fairly easily, going from 80 to 96 km a day. The trail meandered through mountain paths, gravel roads, and a patch of asphalt as it passed through villages and towns. I made the first stop for food after 25 km. I decided with Marek that we will see how often would we meet on the go, depending on conditions and how I was feeling. During these first days we met every 20 or so kilometers. These were mainly food stops. I had a lot of water along the way, so I could refill my flasks. In every village there is a fountain that you can use, and besides, I always had some cash with me to buy something cold along the

way. At this first stop there is a road sign showing 790 km to Santiago. I forgot to take a picture next to the sign but I would not go back. I kept going. That first day I went through the large city of Pamplona, which is famous for its national bull races. The week of running with bulls was over and the streets are crowded with people dressed in traditional white and red clothes, celebrating, dancing and joyfully besieging the numerous bars. I try very hard not to lose track in this crowd. I only lose it twice, thanks to my live tracker and Google map I quickly find the right way. Behind Pamplona I find hills again, including a hill with the famous metal sculpture of pilgrims. It is quite late

when I get there, I am happy to find a tourist, I ask for a photo and then it's straight to the designated base for accommodation.

On the second day I pass another well known place, the so-called "Wine Fountain" (Fuente del vino). This is a rather unusual fountain, where water flows from one tap and red wine from the other. The pride of this region of Spain, where, as far as the eye can see, are fields of grapes. There is an organised trip in front of the fountain. The queue is long, so I decide not to wait. Anyway, wine during the run is probably not the best drink. Then it turns out that my husband filled an isotonic bottle there. With wine of course, so after returning home I could try it. Sweet, delicious.

The next day passes peacefully and without any major attractions. Some pilgrims have an irresistible need to leave a mark on the trail. So you pass, for example, stones framed in a pattern, drawings, colorful pendants, crosses made of sticks and various types of inscriptions. I particularly liked one of them that day, "What you give comes back to you 3 times." Is this not real? Cool.

## IN A FRYING PAN

On the fourth day it gets harder. The spaces have become more open, and I really feel the heat. After twenty kilometers that day I reach Burgos. There, I feel that I have to take a good nap. I have taken part in long runs in





# Race Reports



difficult conditions more than once and I know that when I start walking sideways, it is a sign that I need to rest. I take a 40 minute break, it's not a race after all, and I still have a lot of work to do, so I don't regret it. It puts me back on my feet. I continue running, passing a huge cathedral along the way, which is the main attraction of this city.

On the fifth and sixth days most of the route leads through dirt roads and open fields, this means no shade. The heat goes up to 36 degrees. Many people who don't plan to do the entire route skip over the 100 km from Frómista to León because nothing really happens on this section. There are very few fountains where you can cool down. I spray my face, neck, rinse my head and shoulders at every occasion. Temporary relief, but refreshing. I meet with Marek more often for ice cooling and electrolyte replenishment.

I change my shoes to lighter ones and it was a relief ... until my feet started to swell. My small toes began to rub, one is quite torn. In general, my whole body was swollen incredibly. I looked with disbelief at my hands and my wrist so thickened that I had to fasten my watch three holes further than usual. I have never experienced anything like this before, even when

running in Cyprus at a temperature of about 40 degrees. Well, I only ran there for 2 days, not 5 days in a row.

These two days were extremely hard. I felt like I was sometimes burned with fire. Despite the strong filters, I burned my calves. After applying cooling gel, I wrapped them in gauze to protect them from the sun. It helped, my mileage has already fallen to 70 - 80 km.

## THE LAST STAGE

Finally, I got to León, from where the route was to become more hilly again, and therefore partly shaded. The next two days are a lot of going up the hill. Both are 75 km kilometers. I finish day seven at Cruz de Fierro. It's a special place for many people, it's special for me too. There you can leave a little stone that has been brought from the country where you live with some intention. I left mine and I stood there for a long moment, silently admiring the sunset.

On the eighth day, the first stage led me to the city of Ponferrada. We agreed to eat breakfast there. Marek always found a place where you could order toast with butter, jam and tea. I said I had to change shoes back to trail shoes, my feet were so swollen that I had no choice but to adjust the shoes. He cut holes in the sides and this was a very good move, a huge relief. From now on, I soaked my feet in cold water and changed my socks at every stop. I ignore the toe so swollen that it all

comes out of the shoe.

The last two days (87 and 84 km) are mainly a mixture of asphalt and gravel roads. It is different now as I pass more people. It is a tradition to obtain a Compostela diploma in Santiago if you have traveled at least 100 km on foot or 200 km by bike. So many people go only on the last stretch, 117 km from Saria. Suddenly there are more shops, bars, restaurants and souvenir stands. After so many days of being with myself for most of the time, I feel a bit awkward when suddenly I am surrounded by so many people and different sounds. On the last day I do something that I avoided throughout the entire time, I turn on my mp3 player. I have to cut myself off from this buzz and from the pain that is becoming more and more difficult to ignore.

## SANTIAGO DE COMPOSTELA

40 km before the end I met with Marek for the last lunch break. These breaks always looked similar. Marek found a place where you can order pasta with tomato sauce, he ordered immediately, because Spanish people have a very relaxed (read: slow) approach to customer service. He was also preparing a bucket of water and ice so that I could soak my feet while eating. After lunch, I went off all happy because it's so close to the finish. Suddenly, after a few kilometers I began to feel dizzy and with no power. OK, no panic, it's just the body that demands rest because the mind







knows it's almost over. I tell myself that soon I will take a shower and I will go to sleep, and tomorrow I don't have to do anything. It keeps me going.

Finally, Santiago. Only less than 3 km to the square in front of the cathedral. Just before running into the square I let Marek know that he can start recording a video. I run, people clap, it's amazing. When I reach the finish line, I laugh and I can't believe it's over. I sit down and look at the cathedral bathed in the evening sun. It's 22:15. The trail was completed in 9 days and 15 hours. I'm happy.

"We did it," I say to my husband.

"You did it, honey," he replies.

"No, we did it. I couldn't do it without you."

We often look at the runners with admiration as they overcome their own weaknesses and difficulties on the route. The truth is that proper support is half the success. Marek did not sleep, supplied food and drinks, served supplements, arranged accommodation, and was on the road for the whole time. We met every 1-3 hours depending on the conditions. He is an athlete himself who competes

in the long distance Ironman competitions. He also tasted ultra-running several times, so he knows what a runner needs. Besides, we've been together for a long time and he knows when to pat me on the back, when to rebuke a little, and when to just shut up and let me complain. We are a really well coordinated team. Without him, this adventure would not have happened.

## RECORD?

From the beginning I had two aspirations, to complete the trail under 10 days and to start running on my birthday, it was very important to me. I knew about the American FKT, Jennifer Anderson, and it occurred to me that it would be great to do this route faster. I also realised that I would not run in March, like my predecessor but in a hot July. If I was concerned only for the record, I would also choose a different time of year. For personal reasons I chose such a date and I do not regret it, and the record? Maybe another time.

Finally, I ran 10 hours later, doing a distance of 70 to 96 km a day. The fact is that I am the first European to cover this trail in less than 10 days. At least according to the data that can be



found on the Internet, that's enough for me.

## LOGISTICS

Preparations for this challenge took a lot of time. Many things had to be planned and organised. We arranged accommodation with a friendly company, Follow the Camino, which organises trips on all the Camino routes. We tried to estimate where I could end up more or less on each day. Of course, it couldn't be planned a 100 percent. For the first time we organised such a long trip. Sometimes we had to commute to the next hotel from the place where I finished that day, to return to the exact same point the next morning. I have every one kilometer of this route in my legs. From another friendly company, Primal Tracking, I got a GPS tracker and they set up a live tracking site for me. They also updated it every day.

Car hire was the second largest expense. We picked up the car in France and returned to Spain, the amount of normal rental price increased almost twice, so that the car would later be returned to France. Plus a full insurance package, because you have to be prepared for such a long route that something can happen along the way. Fortunately, nothing happened, and the car managed.

As for the other things, I have been compiling the list since the beginning



# Race Reports

of the year, adding to it everything I thought that might be needed. In addition to the obvious things like running clothes, spare shoes, headlamps, etc., it included items such as: a bowl for soaking the feet, a rope and clips to hang laundry in the car, or an ice bucket in which drinks were cooled. A pilgrim's passport was also on the list. This is a passport in which stamps are collected along the route. Many bars, shops or pilgrim accommodations (so-called 'albergue') have their stamp. Based on this, the Pilgrim Office in Santiago issues

the already mentioned Compostela certificate. You can also ask for a certificate confirming the mileage covered. I have both.

I ran the French route of Camino de Santiago, 800 km. How can you describe it? It was amazing, beautiful, exciting, crazy, funny, hard, terrible... a whole range of experiences and emotions. How to sum it up now? Maybe I'll just say this, do what makes you feel happy and fulfilled because only this gives meaning to life.

Best regards to all runners,  
Agnieszka



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# The Black Mountain Monster 6, 12 & 24 Hour Ultra

By Heather Strowd



Heather, Linda and Michael before the race start (taken by runner with my phone)

Just three short weeks after running 151 miles in New Jersey, at 3 Days at the Fair, I headed up to Black Mountain, North Carolina for The Black Mountain Monster 6,12 and 24 Hour Ultra. The Black Mountain Monster has been on my radar for a few years but due to a past injury it was a race I was not ready to sign up for at the time. Now, injury free and back to running regularly, I was ready to sign up for this year's race. Knowing that I would still be recovering from my previous race I opted to sign up for the 12 hour race rather than struggle through the 24 hour race. This year's race would be one that everyone would remember for many years to come.

Black Mountain is just a short two hour drive from Charlotte. Many runners from the Charlotte area participate in the race, several make this a yearly event. The race takes place at Montreat College and is a 3.125 mile loop that is comprised of grass, paved greenway, gravel and single track trail. This year there were about 270 runners registered for the three races and about 210 finishers. Many that registered did not show, and I am sure the weather forecast was a factor with the amount of Did Not Start (DNS) that day.

Last year the race had to be rescheduled due to multiple days of rain leading up to the race and

major flooding in the area. However, on race day last year the temperatures were very high and heat played a factor in everyone's race. The weather forecast was not looking good for the race this year. Rain was moving in towards the end of the week and the area was to expect up to 8" of rain over two to three days.

Although it had rained most of the day preceding the race, the first few hours of the race were relatively dry. By the afternoon the weather quickly turned to heavy rain and storms.

At the beginning of the race there were sections of the course with large puddles and slick mud. My friends and I had been under the impression that this

course was relatively flat. We quickly discovered that although there were some flat sections of the course, there were also some significant climbs including running uphill to the start/finish timing mat.

From the start it was impossible to keep your feet dry, luckily, I had plenty of socks with me so that I could change them frequently and hopefully prevent my feet from blistering.

My friends Michael, Linda and I started out together, but I knew that I would not be able to keep up with them. They were here for the 6 hour and I was signed up for the 12 hour race. With legs still tired from my last race I wanted to try and run for as long as I could by slowing my overall pace. I ran much of the first few laps, while choosing to walk the inclines in order to save my legs for as long as possible. Blisters started early and my feet were shriveled up since they were constantly wet.

After 4 loops around the course I saw my friends Michael and Linda up at our canopy. I knew they must be getting ready to head home. They were both coming off injuries, so they planned to get in about a half marathon and call it a day. Before they took off, we did a quick shot of Fireball. Then right after they left, I got back on the course and





Tent City- Heather Strowd

started running lap 5.

By 4pm the heavy rains were underway, and the course was deteriorating very quickly. Parts of the course became a stream and the pre-existing puddles from the start of the race were now much deeper. There was also so much shoe sucking mud that tried to pull your sneakers off your feet or make you slip and fall into a large mud puddle. Crazy enough, the rain couldn't ruin the

fantastic time I was having. As I saw it, there were only two choices... quit... or push on and have fun and do the best I could. Today I decided to embrace the rain.

My good friend Bill Keane was here for the 12 hour race. We have participated in many of the same Ultras over the years, but only recently becoming friends last fall at Hinson Lake Ultra. We shared many miles and stories together as

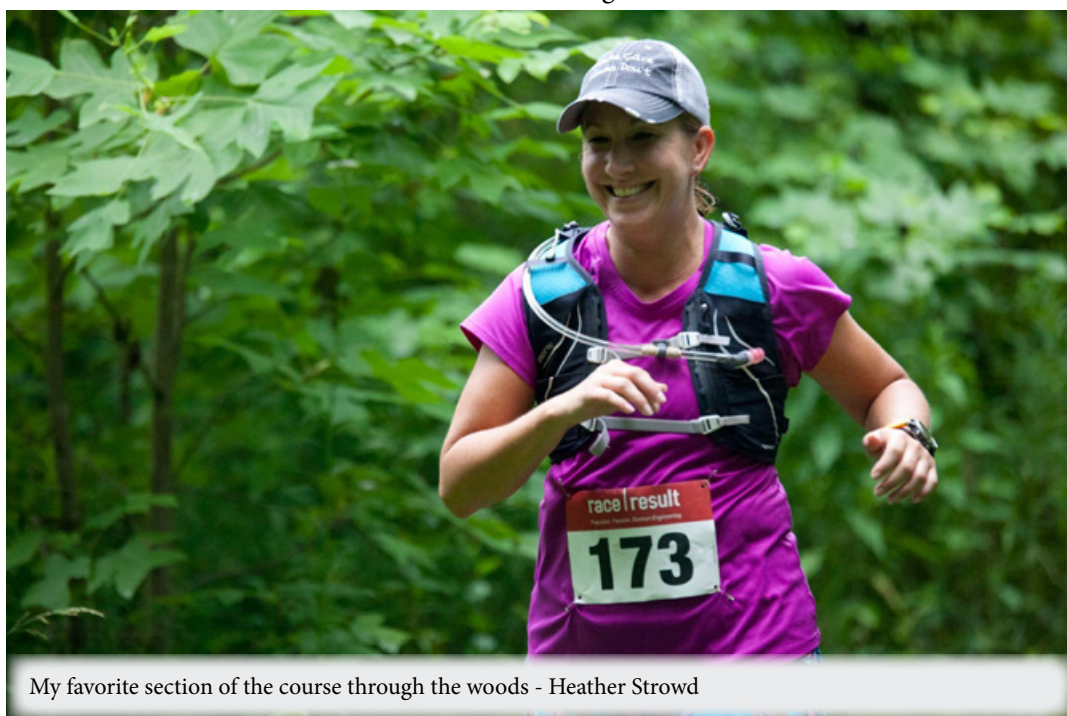
we ran/walked around the course helping each other stay vertical and focused.

Bill finished his 50K before me, I had one more loop I had to make then I would be finished with a 50K. I started my last loop just before 7:30pm. Conditions were worsening and I mostly walked the last 3 miles since running was extremely difficult. Once the weather went from bad to worse many dropped out of the race. Now I

found myself out alone on course never seeing another runner. Bill had mentioned earlier in the day that there have been bear sightings along the course in the last few years. We were in the mountains, so it made sense but now my mind started racing, I was out here alone and worried about the possibility of running into a bear. It would be dark after 8:30pm and I knew I had to move through these last miles as quickly as possible since I did not bring my headlight with me. Shortly after 8:30pm I had finished 50K and although there were 90 minutes left before the end of the 12 hour race I decided to call it a day. My legs were tired and sore, feet shriveled and my body terribly chaffed due to wearing wet clothes for so many hours. It was far from my fastest 50k but it also wasn't my slowest. All in all, it was one of the most fun races I have done in the last year.

It was still raining, and Bill was still hanging out cheering on the other runners. We sat under the canopy for a while enjoying a post-race beer and some great stories from Bill. I spent the night in a hotel just down the street and hoped that in the morning the rain would have passed so that I could go back to the race and cheer on the runners for the final hour and break down my canopy and gear that I had left on-site overnight.

During the night the conditions at Tent City became dangerous, campsites were flooding



My favorite section of the course through the woods - Heather Strowd



# Race Reports

Uphill in the slick mud - Heather Strowd



and areas on the course were now so flooded that the water came up to the runners knees. The race director called the race around 3am for the safety of the runners. Everyone still at Tent City needed to break down and leave the area right away. When I got back to Montreat College in the morning I had no idea what had happened during the night while I was sleeping, or the carnage that was to greet me upon my return the next morning. It was rain saturated chaos as everyone who had abandoned camp at 3am, was now trying to pack up what was left of the remaining campsite after the previous night's storms.

Mike Guyer, the race director and his team put on an amazing event. The energy at Tent City is unlike any other. There were bands playing live

music throughout the day plus a great aid station with plenty of food to keep the runners fueled. There is something truly special about the ultra running community and it seems to be even more prevalent in the running community in the mountains. An absent minded runner who forgot to pack sneakers receiving a donation pair to run the race in, to all the help everyone gave each other in the early hours of the morning when Tent City started to flood, the community is strong and dedicated to each other as much as the events themselves. Black Mountain Monster was a great race made even better by a great time spent with friends on the course. We are all looking forward to running this race again next year and plan to camp overnight in Tent City (weather

Having a great time in the woods - Kristofer Alan Thompson



permitting of course). I just hope next year it will be more of a trail race and less of a mud run, but

whatever form it chooses, it will once again be an event full of challenges and fond memories.

Large mud puddles before the storm really hit - Heather Strowd





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# Swiss Alps 100 Endurance Run

By Jakob Herrmann

Photos courtesy Sportograf.com



The third edition of the Swiss Alps 100 Endurance Run came to a close on Sunday, August 18, 2019. With 100 miles, 100KM and 50KM distances, the race attracted 308 runners and their supporters from 30 countries to the beautiful Swiss Alps.

The fastest runner in the 160KM distance was Antoine Bouchet (France) completing the race in a fast 28:59:19. Denise Zimmerman (Switzerland) was the female winner with an amazing time of 31:14:12. A total of 44 runners finished the 100-mile course. In the 100KM distance, which had 96 finishers, Andreas Manz (Switzerland) won the race in 14:17:28 and Helen Ogi (Switzerland) was the first female with a time of 15:53:22. The 50KM distance had 64 finishers with Fabrice Fauser (Switzerland) the first male (5:16:55) and Kerstin Dusch (Switzerland) the first female (06:42:15).

Organizing a 50KM, 100KM, and 100 mile race from Southern California is no small task. Jakob Herrmann grew up in Brig, Switzerland and emigrated to the USA in 1998. After getting his College degree he worked for large

companies like Disney, Sony, and Legalzoom as a web developer. After years of sitting at a desk, without doing any physical activities and with a weight of almost 200 pounds, Jakob started running. He really got into it and within 6 months of running he had already completed 11 races including 3 marathons and his first ultra, the 2005 JFK50. At the 2019 Javelina Jundred, he will run his 100th ultramarathon which will be his 27th 100 mile finish. He is the co-RD and 49% owner of the Angeles Crest 100 and he was always interested in organizing his own race. So, one day, he thought why not create a beautiful race in the area he grew up in and had hiked so much as a child. The idea of creating the Swiss Alps 100 was born.

During the first 2 years he spend the time planning the race course on the computer creating over 30 variations of what could be the perfect route. In the summer of 2016, together with his wife Linda and friends Dan, Stephen, and Lily Marinsik, they would pre-run the 80KM course which would be offered for the inaugural race in 2017. That first year, the race started in Oberwald and the finish line was





I compete only with myself,  
for my progress is my true victory.  
**SRI CHINMOY**

# 3100: RUN AND BECOME

ILLUMINE presents 3100: RUN AND BECOME Edited by ALEXANDER MEILLER Music Composed by MICHAEL A. LEVINE  
Director of Photography SEAN KIRBY Executive Produced by LINDA SINGH CHETAN CHAUDHARY ANTHONY ROSALE and JOE DE SENA  
Produced by TANYA MEILLER Featuring Music Performed by ROBERTA FLACK Directed by SANJAY RAMMAL

SPARTAN BERTHA

**Date:** Sun, 8 Mar 2020, 11:00 am  
**Location:** Watershed 1 Canon's Road  
Bristol BS1 5TX



# Race Reports



in Simplon Dorf. 50 runners from 14 countries stood at the starting line and 39 crossed the finish.

After feedback from the runners, the organizing committee changed the route in 2018. The start and finish would be at the airfield in Münster and the 80KM was changed to a one big loop course. That year, a 100KM distance was added too and they were excited to welcome 95 runners from 15 countries. Extremely bad weather with a sub-freezing snowstorm in the Alps led to runners getting frostbite and some of them got lost in the thick fog. 11 hours after the start the difficult choice was made to stop the race to keep the participants safe. The race's search and rescue team, the National Ski Patrol, went into action and had all runners down the mountains safe and sound within a few hours.

Going forward, many runners asked for a tough 100-mile course so in 2019 that's what they got. With a total elevation gain of 34,600 feet the course was tough but also very beautiful traversing over 3 suspension bridges, a big dam, by idyllic villages catching many stunning views along the way including running along the UNESCO World Heritage high trail of the world famous Aletsch Glacier. The race was now also a Western States 100 qualifier and runners got 6 points for the Ultra-Trail du Mont Blanc. These added goodies and the growing reputation of a stunning course

led to an amazing 308 registrations from 30 countries for the race this year.

The weather on Friday morning was a cool 43F as the runners for the 100-mile course took off at 7am. The weather conditions were nothing less than perfect. Dry and cool in the evenings, with nearly a full moon at night, the race could not have asked for better conditions. Saturday, at 7am, the 100 and 50KM racers took off from the airfield in Münster.

Sunday at 9am the last runners on the 100KM distance crossed the finish line. The faces showed evident elation. The scenery and difficulty of the course were praised by all. Jakob and his organizing committee were pleased with the results and are already planning 2020 to be even better.

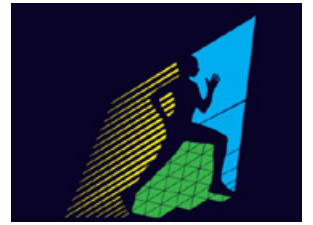
The Swiss Alps 100 race is an opportunity for Goms and the 12 municipalities to show themselves and their incredible beauty to the world. While the race is growing the committee is looking into moving the start/finish line one last time to a facility, which will offer runners hot showers, real bathrooms, and a big indoor space during the cold night. The race is constantly evolving to allow runners, their families and friends to experience this incredible area in the Swiss Alps from the best side possible.

Photos are taken by <https://www.sportograf.com/>



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# Gran Trail de Peñalara 2019 Race Report

By Marijn Sinkeldam, the Netherlands



(Figure 5) At the finish line

In the last weekend of June, I participated in the Gran trail de Peñalara in Navacerrada, Spain. This is an ultra-race of 116 kilometres with a total ascent of 5100 meters which is part of the Spain ultra-cup and has been assigned 5 ITRA points. It starts and finishes in Navacerrada, a small town north-west of Madrid, which is a ski resort in winter. The following race report is my account and personal story of the Gran Trail de Peñalara (GTP).

Four weeks before this event, I had run the West Highland Way Challenge Race (WHWCR), I wrote an article about it in *Ultrarunning World* edition 21. I had already registered for the GTP and booked a flight, I had no idea how my body would respond and how it would be able to recover

after my first big run (the WHWCR). As I learned Spanish during a half year of travelling through South America, I thought the GTP would be an excellent and quick way to recap on my Spanish. Furthermore, I knew that if I managed to finish the GTP, I would have enough points to register for the UTMB in 2020.

My training in the month before the event mainly consisted of comfortable, long runs, while I was still recovering from the WHWCR. I foam rolled daily and also did some cycling, to keep my legs moving. In the week up to the event, I did a couple of interval runs, and I tested the running poles I had bought, especially for this race. Also, I tried eating some wraps on the longer runs and found out that I run pretty well with them as my source of energy,

as I had no gastrointestinal symptoms (Figure 1). I lacked experience in hill training but I tried to compensate for this with a couple of uphill runs on a treadmill.

I arrived one day before the race in a hostel close to Navacerrada, I was able to pick up my race number before travelling to the hostel (Figure 2).

The race number could be collected in the Real Sociedad Española de Alpinismo Peñalara headquarters in the centre of Madrid. My eyes fell on a maquette of the Peñalara mountain and the Sierra de Guadarrama national parc. I immediately felt some positive energy and wanted to start right away. The collection of the race number went smoothly, the entire organisation of the race was professional. It is surprising to know





(Figure 3) First couple of kilometres

that the event has only existed for ten years. It has expanded very quickly since its first edition in 2009.

The day afterwards, hours before the race, an informative speech regarding the regulations of the Spain ultra-cup and the GTP was given. I was the only blond (and perhaps even foreign) participant in the room. The presentation was in Spanish, for me no problem, but for future (non Spanish speaking) participants, this might be a problem. Make sure to bring someone to translate. To have a good start, I added a word list at the bottom of this race report to be somewhat prepared regarding ultra-trail-running-Spanish. However, volunteers are always willing, and able to translate, or at least to provide you with sufficient information to make in through.

The race started at precisely 23:30. I was quite late at the starting point as I had some problems with my camelback, a local store owner helped

me to find a shop to buy a new one, and I had a quick rest. I was thrilled with the last minute decision to invest energy in getting a new camelback as during the race daily temperatures went up to about 38 degrees Celsius and a lot of uphill running was on hills without trees, hence, without shelter. I decided to start directly with my running poles, a correct decision as the first 8 kilometres are easy going uphill with an increased ascent in the last part of the first mountain called La Maliciosa (Figure 3). I started too far back in the field because in the first ten kilometres I was only overtaking other runners. During the first ascent, when looking back, a beautiful zigzagging line of light going up to the mountains could be seen ([also see the movie](#)). A moment of pure enjoyment for me.

The race continued, and I found a spot in the race with a couple of Spanish runners. During the WHWCR I had a lot of intestinal problems, in this race

I did not, due to a change in diet, I chose wraps, and at aid points, on the way, I would go for fruits and nuts. I found out that my intestines react to everything that raises blood sugar quickly (foods with a high glycaemic-index) such as sweets. This race would be perfect for me regarding food intake. The race had eight aid stations on the way, and one point where only water was provided. In the middle of the race, in Rascafría a drop bag could be collected.

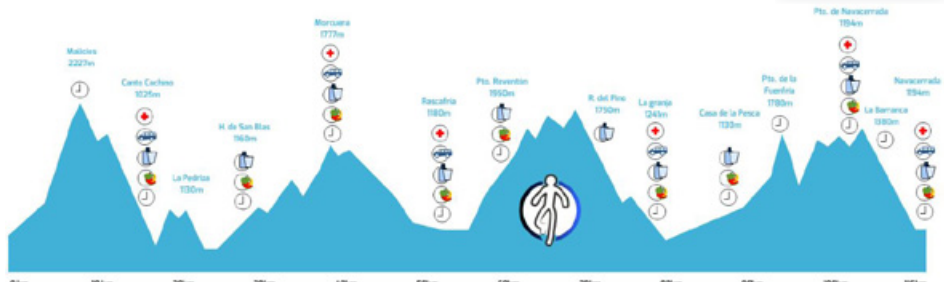
After the first mountain, a steep descent was initiated, and I was overwhelmed by the technical aspects of the course. Uphill I had been overtaking other participants one by one, but while going down, I noticed this was not my kind of terrain. Rolling rocks were encountered regularly, and I am sure that every participant fell (at least) once during the race. Especially in the latter part of the race, I decided to keep my tempo down a bit, this cost me 5-10 spots in the final ranking. However, I was warned during the presentation about the GTP.

Just before Rascafría (the half-way/drop-bag point of the race), the sun started to rise. A beautiful sight as I was running and enjoying the silence of the night as the first sun rays stroke the mountainous backs. At every aid point on the route, I had a short (Spanish) chat with one of the volunteers. This was new for them as most of the participants were genuinely racing. I was enjoying my time out in the Spanish mountains. At this moment I am not yet racing, so far I have been participating in ultra-events. Maybe in future events, when I am a bit more seasoned, I will be able to compete. Time will tell.

With the first sunlight coming in, temperatures rose quite quickly. I noticed this was not a big deal for me. At the start of the year, I did a medical internship in Ghana. Hence I was somewhat adapted to the heat. At the aid stops, I decided to take a risk, and I filled my camelback and water

GTP 116 KM - 5100+

4 GTP profil





# Race Reports

(Figure 1) Wraps in the making



(Figure 2) Ready to go



bottle at every aid station on the route. I was required to carry at least a litre of water on every given point during the race. No control was carried out (I can't imagine how to control 500 participants).

I took some time to enjoy a well deserved rest in Rascafría, finally, I took 15 minutes to relax and to put on some sunscreen as the sun was coming in for real at this point. I also put on my sunglasses. For the next section of the race, I decided to run with music (my second improvement besides running poles after the WHWCR descent in-ear-headphones). For a year, I have been collecting songs I like to listen to while running in a specially named UTMB-playlist. It is an open playlist if you like ([see the link below](#)).

The next 30 kilometres flew by as I was feeling better and better. After the aid point in la Granja I missed one of the ribbons which marked the route. I ended up detouring for a kilometre

and a half before one of the volunteers caught up with me on a mountain bike (after I had just decided to turn around). A demotivating moment as I had to catch up with a group of runners I had left behind 5 kilometres before.

This point had a mental impact on me, especially with temperatures rising and an extended part of the route running alongside a river, at this point many families were trying to cool down and search for some shade. I walked for quite some time on this part of the route, which was relatively flat. I lost time on this part of the course as it had been perfectly suitable for running a comfortable pace. The mental part of the race is the challenge (and the part of ultra-running I like the most). To be honest, I had prepared for this race but not entirely as detailed as I wanted to. At this point, I did not know how many uphills had to be taken (Figure 4). Another big learning point for the

next races, make sure to see the route AND its height profile. I was feeling fine again, as I had gone through my mental low-point, from now on it could only go uphill, and it did.

The last part of the route consisted of a couple of gentle ascents, with a long descent at the end. A couple of water wells halfway past mountain points could be used to refill water bottles and camelbacks as volunteers pointed them out on the route. I wondered what it would be like to live and train in these surroundings and felt kind of jealous of the people who have this opportunity. At one of the last aid stops one of the volunteers poured some water on my back, which was a great relief as temperatures had been rising gently during the day.

The last 5 kilometres of the route where downhill (sometimes really technical again) but I recognised the course, and I knew how far I had left to go. These kilometres felt gentle because we had already run the route,





## Links

- Gran trail de Peñalara website: <https://www.grantrailgtp.com/>
- Gran trail de Pañalara aftermovie: <https://bit.ly/2ZaQMEG>
- Marijn Sinkeldam on Strava: <https://www.strava.com/athletes/22109542>
- UTMB playlist on spotify: <https://spoti.fi/2Y8SxRr>

some 17 hours before. I finished the race in 17 hours, 56 minutes and 53 seconds. This resulted in the 44th place out of a total of 246 participants who managed to finish ([STRAVA file](#)).

The finish itself was quite a big event as the entire village of Navacerrada had gathered on the main square, and a lot of 60 kilometre participants were finishing at the very same time (Figure 5). The friend who joined me on this adventure treated me with a German beer, which was quite heavy after having run 18 hours, I enjoyed it all the same (Figure 6).

The GTP has proven to be a welcoming, well organised ultra-trail race though a beautiful scenery and I can recommend it to every ultra-runner who is looking for a real adventure!

During the next three months I will not run any big races, I will run some local trail-marathons, I am planning another big event in December 2019 or January 2020. I have not yet decided which one. Input is welcome! I am looking for another ITRA 5 or 6 points race. The upcoming months will be dedicated towards starting working as a doctor in an emergency room and trying to combine this with gently increasing my weekly mileage.



## Trail running Spanish - essentials

I'm hungry / thirsty  
Tengo hambre / sed

Is there a toilet?  
¿Hay baño aquí?

Left / right  
a la izquierda / a la derecha

Let's go!  
¡Vamos! / ¡Animo! / ¡Venga!

It's hot / cold!  
¡Hace calor! / ¡Hace frío!



# Mud Crew - The Plague 2019

By Dan Jones



Wide awake. Not even close to sleep. This failed attempt at a midday snooze has just become a visualisation of the entire race. The theory is that if I conjure up the feelings, sights, smells and sounds of the race, running throughout the night and into the next day, it might not be that bad when it actually happens. It won't, will it?

Either way, I'm not getting any of the much needed quality shut-eye that I had hoped for. The 00:05 start time ticks ever closer.

The R.A.T Ultra and Trail running festival is probably the biggest running event on the calendar in the Southwest, encompassing a number of races from 11 to 64 miles, not forgetting the almost unthinkable 24 hour steps race. Its stage is the stunning Southwest Coast Path from Porthpean to St Anthony's Head, and back, for the (un)lucky ones. Every year volunteers and locals fill the streets and villages along the route to cheer on the amazing feat of those still running by propelling them towards their chosen goals.

This is my second year at the festival, returning from my previous effort in 2018, the 20 mile Red RAT from Portloe to Porthpean. The euphoria of completing the 20 miler was not enough to convince me to take on the 64 mile route,

I vowed that I would never be seen in pursuit of such a ridiculous target. One year on and here I am, on the cusp of pulling on the iconic green vest to plunge into the darkness and compete in what is fittingly known as The Plague.

Running for me has always been about staying in touch with my surroundings, a great way to watch the seasons change, over the last 12 months I've become quite taken with running events. I love the opportunity to meet new people, and to feel inspired. I'm not sure when it was that I decided running 100k was a good idea but there really is something about the longer runs that draws me in. A man can lose himself in the long run, clearing the head and finding a better perspective on life. It is freedom.

Several hours after my non-sleep, I sit in the corner of the barn, eyes closed thinking about what it is I'm about to do and all the problems that I might face. The amazing Ultra runner Damien Hall has just given a talk about his UTMB and southwest coast path adventures. He will be running in the Black RAT 32miler the next day.

The wind rips through the barn doors bringing with it lashings of rain, taunting us. The course will be wet and slippery we will face a stiff head wind along with the usual





booby traps, badger holes and low hanging branches. The thought of this race is why many don't take up the challenge. The challenge is also why many do. As the clock nears midnight we all happily make our way into the rain.

The drums pound, smoke swirls and through the darkness resolute runners emerge. We are off.

The first five miles are more about staying upright than good running and despite my recce I manage to go the wrong way within the first half mile. I'm at the back of the pack, and given the width of the trail, this is far from ideal.



It's hard at this stage to move past people so I reluctantly sit back and start to take it all in. The rain has stopped and on this stretch we are sheltered from the worst of the winds. I can see the torches of the lead pack making steady progress into the darkness but I decide not to worry, this is a long game, a race in which anything can happen.

Moving though Pentewan and into Mevagissey, I start to make my way up the order and toward the lead group. After a second wrong turn I'm out of Mevagissey and back on the trail to Gorran Haven. Things are moving well and the miles are ticking by nicely. The intimidating wind and rain of the starting lane is a distant memory, shortly after Dodman Point we get a timely reminder that weather warnings were issued for a reason. The headwind is hard to take at this point, with the constant battering gusts throwing me off balance and stalling progress. This feels like the zombie hours. Head down, keep moving. Luckily I find myself in a small group and find strength in numbers. It gets me through to the first light of morning.

With the morning light comes a new lease of life. I've gone by Nare Head and rounded the corner towards Pendower. This is where the running gets good, and with time to make up I'm determined to push, not letting any of my little group get out of sight. I pause briefly at the last checkpoint and slip away before the rest of the group. As I near the halfway point of St. Anthony's Head, I can count those ahead of me as they head back on the return leg. I work out that I'm 7th overall, 5th male, at the halfway point.

The halfway point is a huge milestone forward. With every step, the gap between the distance already covered and distance remaining widens. The promise of a black coffee and a bacon roll at the next checkpoint is also a big bonus. Add a tail wind into the mix, and I'm feeling wholly positive, with the legs feeling fresher all the time. As I approach the checkpoint, I'm wary. The warm embrace, smiles and encouragement are wonderful, but they can make the bleak loneliness of the trail even harder to face, so I don't linger, instead heading out as soon as I feel able. I notice others taking more fuel on board and adjusting their kit, so I get out there, taking full advantage of their delays, and focussing solely on the runner in front. I'm in 4th right now, and it's a good feeling. If I can track him down before Caerhays, I know I'm in with a shot of catching up with 2nd place before the dreaded 5 miles of steps.

It's a slow game of cat and mouse. He's only a couple of minutes ahead of me, but after 40 miles that seems like a lot. My only chance is to not to panic and make slow gains. A mad dash at this stage could leave me unable to finish the race. A couple of miles short of Caerhays I catch up to him. He's still running well but slowing. I think he's having one of those moments in a race when you just need to hang in there so I leave him to it and go in search of the runner in 2nd.



# Race Reports



I know I need to keep eating and drinking during a long run to avoid cramping up. I've been monitoring my food and drink since the start of the race and it's amazing to see how much more I'm drinking in these later stages, I'm feeling the effects of the past 50 miles but I'm still moving well and keeping a good pace.

I run hard until I reach Dodmans Point and onto Gorran Haven. The only other runner I've seen is the 2nd placed female. She's running well and I don't think she's in danger of losing her 2nd place finish at this point. There is no sign of the 2nd placed male and with the miles running out it now becomes about keeping my 3rd position and making sure I finish the race well. Always an optimist, I feel a pang of disappointment as I realise 2nd is out of reach, I overcome this mental dip to do what needs to be done. Pentewan is its normal lively self with the locals in good voice and the checkpoint handing out ice lollies. If I didn't know better, I'd almost think I had finished. The calm before the storm, the last 5 miles are crippling.

Facing steps after running 59 miles doesn't sound like much on paper, those miles make the steps live long in the memory. Every time I start on the steps I feel sick and it takes every last bit of mental energy to get me past this section and on to the famous Cocktail Corner. I knock two back (orange juice) before finishing the final couple of steep ascents. On to the final 100m and across the finish line.

To my surprise I'm cheered over the line by a group of close friends and their children. Their congratulations and the excitement of the kids begins to make it hit home. I've done it! Not only have I finished, I came 3rd. I'm elated. Tired, but elated. What an experience.

With special thanks to the Mud Crew and to all those who gave their time to support at checkpoints.







Time: 13 hours 20 minutes

Position: 3rd.

Happy: Very.

Tired: Unbelievably.





## Ultra P.B.'s

By Mick Fararr



Photo credit Alan Snow

I've been asked more than a few times, "what's your 50k PB?" or "what's your fastest 100k?" mostly by road runners and my answer always seems to surprise them. To me the personal best in ultrarunning is only for that race, in the big picture, it really doesn't matter that much to me. Don't get me wrong, being 15 or 20 minutes ahead of your last finish time in the same race is a massive achievement and something to shout about. Quite often it's to do with better training in the lead up to the day, knowing the course is a massive advantage and simply getting it right on the day, but there are many factors that can affect the finish time.

Running a 10k race, even a half marathon is over in a relatively short period of time and a hot day can make it uncomfortable, freezing weather and rain can make it just as awkward, you're really not out for that long and the preparation, warm up and warm down can often take as long as the race itself. Even the local off-road leagues are short races, often with the odd river or other obstacles to make the race more "exciting". I'm not decrying them, they are a great taster for trail running.

So what makes ultramarathons so very, very different?

Let's start with the basics, the terrain alone is enough to make each and every ultra-race totally unique, no two ultras have the same exact distance or terrain. There are no exact course measurements, a recent race advertised as 40 miles was actually 41.8 miles and the Thames Path 100 in 2019 was 103.5 miles due to diversions, it's part of the attraction. Next year both of these races may need to adjust the routes for roadworks or a blocked path, with the distance being extended or shortened, ha, no such luck! The race name isn't changed and no one throws a fit because they've run a few extra miles, it really doesn't matter. Obstacles are another factor not normally taken into consideration for race times, navigating 100+ kissing gates, styles and road crossings can add copious amounts of time to the final finishing time. I promise you, trying to open a gate at 3am after 12 hours of running can become a real task.

The elevation of a race is another massive game changer between road racing and ultra-running, even on the hilliest of road races, you are still on the road and you don't normally choose a hilly route to chase a PB, it's more about bragging rights. A single muddy track up the side of a large hill will reduce your speed phenomenally, even picking your way back down the other side without going over a few times can be a complete chore, so compared to races over the same distance, even with a similar elevation, they can be totally misconceiving.

Racing over ultra-distances needs the right kind of fuelling, burning out at 10 miles in a half marathon or 22 miles into a marathon can be devastating when chasing a PB or GFA entry, but messing up your fuelling in an ultra can create serious issues, and being many miles from a road or checkpoint can create problems for those who will need to support you. Taking in enough liquids, carbs, salts and minimal protein is imperative to keep you going. If a runner stops and walks, or sits down in most road races the majority of runners carry on (collapsing is different), that's what the stewards, first aiders and marshalls are for. It's not uncommon to see an ultra-runner walk, in fact, it's recommended, but seeing someone sat at the side of the track can mean all sorts of issues, as most runners are stubborn enough to push on to a checkpoint as they are instructed and stopping is the last thing on your list of things to do during a race. Ensuring that the person is looked after is the most important thing and getting the situation sorted can eat time, most race directors allow for this and will either subtract time from the finish for the



Photo credit Mick Farrar



helpers or let them run the race next year for free.

The effects of weather conditions can easily be multiplied due to the long hours of exposure to the elements. I have run through driving freezing rain, brilliant sunshine and deep frost in the same race, carrying the right equipment to deal with the conditions is as important as getting fuelling right. Battling to keep warm, dry, cool, is all part of the race and having experience or the knowledge to deal with the conditions is imperative. Having a crew to lean on during longer races is exceptionally useful, but not always possible. Not all races insist on mandatory kit lists, some ensure you run the entire distance with all the listed items with rigorous kit checks. Looped circuit endurance races rarely require any kit to be carried and the length of the loop allows an easy dip into any equipment and food needed, unlike many trail ultras with checkpoints often over 10 miles apart.

So, can conventional road racing be measured in the same way as ultramarathons? Personally, I don't think so, not even slightly, the races are worlds apart. Completing an ultramarathon is a feat in itself, other than the top 10% of the runners in the race most of the competitors are only battling themselves to finish, although some will have completed the race before many will be running it for the first time, no measures. Those that are returning may be running in completely different weather and there may be alterations to the course, it's not a science, it's an experience.

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# My RAT-Plague Journey. 100km on the Southwest Cornish Coastline.

By Naomi Moss



Race blogs and write ups have always intrigued me. I have read many and learnt lots from them and more importantly I love to hear about a runners experiences, high, lows, results and plans for their future races.

Mud Crew events have a huge following and many people have recommended their well organised and friendly races.

Back in June I took part in Scafell Sky Race which was my first Sky Race and it did not disappoint. The problem is after a race, I always feel a little lost. It's a though somebody has taken

away my comfy duvet and replaced it with a hessian sack. I become a little grumpy, fidgety and then my mind starts to wonder about my performance and if I could have tried harder out there.

I am lucky enough to have a very considerate and patient husband and daughter, they listen to my running dreams and aspirations. They don't judge me or sway me in my race choices but they listen with an open mind and occasionally roll their eyes at some of my suggested race choices.

While in this post race lull

I looked avidly for a race with some good elevation and distance to act as a long hard training run (as coach puts it).

I had been recommended The RAT (Roseland August Trail) by friends that had done the Black RAT 32m last year so I looked into it further. It was perfect and they had a 100km distance called The Plague (great name for a race) which took my fancy.

I spoke with my coach Lindley Chambers @ [challenge-running.co.uk](http://challenge-running.co.uk) and he agreed it would be a good race and being at the beginning of August it

would fit nicely and give me enough recovery time before my next race in October.

Husband, Daughter and myself set off on what ended up to be a 7 hour drive to Cornwall due to the traffic. I made the most of it by getting in two short naps. Travelling to races gives me a chance to brief husband and daughter (my awesome CREW) to where I will need them and how the supplies will be available to me.

The RAT races are all off road coastal path runs along a stretch of the stunning South-west Cornwall





Coastal Path between Porthpean in St Austell Bay and St Anthony Head on the Roseland Peninsula.

The RAT has 5 distances to choose from with runners being coached out to their various start points at various times. You have the option of camping or Pod accommodation at Race Headquarters at Porthpean Outdoor Education Centre.

On arrival we parked up and had a quick mooch around the site to get our bearings. A group decision was made not to put the tent up due to the high winds and rain.

Registration was welcoming and swift, I was given a Plague vest which was to be

worn at all times. Kit check was the most thorough I have ever had, which to me is a must as we are all out there in various and sometimes hazardous weather conditions, each runner MUST be able to manage themselves if they find themselves in an unexpected situation.

Facilities on site were great including fresh pizza, wraps, tea, coffee, milkshakes traders and a BAR with music!! Re Run clothing's Dan Lawson and Charlotte where there along with a few stands to buy any last minute items and great stand which made my medal something special to remember by framing it with a really cool

background stating all the race details.

At 10.45pm in the back of our trusty transit van, (which hubby kindly emptied of tools and lay carpet and duvets down) I changed into my race gear, taped my feet, repacked my running vest, selected my nutrition/fluid for the next few hours and undecidedly changed jackets 10 times .

I asked hubby to see me off at midnight then to go and get some sleep. I didn't need to see him and my daughter until the turnaround point at St Anthony's. This probably sounds harsh to some but I knew I had everything I needed for the first half of the race and I just wanted to get into my night-time running zone, yes there is such a thing

The race start was like no other I have seen before. Loud music, chatter, drums, selfies being taken all around, people dancing with fire rings, Steven Cousins interviewing runners... It truly was a sight to send your senses into a complete frenzy. It was just BRILLIANT.

The first 10m would hold the most ascent and I had been warned about the numerous steps I would have to climb at various points along the route.

Starting just after midnight was a first for me but I do love running in the dark, this bought out an eerie feel with so many runners but little chatter amongst us, as most were concentrating on foot placement on the slippery, rooty and unforgiving terrain. The

weather during the first few hours was perfect for running if you took out the strong winds.

I soon settled into walking the hills, jogging the downs and flats mentality. Although it felt like all climbing for the first couple of hours with countless ducking and diving maneuvers so as not to get face plated into an overhanging tree branch or sliding off the coastal path into the sea. It may sound exaggerated but night running really does make daylight running feel like an extreme sport at times. The string of head torches ahead was a great sight to see. It gave me a realization about just how hard and quick the front runners where, up there in the distance soooooo far away from the rest of the field.

I chatted to fellow Plague runners and listened to their stories and plans for the next several hours and I wondered if I would see any of them again on the course during the daylight hours.

At roughly 12.5m I found myself alone with no head torches ahead to reassure me of my direction. Had I gone wrong? Oh crap, typical me, should have been paying more attention. As I followed the path it led me to a large concrete cross highlighted by the moon, I stopped and listened to the sea crashing relentlessly against the cliffs edge as the wind swirled around me. I could sense I was only a few feet away from the cliff edge. I moved sharply inland and knew I had just deviated from



# Race Reports

the path as this was the Cross at Dodmans Point. I turned, retraced my steps and was met by a group of runners that had made the same mistake as me. We corrected ourselves and onwards we trod together.

On leaving Caerhays CP my head torch decided to intermittently go on the blink and this forced me to stop and change batteries. This hiccup would normally irritate me but my mindset was different for this race.... I was calm and dare I say more chilled. I wanted to enjoy the darkness and then be amazed on the return run in the daylight.

The wind was pretty damn strong and after falling over my own feet I had to lean into the gusts more aggressively, determined not to hit the deck again. The miles ticked by nicely with only one more minor navigation error.

I visited the CP's only to top up my water and grab a handful of crisps as I had planned my own nutrition and wanted to put it to the test. I do love a CP as I like to observe people and what a perfect place to observe from, each individual is shuffling kit, eating random foods which they have probably never eaten on a training run, talking, moaning, laughing and sometimes lingering, knowing they have to get back out there, but not quite wanting to in some cases.

Roughly 3/4miles from the turnaround point the first few super speedy Plague runners where on their return. How did they look so fresh and light on their



feet? WOW! Comments like great running, keep up the good work, looking strong were passed between us. They were not just fast but polite and encouraging to us slower Plague runners.

St Anthony was the halfway turnaround point and in my head, I needed to get there and be gone before 8am as this was the start of the Black RAT 32m race and I didn't want to get caught up in a 100 odd runners all trying to run single file along the coastal path. I made it and was out by 7.50am with a tummy full of vegetable sushi and baked beans supplied by my marvellous crew.

The lovely aspect of this race is that with various distances and start times along the same route you are continually bumping into runners and walkers. This helped in a massive way as our short chats and passing jokes passed the time nicely and generally took my mind off the pain

in my right hip.

My calf cramps kicked in at about 40 miles, the sharp type that feels like someone has just stabbed you with a hot poker. I tried to run relaxed and every time I thought that's done it, no more cramp, it happened again and again. At this point I questioned my fuelling but I knew I had been good thus far. This is what I thought but realistically I knew I could and should have eaten more. Fuelling for me will always be a battle, as a Crohn's sufferer I can have good races and bad all because of my gut. I know how many calories I need per hour but as a race progresses it gets harder to consume the calories required for the energy expenditure. This is something I am continually working on and practising lots during my long training runs.

My cramps continued over the next few hours, then

my right ankle started to lock up due to all the steps, hills and the angle of my foot placement. I'm sure the Mevagissey steps of doom played a part in this I just needed to work through it and as I like to say, "suck it up buttercup."

The weather throughout the race was changeable, pouring rain, strong winds, sunshine, mugginess then repeat. I didn't mind this at all and was over the moon that it wasn't boiling hot, I hate running in heat.

All CP marshals and helpers were so friendly, helpful and encouraging which at 45 miles was much needed and appreciated. My crew did a great job keeping me fuelled, upbeat and moving forward.

The daylight views were amazingly breathtaking and beautiful with the rain downpours providing me with light relief from the intermittent sun heat.

Everything was hurting





now but I can honestly say there was no doubt in my mind that I would finish this race. I wanted it, I needed to know that my trips to the lake district to run on the mountains and all those hill repeats had been worth it and that my leg strength and endurance

had improved this year.

Myself and 3 other Plague runners would see the last 7 miles or so together but there was little chat going on but many groans/grumbles over the fact we still had so far to go, when one of us stumbled over a tree root and cursed it made

us all chuckle. Trust an Ultra runner to find pain and lack of coordination funny after 16 hours of running.

My second fall was pretty spectacular if I do say so myself. It left me lying on the floor with calf and groin muscles in the worst cramp ever. I wanted to get up but I couldn't. Once upright I gave myself a stern talking to.

The marshals at every CP where always helpful and supportive, what I saw at the last CP was a sight for tired eyes. There was a mocktail Bar setup about 4 miles from the finish with music and posh wine glasses and at this point that tropical delight went down a treat and really lifted my

mood, after all I was nearly at the finish.

Running across that finish line was euphoric. I always knew I was going to finish this race but to do it justice and finish 6th lady in 16hrs 58mins was just the boost I needed and it showed me I still have that mental toughness I thought I had lost. Not bad for a girl from Essex.

Thank you, Mud Crew and all your marshals/helpers, for a memorable race experience and to all my fellow runners I had the privilege of running with and to Cornwall for supplying SICK views throughout, testing me both physically and mentally.

Now for recovery and maybe a whiskey or two :)

## 2<sup>e</sup> ETOILE VERTE D'EGUZON

Val de Creuse - Berry - Limousin

**300 km**

---

**6 étapes**



**30 AOÛT**

**04 SEPT.**

**2020**

- ◆ 1 Val de Creuse Nord 49 km
- ◆ 2 Val de Creuse Sud 45 km
- ◆ 3 La Gauloise Verte 51 km
- ◆ 4 La Limousine 65 km
- ◆ 5 La Berrichonne 55 km
- ◆ 6 Le Tour du Lac 29 km (GR)

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# Thames Ring 250 2019 the journey to the centre of ring and beyond

Text & Photos Nicole Atkinson



My journey to the Ring started 5 years ago after I became aware that something existed in running called an “ultra” and some folks considered these to be achievable. I remember being highly sceptical at the time, having just staggered around my first marathon.

I became swept away reading race reports for ever increasing mileage races and finally stumbled across Kate Hayden's report on the Thames ring 250. Here was a lady who for all intents and purposes I could identify with, a working mum, a runner and someone who was willing to give anything a crack. I was hooked and the rest they say is history.

The Thames Ring is a 250 mile trail race starting in Streatley-on Thames and follows the central waterways of the Thames path, Grand Union and Oxford Canals to make up the 250 mile ring. Runners have 100 hours (4 days and 4 hours) to complete the run, navigating using maps and being supported at checkpoints every 25 miles or so. It is badged as an extremely tough run testing runners



endurance to the limit, long hours with little sleep and long dark nights.

The race first ran in 2009, it is the brainchild of Anthony Taylor, Dick Kearns and the Trail Running Association, it is now superbly directed by Lindley Chambers and his crew of willing volunteers. The race only runs every 2 years and has an average 40% finish rate (34% this year) despite the calibre of experienced runner that toes the start line.

Fast forward to 8am on the 26th June 2019 and 41 runners turn up at the Morrell rooms in Streatley for registration and Lindley's race briefing. As usual at these events I wonder, “what on earth I think I'm doing here?” while looking around the room at the other runners who look to be far more experienced than little old me. Too late now I tell myself, I've committed 100% mentally to the challenge with 3 options for failure: death, unconsciousness, loss of limbs, the rest is just an excuse to go home early. This mental contract with myself would come into its own days later when my mind no longer worked and I was unable to work out the who, what and why of the race.

1, 2, 3 and we were off, 10am sharp crossing the bridge past George Michael's home and out onto the fields of the Thames path. The usual start of an ultra with the fast runner speeding off, and the rest of us trying to stay at the back and not wanting to go out too fast.

At this point I was running with my best friend Vicky who had entered the race late, after coming to recce most of the Thames path with me and falling in love with the area and the concept of the run. We chattered to pass the time and trotted along into Henley at the 20 mile mark, where we stopped and treated ourselves to an ice cream as the day was beginning to hot up. So far so good, I thought right on time, feeling good, no navigational errors, and most importantly having fun.

Off to Checkpoint 1 at Hurley (27 miles in) and the first real stop of the day. This was a hive of activity with volunteers ably assisting runners with bags, food and foot care, this was an opportunity to have a cup of tea and a chance to air my feet. I was met by Javed Bhatti, who had popped in to say hello and wish me well with my adventure. He had been instrumental in helping me prepare mentally for this race having met me during my failed GUCR attempt the year previously. Following this we had spent many hours talking about the importance of mental preparation and being clear on my “why”. As a mum of 4 young children my biggest issue had been after 24 hours of running turning my focus to worrying if the children





were surviving and who was getting them ready for school the next day. Their needs always seemed to be greater than mine, I would use this as an excuse to stop when the going got tough.

This time however my children were coming with me. Prior to the race they had written me secret notes to open every 50 miles with good luck messages inside. I was under strict instructions, “not to be rubbish mum” and they were adamant a DNF meant not ever reading what they had written. There was no chance I was going to let them down and miss out on their messages.

Off out of the checkpoint and this was the last I would see of Vicky until 150 miles. I spent the next section running solo and enjoying the countryside. A brief stop off in Oxford for chips and tea and then the push to the next checkpoint at 55 miles before it became fully dark.

Now was the time to don night gear, refuel and read my first message of the race.

“Running is nothing more than a series of arguments between the part of your brain that wants to stop and the part that wants to keep going!”

With that in mind I set off alone on my journey into London with the hope to connect with the Grand Union Canal in the early hours and more importantly the turn to start running north.

As I was nearing Kingston I stumbled on two fellow runners who helped me find the Thames path link (which I would have missed in my tiredness). We leapfrogged for a period before they headed off into the darkness and I plodded on alone enjoying the peace that only comes from running in the dark. A panicked call from my husband who was getting increasingly anxious about my solo endeavours late at night meant I was on the hunt for a buddy. Fortuitously out of the darkness in a Richmond Park I stumbled upon a fellow runner who had stopped for a break and was looking for someone who knew the trickier navigation through Syon Park and Brentford. I assured them I was “the woman for the job” and all they needed to do was provide me with air cover on the tracker to reassure my husband I was not likely to become a crime statistic!

It was good to have some company to while away a few hours and we sat and watched the sun start to rise as we stopped to refuel at the start of the Grand union canal. Only 139 miles to Birmingham reported a canal side sign but on this occasion, unlike the GUCR this wasn't the final destination.

This section of the canal is sadly extremely polluted and it is shocking to see the amount of rubbish and fly tipping that has accumulated. During this section the sleep monsters arrived and I asked my fellow runner to push on while I contemplated my next steps, to sleep or not to sleep? Following a “man up” talk I decided to try speed intervals with the hope this would wake me up and hopefully not see me staggering and taking a nose dive into the canal. On this occasion it worked and I picked up the pace singing and dancing along into Checkpoint 3 at 84 miles.

Here I found a number of runners contemplating pulling out from the race. The first morning can always be tough especially when considering the distance and time left to go. For myself I had already committed to the total duration and mentally had badged this time as an adventure holiday, “who goes home early from a paid holiday?”





# Race Reports



I discovered Karl Baxter (who I had met the night before) hidden in his sleeping bag. He explained he had been overcome with profuse vomiting in the London stage and had significant chest pain from retching which would make wearing his rucksack an issue. I encouraged him to walk out with me and we'd see how he went for the first 5 miles before deciding if he wanted to continue. Several hours of talking nonsense ensued and for a period he looked to be keen to continue his Thames ring journey. We stopped for tea and cakes at Batchwork Lock, and then were off to make the final push to Berkhamsted. Sadly I lost him on the route and I was to find later his journey ended at checkpoint 3.

Never was I so glad to see a checkpoint. Stumbling in at 104 miles with the heat of the day starting to blaze down I was hoping to get my first shot at a sleep. Sadly this was not to be. After 30 minutes of lying and listening to the ongoing hum of the checkpoint, I decided to push on and try to sleep later on the route. My dad had popped down to say hello and treated me to a pint of Lemonade which somewhat helped to curb my disappointment about the lack of sleep.

100 miles and message 2 read, "There are moments in time in running when you see how wonderful your life is. When you can't run with your legs, run with your heart mummy,



anything is possible, you can do this!" Message received and understood and off I went.

The next section was a total slog up to Milton Keynes and due to fatigue a lot of this section is fuzzy in my memory. I planned a stop on the route for more Lemonade at the Grand Junction Arms pub and received a wonderful surprise in the form of a fellow running club buddy who had been watching the tracker and stopped at the pub in the hope of saying hello. We briefly chatted over a pint about his previous weekend's success at his Bob Graham attempt and then I sadly had to say goodbye as time was ticking on and the miles wouldn't run themselves.

My next target was the awe inspiring Tesco at Leighton Buzzard in search of a hot drink and food. I'd stopped here



on a previous GUCR attempt and had experienced the pleasure of using the facilities, at this stage this would seem luxury after nearly 48 hours on the move.

First I needed to pass a pair of angry swans who were sleeping on the towpath with their young and were very cross to be disturbed. For those of you that know me swans are my nemesis, they are one creature I am truly petrified of, having listened to childhood stories of their ability to break your arms. 10 minutes ensued where my addled brain tried to problem solve. How I was going to get past? It was either swim or die. In the end I chose to face my fear as the water didn't look very appealing. I fashioned my scarf in the style of a bull fighter's cape, closed my eyes (because that would obviously have made a difference!) and took off at a sprint in the hope that we would all survive this encounter. Opening my eyes later, not dead or in the canal, I let out a great whoop and cheer. I was motivated to continue





running patting myself on the back that no one had died or had been injured. Runner 1 Swans 0 –Result.

Food consumed, I became aware that I had lost a lot of time with stops and periods of walking and if I wanted to have a sleep at the next checkpoint this would involve picking up the pace. Trying not to panic at the thought of being timed out, and angry at myself for letting this happen I pushed on into the night. About 6 miles from the checkpoint my head torch died, the spare torch when I tried it looked to have been accidentally switched on in my bag and I was so addled I forgot I had spare batteries I could have used. What followed was a particularly scary solo section with minimal lighting whilst trying to run to beat a cut-off. The panic was rising and I was using every tool in the box to remain calm and not freak out about the possibility of falling over on the uneven ground or landing up in the canal as I could hardly see a thing. Lesson learnt the hard way, prepare and prepare some more as your equipment is critical and sloppy management equals a dangerous stressful situation that was totally unnecessary. It was not to happen again.

Nearly crying with joy entering checkpoint 4 at Milton Keynes (as I hadn't died or injured myself running blind),



I threw myself into a tent in the hope I can finally get some sleep after 48+ hours on the go. Luckily I managed half an hour and felt somewhat refreshed on waking but thinking how was I going to cope through the next section with so little sleep?

Leaving the checkpoint I was bemused as to the way forward as a large section of the canal around Milton Keynes has been redeveloped and the maps hadn't yet been updated to reflect the new route. Luckily for me I bumped into Andy, Ernie and Charlotte who were also looking a bit lost and we decided to stick together and hope Andy's recollection of the section from the previous month's GUCR was enough to get us out of Milton Keynes. Luckily it was, I found out later Andy is notorious for his epic navigational hiccups. I'm pleased to say he came through on this occasion. Many thanks Andy. What followed was a masterclass in ultra-running as Andy and Ernie between them have years of epic races beneath their belts. They were so lovely sharing their experiences and stories and it was a great way to pass the night. These races are all about the fantastic people you meet on the route which inspires you to go out and have a go, and help to make the sport seem accessible to us mere mortals.

As the sun rose my sleep deprivation kicked in and I suggested they push on while I attempted to sleep on a park bench. Having managed 10 minutes max I awoke cold and I was starting to feel every ache and pain of the previous 130 + miles.





## Race Reports



The following period was miserable as I chose to be miserable, I struggled to pull myself out of this, forgetting your mind sets the tone of the race. The climb out of Stoke Bruerne locks saw me stop to repair the ever increasing blisters and I attempted to fix my painful feet. The importance of good foot care as a precursor to finishing had been forgotten in my panic and brain fog. I'd failed to



attend to hot spots in Milton Keynes in my haste to exit in the cut-off. This was to follow me through the rest of my journey and became increasingly painful as the miles ticked off.

I finally succumbed under a canal bridge and acknowledged if I didn't sleep my ability to think and act rationally was on a downward spiral. I wasn't quitting but I needed to change the mood music or this was going to stop being fun and I hadn't signed up not to enjoy this. Donning all my cold weather gear and bedding down in my bivvy bag I closed my eyes and nodded off for 15 minutes, I awoke feeling more positive. By this stage my watch had died hours ago, I was left running and walking to feel and being unsure how much further it was to the next checkpoint.

Out again came the sunshine and on this occasion it was scorching. I couldn't work out if running or walking was better in the heat but decided the sooner I reached the only indoor checkpoint for hot food and sleep the better. Music set to maximum and voice at the ready I skipped danced and sang my way slowly to the checkpoint trying not to think about how much I felt like I was roasting from the inside out.

Nether Heyford (mile 156) proved to be a very welcome sight where Maxine (Lindley's other half) kindly drained my ever increasing blisters and taped my feet. I took the time to change clothes and attempted to sleep on the stage





area with fellow runners but again despite 45 minutes of lying down I failed abysmally. Message number 3 was read and received, "Just keep swimming mum, don't give up, break your boundaries, impossible is possible, push your limits, remember the world is your oyster!" With those words ringing in my ears I was ready to face the next 100 miles.

Dragging myself up I saw my friend Vicky had arrived and we sat and chatted for some minutes before pushing on with Andy and Ernie for a few miles before I again lost them and was to remain staggering along alone for several hours before bumping into Richard who was attempting to find the route over the Braunston tunnel. We proceeded to get lost for an hour wandering around in various directions before finally locating the path up and over a hill that seemed to go on forever.

Further Lemonade rocket fuel and crisps were required at the Admiral Nelson pub in Braunston before pushing on to start the turn onto the Oxford Canal and the push south to the end.

Having recced the Oxford canal sections I knew we were in for a treat. This is an underdeveloped area of canal and is poorly maintained with uneven ground and large cut outs underfoot which are prime areas for taking a dip. This made the going slow, I was determined because it was going dark, I wasn't adding swimming to my list of talents that night.



I stumbled into Richard again who had had a similar episode with total lighting failure but on this occasion I'd learnt my lesson from the previous night and had enough spares to be able to rescue him in the dark. I pushed on ahead breaking the trail through the long grass and we talked for what seemed like hours getting to know each other in the pitch black. Strange how I make friends, but epic all the same.

Mile 184 saw us locating the checkpoint at Fenny Compton. I hoped I'd left enough time for 30 mins sleep and ran for a tent clutching my sleeping bag and Richard decided to carry on aware we were close to the cut-off buffers. I woke

Thames Ring 250 2019		
1. Henrik Lowemark	62:22:23	1st
2. Henrik Reos	72:25:00.	
3. Steve Willis	78:50:07	
4. Mark Thompson	84:25:47	
4. Paul Mason	84:25:47	
6. Mandy Fougner	85:53:41	1st LADY
7. Alan Cormack	90:56:14	
7. Gary Lane	90:56:14	
7. Robert Whitehead	90:56:14	
10. Steve Illingworth	91:21:35	
11. Gary Warrington	93:40:29	
12. Andy Ives	95:21:21	
13. Charlotte Smith	95:51:50	
14. Nicole Atkinson	98:25:08	
41 Starters		
14 Finishers		



## Race Reports



to hear Vicky's voice saying her back had gone and threw myself out of the tent to check what was happening. Her race was finished, sadly, as she'd developed significant back pain and was struggling to straighten. In my confusion and panic to leave the checkpoint I shouted a few words not really understanding that she was done, in my head believing she was going off to get it fixed and then would be carrying on. Sadly this was not the case.

What follows was an hour's pity party as I processed her leaving while stumbling in the dark, conscious of the ever increasing pain in my feet. I had 6 miles to go until Cropredy and was struggling to process how I could get this



finished at my present rate of progress. Cue an enforced sit down to problem solve and take a man up pill in the form of a good talking to.

Walking hurt but so did running, and the difference between the two was minimal. Both made me want to chop my feet off but that wasn't an option either. Stripping down to shorts and t-shirt I decided the only way forward was to run a 10 K. I could do that surely? I set off at a run and then at intervals sprinting (well in my head it felt fast) and managed to run this section down to Banbury in record time, making up for several hours and convincing myself there is always more in you than you think.

I'd read previous reports of hot food at Banbury station so I left the track to hunt for supplies and arrived at 5am with half an hour to go until the café opened. It was a call to decide whether to stay but sense prevailed and I used the time while sitting with the drunks, to dry, tape my feet and then proceeded to consume my body weight in croissants, delicious.

Having learnt that early mornings are my nemesis I found a relatively dry patch of ground and lay down to sleep for 15 minutes.

Upon waking I felt marvellous having eaten, slept and ready to tackle the next day. This was forecast to reach over 30 degrees so making progress before the sun reached its peak seemed paramount.

A further stop for foot repair and taping saw me arrive at a field of cows with the sign "beware of the bull". I was assured there were no bulls to be seen and I proceeded to walk slowly through the large herd that gradually started to move out of the way, but they were penning me in between themselves and the water. A few young bulls decided it would be fun to run and stop a few metres from me, I chose not to panic having a back-up plan of a dive into the canal if all else failed. Queue the biggest bull known to man appearing out of the herd and scaring the hell out of me. Luckily I wasn't a cow and he decided some extracurricular activity with a fellow female was more interesting for which I was eternally grateful. Smugly exiting the field having survived the crossing, I came across a man walking his dog. Thinking they were friendly I started to nod and smile only to find the dog showing its teeth and deciding to bite me on my arse. Seriously! In my mind I'd survived a bloody







bull at this point only to be taken out by the next animal I saw. Weirdly, I started to laugh, I suspect rather hysterically at this point, finding it amusing how unexpected adversity kept happening and despite this I was still moving forward.

Arriving at Lower Heyford checkpoint saw me break the 205 mile mark. A significant mental milestone. I was convinced at this stage I would finish. Even if I was out of time I would continue until the end as the kids didn't care about the medal, just that mum had tried her best. What follows was the best bacon sandwich known to man, some lovely chat with the volunteers and some welcome shade under the bridge out of the full sun.

Message 4 read and received, "Mum if you are reading this you are doing exceedingly well. The worst part is done and the end is to come. We are all thinking about you. We all know you can do it, you crazy woman! But let's say you want to stop, you feel beaten and broken. Well there's your problem. You are already in the wrong mindset! Of course you will never do what you can't believe can be done. Remember to KEEP THE FAITH! Your philosophy is paramount to your success. You know you can do it. Just keep running."

"Man is the measure of all things (Pythagoras). The end justifies the means (Machiavelli). There are two worlds, our bodies and the external world (Immanuel Kant). It does not matter how slowly you go as long as you do not stop" (Confucius)

With the wise words of my eldest ringing in my ears I faced off the blazing sun and threw myself out of the checkpoint. What follows is my slow descent into La La land and ever increasing hallucinations brought on by extreme sleep deprivation and heat stroke.

Several miles out of the checkpoint I became aware of the heat and the ongoing lack of shade, I couldn't work out a plan of action. Running wasn't an option as I knew I'd collapse so one foot forward and repeat became the mantra.

Then things became very blurry. I must have stopped to change my socks but only managed to change one as was evidenced later, I vaguely recollect entering a canal barge to ask for water to soak my hat and clothes and being asked in for tea which I politely refused. I came across Andy and another runner taking shelter from the sun under a canal bridge and what then became a conversation about going on a journey to La La Lollipop land as we were aware there was a café at some point ahead, we were all desperate to cool down.

Off we staggered to lollipop land and I remember collapsing in the shade desperately trying to eat a Calippo and down a packet of cheese and onion crisps at the same time. Food of the gods! Then nothing, I must have passed out for 10-20 minutes.

Coming round I was helpfully pointed in the right direction as by now I wasn't sure which way was up and knew my task was to reach Oxford at all costs and the start of the Thames path home. I started to make faster progress as the food and sleep kicked in, then I came across Richard hobbling over the bridge at Duke's cut. He was in a lot of pain with swollen and inflamed shins and I think he was grateful for some company. I was happy to walk for a stretch as I'd not seen a soul for hours and was keen to help him navigate the crossing through onto the Thames path.

We talked about our adventure and how we were determined to finish no matter what. For Richard this was his second attempt having DNF'd last time. Having waited 2 years for the rematch he wasn't planning on letting the small detail of not being able to weight bear get in his way.

Oxford appeared and so did my husband with the request to facetime my children so I waved Richard goodbye and went about trying to hold a coherent conversation with my kids and not allow them to see the mess that was going on behind the scenes.

Being on my own again I decided to try to run as it was only 30 miles to the end. Surely that wasn't far. Then off came the wheels again. I remember little after Oxford apart from bumping into Richard again and him assuring me he was fine and to crack on. I wouldn't see him again as soon after he collapsed with the pain in his legs and needed to be carried out in a fireman's lift by Lindley and team. He was so brave and a total gent and I know he'll be back to beat the race into submission in two years' time.



# Race Reports



Cue the night and my complete brain meltdown. I became aware of a white object out of the corner of my eye that seemed to be going past. Imagine my amazement when I worked out it must be an arm. But who's arm and why was it there? And where was I? I must be in a dream at home in bed and I'm imagining running in the dark. In my dream I pinch the arm but nothing, it's dead so it must not belong to me! What the hell was going on?

I know let's ring my mum. She knows everything! I thought. Imagine being woken at 3am by your daughter asking, "mum am I at home in bed?" and the utter terror of knowing she is in fact out alone running in the dark, in the middle of nowhere and has no concept of what is going on as she has become delusional. Luckily my mum is made of tough stuff. She convinced me to trust her and to keep moving even though I kept telling her I'm not really there. She continues to check the tracker to make sure I haven't wandered off course and at the behest of her numpty daughter stays on the line for 2 hours to try to be my anchor to reality.

This section went on forever, I was convinced I was turning in circles and seeing the same tree over and over again. I needed her reassurance I was moving forward heading to the place she said I needed to go.

Out of the dark near the checkpoint in Abingdon appears my frantic other half who has been alerted to his nutty wife's behaviour. I assured him as he could see she was not dead, unconscious or having lost a limb all must be well and even though this was the weirdest of dreams I needed to get to the end, wherever that maybe.

Maxine and a volunteer arrives out of the checkpoint to ask about Richard and I precede despite my delusions to give a run down on his painkiller consumption over the last day and possible leg diagnosis and they tell me his race is over.

I am thrown into a tent and told if I don't sleep for one and

a half hours my husband will lose the will and off I went to the land of nod. Waking up, I have no idea what is going on. I continue to ask repeated questions, "What am I doing? Why and what am I trying to achieve?" I think my mental age was about 3 at this stage but luckily my husband and the volunteers were very patient with this confused and delirious woman. Beans and sausage consumed at 2am, cold weather clothes donned and I was off hobbling out of the checkpoint for the final 18 miles thinking surely it can't get any worse. Yeah ... right!

Within 3 miles La La land was back and I was desperately trying to make sense of a map whilst not being able to feel my body or even perceive this was actually reality. Continued calls from my family helped although the weeping at times as I struggled to understand what was happening to my brain, it must have been distressing to hear. Clapping my hands, tapping my head and clicking my fingers became my mechanism to try and stay grounded in the running reality and when all else failed I threw myself to the floor and passed out for a few minutes as microsleeps seemed to lift the fog for a period. It was on one of these occasions on waking I decided in my wisdom to strip off despite the cold in the hope this would wake me up.

Not such a crazy idea but then I proceeded to neatly fold 200 pounds worth of running kit in a neat pile and just leave it there on the trail to carry on in a sports bra and shorts.

As the morning progressed my ability to focus on the map improved and the route seemed to detour from that I knew, as I was anxious about time penalties and cutting it fine I followed the map. This meant I ended up walking miles up a hill to a road only to turn round and see the river in the far off distance.

Bugger (or stronger words to that effect) this isn't right! Call to Lindley to ask what the hell was going on only to be told, "turn back and keep going." This may have added as much as 6 miles onto my distance, at the speed I had been travelling, another 2 hours.

Strangely I never thought of quitting. I was getting there even if everyone else had gone home. So I turned round and staggered down the hill back to where I had come from.

Slowly I started to trot as could sense I was within 5 miles of the end. I was aware of people on the route but couldn't connect with anyone as I wasn't completely there myself. The fields into Goring seemed never ending but finally I hit the trail and could smell home. A brief climb over the world's tallest canal bridge saw me turning the corner and spotting Paul Mason's partner who I followed in. Passing the swan hotel entrance sprint mode kicked in and within seconds I could see Lindley, a few fellow runners and more importantly the end!

256+ miles in 98 hours 25 minutes and 8 seconds. 14th



finisher out of 41 starters and the last to come in, as the other runners behind me were pulled due to injury and psychosis.

What a ride! It was all it was promised to be and much more. The people, the sights, the memories will stay with me forever. What a hoard for my memory treasure box. I'm pleased to say according to my children on this occasion, mummy wasn't rubbish! With the love and enduring support of my family and friends and the volunteers they made this event possible and gave me the courage when all else was crumbling around me to trust in them and get this done.

Will I be back? I don't think so as a runner, but can't wait to volunteer in 2021 and give back to a select band of runners who decide to pit their worth against the ring. Massive thanks must go to Lindley and Maxine for a truly epic event and the band of fantastic volunteers who give up days of their time to help us achieve our life's goal. For the runners and volunteers I salute you.

See below my written man up speech I carried in case I wanted to DNF at any point. I'm pleased to say it never needed to come out of my bag.

"So you are reading this because you want to quit, it was going to happen at some point along the way, maybe more than once and you've written this to remind your tired less able to make a coherent decision self to man up and keep the f@k moving forward.

YOU CAN DO THIS! It's not am I good enough –it's I AM GOOD ENOUGH. Remember that and just walk, it may take you 100 hours but what else have you got to do. This is your time to relax, enjoy and be prepared for the ride of

your life.

The kids are fine and being looked after and Tris can cope (he's a big boy). They have given you this time so make it count. You do not want to have to wait another 2 years to make this happen.

You are writing the story of this journey and consciously creating the narrative. The journey book won't get written if you stop halfway through. Remember from childhood the best stories have a happy ending and good always overcomes adversity. That's the story you want to write and only you can make it happen. Remember all of the best superheroes wear lycra and at least you don't have to wear your pants on the outside! So it could always be worse.

You aren't a quitter. What a story to tell the grandchildren how granny on her Zimmer managed to run, walk and stagger 250 miles. That is worth another 30-40-50 hours of putting one step in front of the other. This achievement will last a lifetime and just think about the memories that forever will be yours. These are priceless gems of life.

You aren't dying and neither is your family. Be grateful for this experience, live in the here and now and notice just as you've been taught. Be grateful for the wonderful life you have. Dance, sing and celebrate this moment.

So now it's time to take a deep breath, relax and as the saying goes, "let it go". Count to ten and then put your right foot forward and then repeat. It will never be as simple as that – BELIEVE, the bad patch will pass, it always does. Breathe in and out and repeat, and smile this is one epic ride you crazy stupid woman! Laugh out loud and get your ass moving – Thames ring here we come and Goring I'm coming to getcha".

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# Ultrarunning World

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# Ultr'Ardèche

Sarah Cameron



Patricia Scalise (Argentina) at the 35km

The Ultr'Ardèche has once again taken its place in the global calendar of road races that are over 200 kms in distance. The wait has been long since the 2012 and 2013 editions, for the runners but also for the organisers, the volunteers and the local communities. The Ultr'Ardèche is 222 kms long with 4500 metres of elevation gain and is entirely on tiny traffic free roads in breathtaking countryside. The scene is set and doing it justice is enough to make any respectable race director pale at the thought. 120 entries were received with 120 competitors making it to the start line, injuries from training and fears of the enormity of the challenge have taken their toll.

What a platform for an event. The battle between both the boys and the girls at the front of the race promised to be a great spectacle. The beauty of this challenge also comes from the

desire of everyone personally to want to defeat the beast. This race itself is intimidating, as we can see from the number of DNSs. Added to this was the weather forecast that predicted that the competitors would experience all 4 seasons during the 37 hours of the race. Snow had even taken part in 2013, on May 28th and 29th. The 3rd edition was set not to break the tradition, with heavy rain forecast during the night.

So why is there such a craze for this event where everyone knows that he or she will have to endure hell on these winding roads, of their own free will, with little respite where they can let their stride unfold?

The answers are multiple:

- The Ardèche Ultra welcome is unique and personalised. Every runner is known by name and recognised, he or she is part of the "AU" family.
- The uniqueness of the location is what attracts many of the runners. The Alboussière campsite is the base for the entire adventure; here we have the briefing, the start, the finish, the aid station, the accommodation and the award ceremony. Three to four days to eat, drink, discuss, run and sleep ultra, a true departure from the normality of daily life. Shuttle buses now operate between the campsite and Valence airport, a service which is much appreciated. "Come on, we take care of everything, you just have to run!" The choice of accommodation is as follows: Communal hall with camp beds, personal tent, campervan, chalet or mobile home all on the campsite and also several bed and breakfasts near by.
- This is a qualifying course for the Spartathlon, the holy grail of every



Near the beginning



UA, Jean-Jacques Moros (who took the start line twice but dropped out just after the second time cut-off) and Christophe Rochotte (a talented runner, photographer and passionate, endearing journalist). They are with us, they are in us.

Back to the briefing: safety announcements, explanation of the course markers, advice on how to succeed at this specific race... and now it's time to go to bed.

At 03:30 on Saturday morning the campsite comes alive again. The coffee machines are working at full speed, the fresh bread and 'la pogne', a brioche flavoured with orange blossom, have just been delivered by the baker. The first runners arrive to eat breakfast. The focus and the desire to fight can be read on their faces. No bravado, just a pleasure to be there in the moment. Following month after month of preparation, the reward is waiting for them and these moments of calm before the competition starts are always rich in emotion, light in conversation but very much a shared experience. Our volunteers are always won over by the kindness and modesty of these runners who call themselves ordinary but achieve these extraordinary things. The countdown to the start continues to tick over the minutes, the seconds. With 15 minutes to go, the runners gather under the flag of the Ardèche department, an appropriate symbol. A few final words of encouragement from the organisers and Kostis from the Spartathlon committee takes the microphone for the final five minutes. He says to make the most of every moment and that it's important to have a wonderful experience. 5, 4, 3, 2, 1, Kostis liberates the 120 participants.

From the first checkpoint, Gilhoc, the first hierarchy is established: Rémi Duboq, stage racer extraordinaire, took control, followed a little way back by Dominique Jacquemet, Yannick Roignant, Philippe Verdier, Nicolas Kierdelewicz, Laurent Bahier and Nicolas Soubies. The first

ultra runner. Kostis Papadimitriou (an eminent member of the Spartathlon race committee) travelled from Athens to evaluate the quality of our race organisation and the difficulty of the course.

27 hours for men and 28 hours for women means automatic qualification for the race in Greece. To enter the lottery, men must run under 36 hours and women under 37.

- There are bountiful and varied aid stations every 10k, manned by volunteers who push the athletes

to discover what lies behind their physical pains and their doubts.

The feedback is unanimous, our volunteers have given runners the extra boost they needed in order to finish.

The briefing on Friday evening consists of a local meal prepared by the outside caterer and served by our volunteers. Le briefing du vendredi soir se tient durant le repas local préparé par le traiteur, servi par les bénévoles. We all had an emotional moment thinking of two of our friends who missed this return to the



# Race Reports

2 runners at the end (km190) after the night



female athlete was Patricia Scalise, an Argentine international runner (like Nicolas who was previously mentioned), then Allison Agostini, Pascale Bouly, Julia Fatton, Maria Pierre and Karine Zeimer.

CP2, 30k: The positions are almost identical, everyone is in maintenance mode. The weather is mild and perfect for running. This is the start of 'la voie verte' or the green route, which will take the runners to the foot of the first mountain pass, the col de l'Ardéchoise. 37 km of peace and quiet, only the squirrels and a few goats watch the runners go by, bizarrely equipped but who seem determined to go and see what lies ahead. Always the desire to push to go further. Of course, they've seen the ascent up to the col and the village of Borée (CP7) are worth the effort. At this moment during the race we don't yet know who's going to win but we already know who isn't going to win. The runners who have gone out too hard and haven't been using a walk/run strategy are beginning to regret it and switch their ambitions to just finishing the race. This afternoon the leaders once again benefitted from clement weather conditions, which wasn't the case for the second half of the field who were hit by a thunderstorm at the top of the mountain pass.

CP9, 87k, le Gerbier de Joncs:

Dominique Jacquemet is now leading, followed by Yannick Roignant, Rémi Duboq, Philippe Verdier et Ivan Bretan, a Swedish international who has run 241km in a 24hour race. Ivan arrived at the campsite at 01:30 after a problem with his flight transfer so had a very short night of only 4 hours without eating either that evening or the following morning before the start. In the women's race, Patricia, all smiles, is still ahead and is in 14th place scratch (overall). Following her are Julia Fatton, Pascale Bouly, Karine Zeimer, Allison Agostini, Maria Pierre and Nathalie Soyer. There are 103 runners still in the race.

CP12, 117k : The second time cut-off. The RD says that this is where the race begins. Philippe Verdier takes the lead, with Yannick Roignant et Dominique Jacquemet a quarter of an hour behind him and Rémi and Ivan 40 minutes back. Stéphane Mathieu and Franck Fradon are following. No change in the women's race, with Patricia and Julia together at the aid station. In third place is Pascale Bouly, 40 minutes back, then Karine and Maria one hour behind. 97 participants arrive in time to meet the cut-off.

CP17, 165k: Third time cut-off. Night falls and it's raining. The strongest will pass. Philippe Verdier is still in front, his average speed 10kph. Dominique Jacquemet had to drop

out because of a knee issue. Yannick is following, 15 minutes behind and Ivan at 40 minutes. Stéphane Mathieu is 1h25 behind, Emmanuel Izquierdo and Rémi Duboq 2h20. The gaps are consistent at the front of the men's race. Les écarts sont conséquents en tête de course. The women aren't slacking either, Julia is now alone at the front after Patricia had to abandon because she could no longer eat or drink anything. Karine is now in second place, 2h15 behind Julia, followed closely by Allison who is only 10 minutes behind. Pascale Bouly and Nathalie Soyer have dropped out. 61 runners are still on course. It was emphasised at the briefing, get to checkpoint 2 feeling fresh; every year the section between CP2 and CP3 sees a quarter of the field disappear. There is no big mountain that culls the runners but rather a series of short, sharp hills that are real leg breakers.

The finish line, 222k: Victory for Philippe Verdier, who arrives in a bit of a state. He is running leaning over to one side and has done so for the last 10k. It's almost certainly this that prevented him from breaking the 24 hour mark. His winning time is 24h27. Ivan Bretan, after a proper Pacman race, finishes 30 minutes after Philippe. Stéphane Mathieu is third, due to a DNF from Yannick who dropped at 190 kilometres, where he had been at the same time as Ivan. Then we had Emanuel Izquierdo in fourth, who must surely start to focus on this type of race from now on, Emmanuel will also go on to take second place in the MiMil'Kil in 4 weeks time. He arrived extremely tired but he remained at the finish line to cheer in the other finishers all day long, sitting in his chair with a blanket over his shoulders. Next was Eric Bonnotte, 5th in this edition, 4th in 2012 and 3rd in 2013; he does well on the roads of the Ardèche. Franck Fradon finished 6th without his eternal smile ever leaving him and he crossed the line with his young family. Seventh runner and first Breton (Brittany was the French region most



Kostis Papadimitriou from Spartathlon comitee, Nicolas Kierdelewicz (Argentina) and me



represented at the start), was Hugues Sucré. In joint eighth place were Julia Fatton and Jean-Louis Vidal (1st Masters 3). Nicolas Kierdelewicz finished the top 10. Only 30 runners finished in less than 30 hours, the meteorological conditions slightly dulled the competition. Maria Pierre (2nd) et Allison (3rd) accompanied Julia on the women's podium. There were a trickle of finishers coming in all day and each moment was special, full of emotion, tears and obvious joy. Paskal Le Nagard finished at a sprint to beat the cut-off by just 20 seconds. Marika Heinlein (8-time Spartathlon finisher) and Mimi Chevillon (long distance specialist) finished just after the 37 hours, resigned to having finished despite not being officially classed. The RD added 30 minutes to the time limit because of the bad weather. To have finished this event is an extraordinary achievement, the time doesn't matter.

54 runners were classified, not including General Gégé (Gérard Denis) who completed the course on

a scooter, so the rate of finishers was 45% compared to 65% for 2012 and 2013 editions.

After the first two editions, twenty runners had finished both races. Only ten of these took the start in 2019 and just seven of them were able to gain their third @, after their name signalling a UA finish: Eric Bonnotte, Manu Da Cunha, Patrice Fayol, Matthieu Véron, Philippe Rosset, Fred Pettaros et Pascal Cury. Fallen in battle: Phil Warembourg, Greg Scotta et Jean-Claude Poret (DNS).

The date is set for the fourth edition, which will fall on the weekend of Pentecost (a major holiday in France), the 30th/31st May 2020. The sun has been ordered, the atmosphere will stay the same, the 80 volunteers will be there again and are waiting for you. The campsite at Alboussière will again resemble a French village where runners, volunteers and organisers will once more live this incredible adventure, a wonderful occasion at which to

make memories that will never end.

I can't help but share with you an article about the l'Ultr'Ardèche event, written by a journalist who is a friend and an ultra runner herself.

Is ultra running reserved for masochists?

"It is above all an opportunity to live a unique experience with a sleepless night, moments of euphoria, emotion, passages of doubt, sometimes distress. One pushes one's limits, one is at the same time alone with oneself and the surroundings. Reigning on this kind of trial is a spirit of fraternity, sharing and mutual help that cannot be found elsewhere. It is also a beautiful way to discover a region by experiencing its relief, its scent, its landscapes... As for suffering, it may seem surprising for the uninitiated, beyond physical fatigue, a feeling of well-being and tranquility settles in the mind of the runner over long distances and it is the quest for this nirvana which is addictive."



# Feeling The Magic of Magina

By Sarah Whittington



A vertical Km laid out ahead.

It's a little after dawn. That golden hour of glorious mountain light, and western Andalusia in southern Spain, is spread out at my feet. There's Jaen, rolling in Granada, and the mighty snow-capped Sierra Nevada into Almeria. It's stunning.

I should be ecstatic. This is simply the best time to be up high, with all the promise of a new day. Instead, I'm shaking, feeling positively sick, and trying to work out how I'm going to navigate the 3km of sheer scree dropping away below my feet.

I'm a little over 20km into the 83km Ultra Magina Top Trail, completely alone, and discovering why the Rope of the Miracle is so called. It's going to be a miracle if I can slip-slide my way down the barely marked goat trail without calamity.

I've also discovered why most of

the few women huddled on the race start line a few hours before were accompanied by more experienced male companions. The guys were there to guide them around some of the most treacherous sections of this course.

At 83km Ultra Magina Top Trail is nowhere near the longest race Andalusia has to offer. Yet with +9,600m it is brutal, and reputedly one of the most technical. I'm not a technical runner, I'm still not sure what encouraged me to sign up for this race. I guess bravado. I'm fortunate to get to run of sorts for a living. My husband and I operate Ultra Trail Spain running holidays. Folks visit us to do some training in the fabulous and deserted trails of southern Spain. I still wouldn't claim to be a natural technical runner, I'm going to have to face those demons

and get down this mountain somehow.

All had been well as we'd trotted out of the town of Cambil. Hitting the trail within 300m, I'd even had a smile on my face as I tackled the muddy path. Yes, it was early May but terrific storms had hit the town the night before creating the rare phenomenon of Andalusian mud. As a Brit, I am well at home. The first 10km passed easily. It was still dark as we traversed jeep track through olive groves and pine woodland. The first checkpoint and the first proper climb.

The race encompasses what the Spanish call the three big walls, that's big, vertical, mountain faces. The first of the three heading up Pena Jaen was stunning. In dawn hues, we wound our way up through the Sierra Magina Natural Park on gorgeous, light, woodland trail. It was cool, damp, and now dry underfoot on





Getting interviewed by Chito Speaker on crossing the finish line. Spanish ultras come with the full finish line experience as standard!



Glorious trails on Ultra Magina Top Trail.



Stunning mountain climbs on Ultra Magina Top Trail.



# Race Reports

Crossing pasture between the climbs of Ultra Magina Top Trail.



the chalk. Hitting the wider track, I could see the field climbing gradually up the mountain into the second checkpoint. After which, the track became trail before gradually petering out to nothing, following flags dotted across the thyme trods, and to where I was now stood at 2,147m with a dilemma of how to descend this darn mountain.

I watched as the last runner confidently dropped down out of my view before weighing up my options. One, return to checkpoint 2, or two, go for it and what would be would be. With much cursing, crying, and bum-sliding, I somehow made it down. I'm pretty sure the overnight rains had helped, offering some much needed purchase into the shale. Still shaking but smiling, I slithered into checkpoint 3 seriously considering retiring. I didn't think I could face another 50km or so of this.

Refreshed and refuelled, I'd been assured that despite there being a V-km between me and the next checkpoint it wasn't as technical nor as

Photo thanks to James Goldsmith.





Feeling and looking worse for wear at Ultra Magina Top Trail. Photo thanks to Ultraviviente Trail.



lonely as the terrain I'd just survived. Animo! Take heart! Onwards and upwards.

The V-km up Pico Magina (2,167m) and the highest point in Jaen province, was relatively uneventful. I'm a strong climber, my knees only hurt going downhill and I was back into the race field. The low parts of the ascent, wind backwards and forwards over the River Garganton. It's hot and rocky. The trail then heads across pasture before the last section, which is also the steepest, on loose rock. A last scramble and I was up.

Compared with what had gone before it's an uneventful descent into the Los Puertos checkpoint and drop bag time. The spiritual halfway point of the race. I grabbed my kit off the tarp and knelt on the floor as I squirrelled out my supplies. There were no free chairs. High in the mountains, it's not so easy to transport much kit. Checkpoints are simple affairs with gazebos offering limited shade and a few vital supplies. UK (and I'm guessing US) runners get used to veritable banquets at aid stations. We get the basics here in Spain. There's enough, but don't expect unlimited choice. Mountain runners are pacer-free and expected to look after themselves and carry what they need.

Heading into the checkpoint I was aware the only other female runner there was currently fifth woman. She was a little disconcerted by my appearance and quickly headed out with her male compatriot.

I took my time, filling up and changing my socks. I knew there was another mighty climb to come and wanted to prepare. Heading out on the next 8km is a runnable section of wide and rolling tracks. The heat was building, it was early afternoon.

Hitting the Berecho checkpoint, I again nudged the fifth woman along. She took one look at me, and headed out. The volunteers advised to fill up both my 750ml bottles with fluid. It's only about 9km back to the Los Puertos aid station but it's an arduous and slow climb. Taking their advice, I also took a few extra pieces of fruit.

Runners can expect a complete calendar of weather in a single race in Andalucia. Snow in July on Ultra Sierra Nevada 2018. Photo thanks to Cano Fotosports.



Stopping off at the Los Puertos checkpoint and getting drop bag supplies. Photo thanks to Ultraviviente Trail





# Race Reports

We are blessed with some fabulous trails in Andalucia. Tackling Ultra Sierra Nevada 2018. Photo thanks to Cano Fotosports.



They were correct, the first couple of km was slow. Moderately steep but across the country, and through the undergrowth. As the mountain opened out, I could see the 5th woman up ahead. She seemed to be struggling. This third 'wall', is hard. It's exposed, narrow in places, the sun is behind, and wind whips across in places. It's not quite another V-km. She was making slow progress. I was within spitting distance as we summited Almaden (2,036km) and its distinctive TV masts. I decided to keep behind. I wasn't racing, I was surviving this one.

Then, as close as I'd got, the 5th woman and her compatriot dropped over the brow and disappeared. I was faced with nemesis number two. Loose sheep-trod soil. No vegetation, just a tightrope width cambered path winding along a mountain contour. Nothing to grip onto, nothing to grab a hold of. I set off on my butt, wildly attempting to traverse the dry soil. Thankfully, two other runners came along to encourage me to stand and to guide me on my way.

Back at the Los Puertos checkpoint, I was informed the 5th woman was now over 30 minutes ahead of me. It was late afternoon, and 20km lay between me and the finish line but there was no more aggressively technical trail ahead. I set off at a brisk run. I just wanted to get this race finished with now. Steep yet runnable trail descended across pasture, rolling into jeep track, and woodland descent. I spied the 5th woman ahead, she was walking where I was running, and away I went.

In the penultimate checkpoint, I was informed that the 4th woman was about 15 minutes ahead. Too much for me to make up in 9km of running.

I eventually rolled across the line, always

a big occasion in a Spanish ultra with a carpeted finish, dry ice, announcer, and plenty of glitz and glamour, I completed in 14 hours and 47 minutes. Easily the slowest I'd ever covered a 50 miler and easily the most difficult race I'd ever tackled. I was spent.

The winning woman, who's a bit of a legend in these parts, finished in a mere 12 hours and 13 minutes. She was nearly an hour ahead of second place. The Spanish runners certainly love their mountains technical.



One of the steepest and hottest standing trail climbs around. The Ravine of the Vipers on Ultra Sierra Nevada. Photo thanks to Cano Fotosports.





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# Pegasus - The EDDUM

## 3rd August 2019 Start time 7am. Race number 39

By Sanna Duthie



I had been thinking about entering this race since the end of last year but only signed up a week before. Due to injury and lack of self confidence I didn't know if I could complete the race and I couldn't handle another DNF, but sometimes you just have to give it a go.

I fuelled up in the week and made sure I drank plenty, I drink a lot of coconut water. I had my pre race massage, I have been working with Pembrokeshire Massage to keep injury away for the last 18 months, my legs were feeling like new. I was still doubting my ability for the race. I did a few easy runs in the week to keep me sane but nothing too hard.

Alarm set for 3am Saturday morning. Me and my dad

set off from Milford Haven at 4am armed with coffee, porridge and Cola. Sat Nav set for the Epynt visitor centre. The drive up was beautiful and catching the sun rise over the Brecon Beacons got me excited for the race ahead.

We arrived at registration at about 6am, it was calm and the volunteers were full of enthusiasm. We had half way bags, I packed gels, socks, trainers, and plasters, but the only thing I took from the bag during the race were a few extra gels. I didn't know any of the other runners which helped my nerves. Me and my dad took a little walk to check out the he start and I stretched. A quick change of socks and we all gathered at the startline.

Rhys explained that we had to follow the posts with the yellow tops and the general direction of the arrows on them. We shouldn't go more than 1/2 a mile without seeing a post. At some points there were some arrows on yellow cards that we followed. There were 800 of these posts over 50 miles, so I didn't count them. A countdown and we were off. It was a cool start which I was grateful for. I made my way to the front of the pack. One guy went the wrong way within the first 1/4 of a mile but we called him in the right direction. Within the first mile I was at the front with Ollie. I ran with Ollie for approx 30 miles until I slowly pulled away. He was a great company but in his own words he entered the pain train and I was just

buzzing. I was in first place and I was eager to keep it.

There were 7 checkpoints all well fuelled and we were always greeted by happy and helpful volunteers. I didn't stop at the checkpoints long only to have some Cola and water then I would head off. Each checkpoint seemed to be just before a hill/climb, this worked for me as it meant I had time to wind myself after the cola.

The race felt like an adventure to find these yellow topped posts that were spread over the 50 mile route, each time one was spotted it would boost my mood and spur me onto the next one. I loved the paths through the forestry. I had some fast miles on those sections.





I had a few sub 8 minute miles which I didn't expect to have in a 50 mile ultra. Due to the weather being so dry lately the ground was very runnable and dry. I can imagine it would be much more challenging in the winter. The last 5-7 miles were brutal. No real paths and lots of short sharp climbs, when your legs are tired these little hills feel like mountains. I was frustrated as I wasn't moving so fast and I was worried I would get overtaken. Then there was this lovely gentle downhill section and it gave me a boost for the last 2 miles. As I left the grass of the mountains and hit the road I realised I was heading back to the visitor centre. The road was a gentle slope down to the centre. I saw the roof of the centre and realised that I was going to

win. I started to cry, when I crossed the finish line I was rather emotional. Rhys and Cerys gave me a big hug and all the volunteers were cheering, I felt on top of the world. Rhys put my time of the board and gave me my medal. The goody bag was one of the best I've had. Beer, jerky, hat and T-shirt.

A good day out was there with two dinky donkeys, I've never seen donkeys at the end of a race and this made me smile.

There was lots of food to choose from at the end of the race, a feast fit for a king. As I finished quicker than planned I had to wait around for my lift, ooops, but it was lovely chatting to Rhys, Cerys all the other volunteers.

The race went almost perfectly, I suffered slightly

with cramp but took on electrolytes and that fixed the issue. As there were quite a lot of clouds I didn't realise how warm it was so I didn't take on enough electrolytes. A few navigation errors made but I uploaded the GPX route onto my watch so I was able to put myself right and didn't go too far off the route. I didn't recce the route or study it much before the race. I think this was the least prepared I have been for any of my races but this didn't worry me. With ultras you can be prepared as you can be, anything can go wrong on the day.

This race was great for beginners as there were no cut-off times. It doesn't mean it was an easy 50 miles. It had a very mixed terrain. You had to

concentrate at all times to look out for the posts and make sure you were heading off in the right direction. I enjoyed the challenge. It was a friendly, relaxed race that was very well organised, set in a beautiful part of Wales. I definitely want to try another of the Pegasus events next year, I hear they might be doing a 100 miler!!





# Thames Ring 250 – 26th to 30th June 2019

By Vicky Yeomans



Last year I entered a race called the Thames Path Challenge, running 184 miles as four separate back-to-back ultras, with camping at the end of each day. The race is held every year in August. I tell you this because it was only in May this year that I realised that I could no longer take the time off work. My friend and running buddy, Nicole had entered the Thames Ring before I really knew anything about the race, I had attended the race workshop in February with her and we had spent two weekends

reccyng various stages of the Thames Ring, which also covered parts of the Thames Path Challenge. When I realised the Thames Path Challenge was a no go, the Thames Ring seemed like the obvious choice.

I am married, a full-time mum to 10 year old twins and I work full-time. Running has always been my thing. My escape, my sanctuary. In 2016 I took part in my first and to date only, 100 mile ultra, finishing in a time of 25 hours 30 minutes. In 2017, I was the female winner of the NOMAD 50-

mile race and in 2018 I paced Nicole over the last 80 miles of the Kennet and Avon Canal Race, which she successfully completed.

I fit my running in and around my life. I like a challenge and I am very focused and determined in achieving goals I set myself. What I didn't know at the time, was that I was about to embark on a race, which is in a league all its own.

On the morning of the race, we registered, labelled our drop bags, got fitted with our trackers and listened to the race brief. I lined up with 40 other runners, slightly nervous about my inexperience but excited to embark on a four day adventure, going from checkpoint to checkpoint.

We set off at 10am and for the first 10 or so miles I felt great but out of nowhere I started to feel sick. Something I had not encountered before. Fortunately, I was running with Nicole and Mandy, which took my mind off the nausea. I came into the first checkpoint, at about 15:30 (27 miles). As I was feeling sick, I was unable to eat anything. No matter, it was early days. I had a drink and a lovely volunteer refilled my water bottles. With hindsight, I should have just refilled my bottles and got going again, but I fuffed about for 20 minutes.

Leaving the checkpoint, I found myself running with a competitor called Richard, whose plan was to walk the whole distance. He walked at a pace, that required me to run, in order to keep up with him! The weather was lovely and as we made our way through Marlow, we caught up with another competitor, Chris. The talk turned to stopping for fish and chips in Windsor. Sadly, I was still feeling sick and the thought of food



made it worse. Chris decided he would carry on running to Checkpoint 2 and for some reason, I decided to divert into Windsor with Richard. Again, looking back, I wasted a lot of time here, walking the extra mile to buy food, which ultimately, I didn't eat and next time I will carry on to the checkpoint.

I reached Checkpoint 2 (55 miles) just before midnight and I was surprised by how many competitors were at the checkpoint. The volunteers brought over my drop bags and got me a chair. They made me feel like an elite athlete, somebody refilled my water bottles, whilst somebody else made me a cup of tea and I think a cuppa soup. Then Maxine, Race Medic extraordinaire, checked and tendered to my feet.

A competitor called Brian, was ready to leave the checkpoint at about the same time as me so Maxine introduced us and suggested that we buddy up for the night section. I was still feeling sick and to my delight, Brian had some ginger sweets that he shared with me. As we ran through the night, we both had periods of feeling sick, the sweets and the chat helped to take our minds off that and we worked our way through the miles. There were a couple of tricky sections to navigate and we reached Richmond just as it was getting light. I was surprised by how many people were out running at 4.30am and they weren't even in a race. Before long, we were beginning the crossing from the River Thames to the Grand Union Canal. Fortunately, we reached Syon Park in daylight, so we ran through the park without incident.

We eventually reached the Grand Union Canal and checkpoint 3 (82 miles) at 8.46am. At this point, I can't remember much. I am certain that Maxine tendered to my feet again and I do remember that I didn't feel sick anymore. I think I ate some fresh fruit and a cuppa soup and then got going again. I am not sure whether I left the checkpoint with anyone.

The next section was to Berkhamsted. I was feeling good, the sun was



shining and underfoot conditions were good. I switched on my music for the first time and managed to run at a decent pace; taking in the scenery, saying hello to passers by and on this section, catching fellow competitors and running or walking with them for a little bit and then pushing on again. I stopped at a canal side café and bought a banana which tasted amazing and then carried on. There were plenty of people out and about, taking advantage of the gorgeous weather, I began to get stopped by people, asking what I was doing? Their reaction to running 250 miles varied from querying whether I meant kms to, "when do we sleep" and "over how many days?" I felt like an elite athlete again, a competitor in an extraordinary race.

I reached Checkpoint 4 at 16.25 (106 miles). The checkpoint was at a pub, that was filled with people enjoying a drink in the sunshine. I took advantage of the toilet facilities and ordered a pint of orange and lemonade before I realised I was 30p short. I explained what I was doing to the barman and said I would just nip outside and get more money. He very kindly told me to save my legs and enjoy my drink. I was very grateful to him.

After eating lots of fresh fruit, my obligatory cuppa soup and my pint of orange and lemonade, I got ready to leave the checkpoint. I had run the majority of the last section so decided that I would do more of a run/walk to the next checkpoint, which was at Milton Keynes. I left the checkpoint



# Race Reports

at the same time as fellow competitor, Andy Miles so we decided to run/walk the next section together. I can't really remember much about this section. I was feeling tired and I was starting to hallucinate.

Andy was struggling a bit with a niggle, so we took it steady. Chatting about everything and anything. It seemed to be taking much longer than I had expected though and Andy was struggling to do any running. I was aware that the checkpoint closed at 3am and I really wanted to grab some sleep there, so eventually, persuaded by Andy to go on ahead, I picked up the pace and went ahead. I arrived at the Checkpoint {130 miles) which was under a canal bridge at 1.47am. I remember thinking how noisy and windy it was under there. One of the lovely marshals made me a cup of coffee and some porridge, which I managed to eat. He then handed me the most snuggly blanket I have ever felt, so I set my alarm for 15 minutes, closed my eyes and had a rest.

It was time to get going again. Andy had arrived at the checkpoint and had managed to grab some rest and refuel, he was ready to carry on, so we left the checkpoint together. This section of the canal was really tough going and with hindsight I made a number of mistakes in this section. The next checkpoint was due to close in 12 hours' time so I hoped to get to the next checkpoint by 12 noon, so that I could try and get some proper sleep at the first indoor checkpoint. We made our way to Leighton Buzzard where there was a 24-hour Tesco, just off the towpath. I wanted to use an actual toilet, buy a strong cup of coffee and a couple of pastries. However, when we got to Tesco's at around 6am, the café wasn't open and instead of grabbing an iced coffee and pastries off the shelf, we fussed about, unable to make a decision and eventually walked to the McDonalds that was in the same retail park. In all, we probably spent an hour or more at this unofficial checkpoint. I did however drink a large coffee



and attempted to eat a breakfast muffin, but best of all, we spoke to the Manager who was very interested in our endeavours and when we asked whether we could take a quick nap in the corner of her restaurant, she duly obliged. A little nap and a short walk back to the towpath and we were back on the route. Despite the rest, I still felt very tired, but we carried on.

The going was really slow in parts, as the path was overgrown and narrow and it made walking, let alone running difficult, I started to realise that I was not going to arrive at checkpoint 6 in plenty of time. My feet were sore but we kept going. As the route left the path and headed onto the road, I started to struggle with tiredness, sore feet and a sore back but Andy kept me going. After a couple of miles and the checkpoint not far away, I told Andy to go on ahead as I was struggling to run. Eventually I got to the checkpoint at Nether Heyford (156 miles), with enough time, to sort my bags out, eat some delicious homemade pasta, a slice of pizza and charge my phone from the mains for 20 minutes. Andy left the checkpoint before me and I headed out with Brian, who had taken longer at the checkpoint to sort himself out.

What I didn't realise at this point, was that the wheels were about to come off my race. Brian headed off and I followed. My rucksack felt heavy. It didn't feel right. By the time I got back on the canal path, I had lost sight of Brian, and had caught up with a fellow competitor, Carl. He was struggling with an injury he had picked up, so he was mainly walking. I walked with him for a while and then he told me to carry on ahead. I ran on ahead but suddenly realised that I was leaning forward as I was running. Leaning that far forward that I was doubled over. I was still shuffling but I couldn't work out what was wrong. Carl caught me up again and I explained what was wrong. Turns out he is a physio so next thing I know; I am lying on my front on the canal bank, receiving a back massage. My rucksack was rubbing on my back and it appears that subconsciously, for some time, I had been running leaning forward in order to stop the rubbing and now my back had gone into spasm. The massage helped and I was able to run/walk for the next couple of hours, counting bridges. We managed to get lost above the Braunston Tunnel and spent a lot of time trying to work out where the canal had gone.



It was getting hotter so whilst trying to get back onto the canal we had a 15-minute rest in a park and bought some supplies from a little shop. Eventually we got back on the canal. I remember coming into Braunston marina. I was struggling to even walk upright, let alone run. Carl was still with me, despite me repeatedly telling him to go ahead.

As I shuffled through Braunston, making our way to the Oxford Canal, I was really struggling with my back, and tiredness was replaced with embarrassment. The marina was full of canal boats and people, who were enjoying the beautiful sunshine and the Irish music. I tried my best to simply walk without leaning forward but in order to stay upright, I had to keep stopping to stretch my back. We joined the Oxford Canal and the going was very touchy. Darkness drew in and sadly I was going slower and slower, struggling to accept that I was going to have to retire. I focused on trying to get to the next checkpoint but the longer I kept going, the harder it got, the more my back spasmed and the more I had to stop

to stretch. Carl stayed with me but in the end, I realised that I was not going to reach the next checkpoint in time. My mind was still determined to reach the finish and my legs were still moving, however, my core had collapsed, my back was in spasm and there was nothing else to do. It was time to ring the race director and ask for help. Lindley arranged for me to be collected. I explained to Lindley how Carl had sacrificed his race to help me and Lindley confirmed that Carl would be given the time back. I thanked Carl for all of his help, gave him a big hug and wished him good luck with the rest of his race.

I was picked up by one of the volunteers and driven to checkpoint 7. My race was over. My head was in a spin. Why has this happened? How could this happen?

It's a week since the race. Initially I was disappointed, I had set out to complete the 250-mile route and I had failed. I had let myself down and I had let others down. I am raising money for the [Derby Children's Hospital](#) and I had failed to complete the race.

By the time I got home, I was overwhelmed by all the support and messages I had received and to my relief, no one was demanding their donations back. It took me a couple of days to appreciate that I had run 183 miles or to put it another way, 7 consecutive marathons. Although I was rescued a few miles short of Checkpoint 7, I had run bonus miles, due to getting lost a couple of times, taking detours to buy supplies and by some sections being longer than suggested, I retired with 183 miles on the clock.

My adventure came to an end all too soon but what an adventure it was. I met some amazing people, both competitors, race volunteers and members of the public. Thank you to all my fellow competitors and race volunteers, you are amazing!

Out of 41 runners, 14 completed the race, which shows you just how extraordinary this race really is. Without a doubt, I will be back in 2021 and this time, I will earn myself a medal.

## Bronberg Back Yard Ultra

**25 July 2020 - 07h00 till the end  
4.1667 mile, 6.705 km loop every hour till the last runner  
drops  
R500 entry fee, R30 meal vouchers available**



# Marathon Menna

**A Guinness World Record Attempt to run the full length of New Zealand.**



By the time you read this, I will be mid flow in my attempt to run the full length of New Zealand, a Guinness World Record attempt for fastest female to do so. The current record stands at 52 days and 15 hours. At this moment in time, I am deep in preparation before flying out after Boxing Day and I am due to start running from Cape Reinga at the tip of the North Island to Bluff at the bottom of the South Island, on the 1st January 2020. The aim is to run approximately 35 miles every day and to cover 1,300 miles. The flights and motorhome (support vehicle) are booked, my team are gearing up and the training is intense as I approach the last couple of weeks before tapering. The excitement is beyond!

So let me start by introducing myself. My name is Menna and I am a single, self employed Mum from a small village in Carmarthenshire, Wales. I took up running only 2 years ago and last summer (2018), I successfully ran the full length of Britain. A distance of 1,050 miles from John O'Groats to Lands End (JOGLE), running 37 ultra marathons in just 41 days. My inspiration for this challenge was the memory of my father who passed away in March 2017. This is when I discovered my passion for running which not only helped me through the grieving process but also helps keep my life balanced as a busy working Mum. My story has inspired many throughout Britain who followed my progress as I blogged my 6 week challenge via social media. I raised £2,385 for The Wildlife Trust and £1,455 for Children in Need. On this occasion,

as I run through New Zealand, I will be raising funds for Mind mental health charity.

During JOGLE, I pushed my body to the limits, running between 26-34 miles a day, typically 6 days a week. I had never done anything like this before and found it all to be experimental during the first few weeks. The feeling of my body falling apart because of the lack of electrolytes, when I just felt thirsty. I could drink my bodyweight in water and still not quench my thirst. The severe leg cramps that brought on panic attacks. The lightbulb moment occurred whilst running through Liverpool (3 weeks in), when I found an old Torq gel in the bottom of my bag and at that point, I was willing to try anything to help me finish the day. I gulped it down and felt it work its magic almost instantly. From there on in, things began to get a little easier. Each day had to be perfectly balanced. Negative thoughts had to be corrected with positivity. I managed to find humour in my day from making my own quirky video blogs, singing at the top of my lungs on the side of mountains, finding humorous place names and listening to good music.. it all helped. If I ate too much, my legs became heavy, too little, not enough energy. If I sat still for too long, the body stiffened, yet I looked forward to my breaks so I could catch up on life back home, eat and relax. I also faced terrifying traffic on the B roads, I was chased by 50 bulls in a field, got drowned by torrential rain and lost in a quarry! I opted to run as much of the scenic route as I could which incorporated The West Highland Way, Offa's Dyke and the Cornish Coastal Paths which certainly added plenty of mileage to my route from the top to bottom of Britain. It was a phenomenal challenge and I wouldn't have changed a thing. Everyday was different and I never quite knew what was ahead of me until I got there. The feeling of simplicity and freedom. Waking up each day and putting on a pair of shoes and doing what you love doing the most, RUN!

During the last week of JOGLE, having the time of my life, I decided that I needed to set another challenge, an even BIGGER one this time. That's when I thought of New Zealand. I have visited there a few times already and know how incredible New Zealand is. It was an easy decision to make. When I found out the current world record I thought, "I can do that!" Now as tempted as I was with the Te Araroa trail (this trail extends the full length of NZ), it was just a little too long for me to be away from my son, home and work commitments, so I have to do the



shortest route which is all road. Deciding on a route hasn't been easy and is still likely to change on a day-to-day basis but I know that the scenery will be guaranteed. With less than 3 weeks to go, I have already been flooded with well wishes, offers of help and support but most incredibly I have reached over half the amount of the set target of £3,000 for charity. That in itself makes all of the effort to do this, totally worth it.

In preparation for this next challenge, I ran 8 marathons in 8 days over the summer which included a marathon on a treadmill in Cardiff Tesco Extra on Day 1 and then Offa's Dyke with my boyfriend Jason (whom may I add, had never run a marathon until the week before we were due to set off!) from day 2 to day 8 carrying a 8kg pack. Since the summer, I have adjusted both my body and mind to running on tarmac, which has been tough at times for a very keen trail runner. My typical week involves yoga, circuit training, a speed session with the Swansea Harriers and I alternate between back to back long runs and a very long run at the weekends. I'm on my feet all day with my job and train 6 days a week to ensure that my body can cope with the daily endurance. I feel stronger and fitter than ever before and although I know I will



be faced with new challenges, with a positive mindset and the support I have, I am ready to face my greatest challenge to date. Watch this space, "See you on the other side!"



# “See you on the other side” The story so far.



*Our correspondent Helen Hayes follows Menna's relentless progress to run the length of New Zealand in record breaking time. Day 16 (16th January 2020)*

If you want to know what it's really like to run 1,300 miles in less than 52 days to claim the Guinness world record for the fastest woman..... go run it. The alternative is Menna's daily Facebook posts that expose the beautiful, brutal reality.

An average of 35 miles a day at a 9.20 a mile pace for 16 days to date. In blistering heat on melting highways, fast traffic, disgruntled drivers, mile after mile to try and make the deadline. Menna retains a beatific smile as she endures the frustration of scrambling in the bush by the road, missing her son and the intermittent awareness of the enormity of the challenge.

“See you on the other side” is Menna's signature message on her daily video blogs, these keep her positive. The feedback from people following Menna's progress helps exponentially towards helping Menna run, so do the charities she is raising funds for. During this journey she has teamed up with “Save the Brave” a charity providing alternative therapies for the courageous men and women of the civil defense forces and the first responders in NZ. Particularly poignant at this time as their colleagues in Australia are fighting the fires. As a consequence of the fires on the 5th January Menna experienced cooler conditions since the sun

was obscured under hazy brown cloud and it was getting dark by 4pm.

Menna got off to a typically eventful start on the 1st of January 2020 from Cape Reinga by passing out with heat stroke after 35.3 miles at the campsite in Rarawa Beach. Lesson learnt by day 2 to Kaingaroa, taking on plenty of hydration, nutrition (vegetarian) and lying down with her feet up at the end of a hot day of spectacular scenery along the coast. The heat and humidity continued to be intense over the following days. Although averaging 22°C, it might as well have been 32°C due to the humidity factor. Her crew were indispensable in providing water, ice packs, and psychological support in unrelenting conditions.

After a cloudy, cool day along the state highway due to the Australian bush fires, the sun returned by the afternoon of day 6 sucking the life energy out of Menna. Sitting in a children's playground, 207 miles so far, despondency was taking hold. This is where the ability to turn your mood around is essential. From Mangawhai to Mangakura Menna gave herself and her followers around the world a team talk. Everyone helped to pull her together, sending messages of support and humorous distractions. Menna was teary and feeling a low mood, throughout this mental shit pit it was crucial that she set herself the goal of spotting “transformer” trucks and getting one to honk the horn, yes! By day 8, Menna changed her route to a run through a forest trail and





commune with the horses she met, it was here she changed her psychological despondency into positivity. Menna came through to the other side.

The 9th January route furnished Menna with multiple pedestrian crossings from Kumeu to Papakura (Dury actually). Waiting to cross, negotiating people, cars and the concrete conurbation were tackled with patience and smiling positivity, another 35.5 miles done.

Day 10 and lovely to be back in the countryside after all the hot tarmac. Papakura to Lake Whangape. Raewyn and Richard (in sandals) joined Menna for the last 9 miles and helped to boost her pace.

This little Welsh Dragon isn't giving up and keeps completing the 8 hour running days. Sometimes the terrain means walking up the hills although it's generally running at a steady pace. Another day at the office until the 35 miles are completed.

The post boxes of NZ are a sight to behold. Everytime Menna spots one she photographs the ingenuity, a microwave on a wooden post and a wheelie bin turned onto its side. These post boxes are delightful little gifts of adrenaline to the long distance runner.

14th of January, some of Menna's support team are going home soon. Menna's son and Mum are heading back to

Wales. Another reality check and a potentially low mood, this was transformed by the incredible views of Mt Ruapehu in the National Park on January 15th, reminding Menna of why she fell in love with running.

It's a long, lonely road and all the numbers are playing in Menna's head. We know this because everyday we see Menna, the raw, unedited Menna on her video blog.

If watching her progress fails to inspire anyone of you... you're a robot. I urge all of us ultrarunners to discover Menna's Marathon Challenges, it's as close as you'll get to running NZ. If she can do it and have no doubt, she will, it inspires us all to set our goals and challenges. Catch up with Menna in the next edition of Ultrarunning World.

## **Menna's Links**

[Menna's Marathon Challenges Facebook](#)

[https://map.racetracker.no/?race=flnz\\_2020](https://map.racetracker.no/?race=flnz_2020) (follow Menna live!)

[www.justgiving.com/fundraising/marathonmenna](http://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/marathonmenna)

[www.justgiving.com/crowdfunding/marathonmenna](http://www.justgiving.com/crowdfunding/marathonmenna)

<https://givealittle.co.nz/cause/save-the-brave-menna-evans-guinness-world-record>



# There is a world elsewhere: Through Morocco on the Ultra Trail de la Plage Blanche

By Lili Sarnyai



Alpine mountain races. Fell runs. Canyon climbs. Trails through tropical rainforests and over frozen tundras. Trails on our doorstep, and trails far away across the world. We ultra-trail runners really are spoiled for choice. It can sometimes feel like the biggest challenge is not so much running the races, as choosing which races to run.

Our selection is based on many factors, some personal and specific, some completely random. At the end of the day what we are all searching for is an opportunity, and an experience. An opportunity to test ourselves on different terrains, travel to new places, widen our horizons, meet new people, and see how far we can really go. An experience which we are unlikely to forget, something visceral that stays with us long after those last stubborn bits of mud have dried off our running shoes.

Every ultra-trail we enter becomes a part of our story, our identity as

a runner, whether or not we reach the goals and get the results that we were aiming for. Great races, good races, tough races. Races that make us question what on earth compelled us to sign up. Even Those races, they happen, don't they, to us all, at some point in our racing lives, and we must be ready to embrace them, which end in DNFs. All are part of the rich and varied pattern of our personal ultra-trail narratives.

Do we ever pause to think about the other story, in some ways, the bigger story here? The stories behind and around the ultra-trails?

In case you hadn't noticed, ultra-trail races don't grow on trees. Behind every great race stand months sometimes years of sweat-intensive preparation. Hundreds of hours of creative planning and focused strategy, intricate logistics with a dedicated and selfless team.

This team, made up of race organizers,

medical and security staff, and volunteers, is the heart and soul of these events. Ultra-trails are large scale operations, and without this team, without their work, there would be no trails for us to run. These are the people who take the initial bright idea of, hey, let's bring together a bunch of driven, adventure-oriented, nature-loving ultra-runners and give them a beautiful and challenging new course to run and translate it into reality.

Between idea and execution there are countless unknowns, and a myriad of actual and potential challenges. The race organizers must be ready to deal with any and all eventualities, both in the run-up to the event and when the pressure is really on and the stakes are highest, on race day. Strong, calm, reliable leadership is essential. Which is why the person with the hardest job, the Race Director, must be someone who Gets Things Done.

Making the magic of ultra-races





happen is a specialty of veteran ultra-runner and in his day job, a busy full-time pharmacist, Cyrus Parvine, one half of Cy&Sy Aventures, the ultra-trail adventure company Cyrus co-owns with his wife Sylvie.

They met (where else?) on a multi-stage desert ultra-race. It was Sylvie's first, as it turned out. Cyrus was by then an accomplished marathoner (with a PB of 3 hours 15) and ultra-runner, finisher of some of the most grueling races out there: the Marathon des Sables, Libyan Challenge, Jordan Running Adventure Race, GlobalLimits Cambodia/The Ancient Khmer Path, GlobalLimits Albania/The Hidden Treasure, TranSahariana, Rovaniemi Arctic Winter Race, Le Treg Ultra Marathon, OCC, and of course, UTMB. He stuck with her every single step of the way.

There were times during the course of that first tough day, out on the dunes under the relentless sun, that Sylvie asked herself what, exactly, she was doing there. When the going got really tough she did not give up, but she did insist, in all sincerity, that once this was over she would never, ever, run another step. And yet, slowly, step by step, bit by bit, mile after mile, the desert worked its magic. She arrived with Cyrus at the rest station at the end of that first day, under the inky black star-strewn desert sky, exhausted but ecstatic. Telling the

story now, she laughs, "I was hooked," she says. Ultra-trail running had her under its spell.

Together Sylvie and Cyrus completed the race in good time. Along the way they discovered the things that really matter in everyday life and perhaps even more so, on the trails, attributes like camaraderie, effort, adventure, adaptability, and good humour. Most important of all, a real desire and a concerted, mindful effort to be in the present, to live every moment, with eyes and mind wide open.

For Cyrus, this experience out there on the dunes also served to reaffirm a conviction that we are capable of so much more than we might believe, the rest, as they say, is history.

He realized that it would be possible to open up the world of ultra-running to more people, to show that what might appear to be an exclusive club to those on the outside looking in, can in fact be made accessible. With a good base level of fitness and some solid trail running or even hiking experience, given the opportunity and the right set of circumstances, anyone can take on and conquer an ultra and enjoy the experience.

Cyrus wanted to focus in particular on desert running. The desert is where he feels the most peaceful and also,

conversely, the most alive. It is a mythic place with many hidden faces which only those who venture in it can hope to experience. The Saharan desert is the terrain he knows best. In younger and even more adventurous days he spent many thrilling weeks with friends freewheeling it on motorbikes across the dunes. It was this excitement, this feeling of a vast kind of liberty, that Cyrus wanted to capture and to recreate, on foot, in the context of an ultra-run.

Cy&Sy Aventures organizes desert ultras with a twist, across Morocco and Mauritania. We can't really call these events just "races". To do so would be a huge disservice because the ultra-trails that Cyrus has created are more like extreme sports destination adventures to far-flung and exotic places. Where breathtaking scenery, excellent company, and the pure joy of running hundreds of miles across the sand coalesce to form something that is quite magical, difficult to describe in words. Once you are there, you will feel it, and you will understand.

Their ultra-trails are challenging but designed to remain within the realm of the possible, even for those of us not born Jornet, as elite athletes and casual ultra-trailers tackle the course side by side. The races are safe, with dedicated medical staff at every checkpoint, and along the route, a visible security presence.

Crucially, the Cy&Sy brand of ultra-trails are designed with this in mind. To keep the stress and the hassle that comes with traveling to new places in order to run to a bare minimum. To this end the organizers pre-arrange and handle everything from transport and transfers through meals, on-the-ground logistics and accommodation. Without anything to worry about runners are free to just enjoy the experience.

Last but certainly not least, these are ultras with the kinds of extras you only ever hoped, but never dared expect to find, on trail races. Think pre and post-race team banquets, live music, singing, dancing and general revelry until the





early hours of the morning.

## The Ultra Trail de la Plage Blanche

Cy&Sy Adventure's flagship desert race is the annual Ultra Trail de la Plage Blanche. This 130 km non-stop, self-navigated course winds its way through the Moroccan desert and as far as the Atlantic Ocean, along the mythic Plage Blanche with its glistening white sands before snaking back across the dunes to finish in the wild heart of the Sahara.

The desert here is a landscape unlike any other you have known, endless, expansive and varied. It can make you feel tiny, it can make you feel strong, it can make you feel alive. It is in Cyrus's estimation the perfect terrain for ultra-running with its variety, its surprises and secrets, its calm, its innate and indescribable majesty.

The UTPB starts at the historic Fort BouJerif, an imposing former fortress built by the French Foreign Legion during their final Moroccan campaign in the early decades of the last century. From here it takes runners on a wide arc out across the desert, as far as the Atlantic coast; along the untouched oasis that is the mythic Plage Blanche, or White Beach before snaking back into the desert's interior

up and down rolling and sometimes brutally challenging sand dunes. The atmospheric and authentic Tafnidilt bivouac, in the middle of the desert, marks the finish line. Here, with a warm welcome, runners will have an entire day after the race to rest and recuperate, enjoy bountiful fresh local food and drink and revel in their achievement.

As for the terrain, from checkpoint to checkpoint, the lay of the land changes quickly.

From the start to the first checkpoint, the terrain is highly technical, across rocky gorges and through canyons. Effort and intensity increase further in the next stage of the race as runners battle their way through an otherworldly lunar landscape along the Atlantic coast to checkpoint 2. Checkpoint 2 to 3 is perhaps the most stunning of the stages along the sparkling ebony sands of the wild and mythic Plage Blanche.

The Plage Blanche, or White Beach, so-named for its dazzling ebony-white sand, is a vast swathe of land, within a nature reserve, stretching forty kilometers in length along the Moroccan coast. The Plage Blanche is a magical place almost untouched by

human habitation and the relentless onwards race of time. Time, here, stands still and this stillness is palpable. With every footfall you will feel it all around you, and within you, gathering. With the azure waves of the Atlantic to one side, the ochre-hued sand dunes of the desert on the other, you will find yourself transported to another world.

To checkpoint 4 the landscape changes as the course winds its way back into the desert, across gaping wadis, on sand, gravel and rock. The two stages to the final checkpoint and then on to the finish line will be everything you ever imagined about running in the desert and more. Sand, sand, and more sand, packed tight and flat, deep and loose, or towering above and ahead in so many endless rolling dunes.

The last dozen or so miles as you fight off the fatigue to keep pushing onwards to the ultimate goal will test you to your limits. The sand dunes here are next level, majestic and duly challenging. The desert will make you work until your final steps.

As the hours tick by and the desert changes, runners must be ready not only for the incredible variety of the terrain but the temperatures as well. It is a significant variable. So do not make





the mistake of imagining that a desert ultra-race requires no warm clothing. Nothing could be farther from the truth. You need to be prepared with the right equipment and in the right frame of mind.

Daytime temperatures in late May and early June are around 25 to 30 degrees C. Although by no means unbearable, don't forget that there is no shade out there, no cover from the sun. To prevent sunstroke and dehydration runners must cover their heads and carry with them a minimum of 2 liters of water at all times.

At night, hypothermia is a very real concern. As soon as the sun sinks over the horizon the temperature drops sharply, brutally, and hovers around and under freezing point. Be smart be prepared. Have layers of windproof and thermal clothing ready. Don't worry, you will not have to carry everything with you throughout the race. That's what the drop bags are for. Every runner is allowed one drop bag for

the things they need outside of the obligatory equipment, this bag is sent ahead to each checkpoint.

To help runners get ready to self-navigate the course the race director provides the GPS trace well in advance. Navigating your own way is an essential part of the adventure. It is essential, considering the fatigue element which invariably kicks in after 10, 20, 30 hours of running, that runners practice navigating and get well acquainted with using the GPS in advance.

First timers need not be nervous. Runners are rarely alone in the middle of the desert. Skill-level groups form quickly, so you are more likely to be running, or jogging, with several others. During the nighttime hours the organizers actively discourage any runner to be out alone.

40 hours is the maximum time limit set for the Ultra Trail de la Plage Blanche. 5 qualifying UTMB/ITRA points are

up for grabs for all those who cross the finish line.

New for 2020 and in response to strong demand, Cy & Sy Aventures is launching a shorter alternative. At 85 km, the Aoreora Trail (AOT) is perfect for runners who want to test their mettle in the desert but prefer to keep their races to under 24 hours. One full day is the time limit on this beautiful course and finishers get 3 UTMB/ITRA points.

In keeping with the spirit of camaraderie, creating a supportive and tight-knit group and to allow all runners, whether on the 130 km or the 85 km course, to experience the same wild beauty and intense challenge, the two races follow roughly the same path. The only difference is that the AOT starts at the second checkpoint of the UTPB but both races wind across the dazzling sands of the Plage Blanche. Finishers of the AOT receive 3 UTMB/ITRA points.





Whether you choose the Ultra Trail de la Plage Blanche, back in 2020 for its fourth edition, or the inaugural edition of the Aoreora Trail, you will be richly rewarded. These are trails you will not forget that will add striking, vivid patterns to your own personal ultra-trail history.

Lest we forget, the crowning glory of the whole adventure, the post-race relaxation and the desert afterparty. The beautiful and comfortable sleeping quarters in the atmospheric Tafnidilt bivouac waiting for the runners, where they have an entire day to rest and recuperate, to relive each moment and to reflect on what they have achieved. When everyone is well rested and ready to come together to celebrate a joint success, there is the party, a revel to rival any, with feasting, music and dancing until the early hours of the morning beneath the starry sky, still in the company of by now steadfast new friends.

So it is no accident that many of those

lining up on the start line of the Ultra Trail de la Plage Blanche are returning UTPB veterans, runners present every year since the very first edition, and those that they invited to come along and share in this unique experience.

Are you ready to embark on a new ultra adventure?

While the UTPB and AOT races are not the longest, the hardest or the most expensive, they do guarantee vivid adventures, new friendships and memories to last a lifetime. If you sign up for either of these races, you might be coming for the distance but you will be captivated by the adventure and the atmosphere. Oh, and that afterparty!

Registrations are open now until 31 March 2020 and cost 1290 Euros. Registration includes everything except your flight to and from Morocco. To put that in perspective, that means:

The race registration fee. Atmospheric rest stops and comfortable sleeping places. Prearranged transport to and

from all meeting points as one group. A splendid pre-race team breakfast in the middle of the desert. Time to rest and recuperate in a breathtaking desert setting. A final team dinner back in Agadir. And the star of the show, the awesome afterparty.

Come for the race. Live the adventure. Stay for the afterparty.

Registrations close 31 March 2020.

What's included:

- First night (29 May) in a double bedroom in a hotel in Agadir.
- Minibus transfer from Agadir to Fort BouJerif on May 30th. Departure at 8 am.
- Return transfer from the Tafnidilt Bivouac (race finish) to Agadir on 3 June. Departure at 9 am
- Full boarding all bivouacs (excluding alcohol).
- Professional medical supervision.
- After Party in the Tafnidilt bivouac.
- Final team meal in Agadir on 3 June.



- Double room in a hotel in Agadir on 3 June.
- Transport to the airport on 4 June
- Finisher's prize

A medical certificate of less than a year is required of all runners. This must be sent to the organizing committee at

least one month ahead of the race. A full list of required equipment and rules and regulations can be found on the race website <https://www.ultra-plage-blanche.com/parcours1>.

The Ultra Trail de la Plage Blanche and Aoreora Trail are organized by Cy & Sy

Aventures: <http://www.cy-sy-aventures.com>.

Cy & Sy Aventures also organizes the Ultra Trail Fort Saganne in Mauritania, a 170 km desert ultra-race in four stages, 14 – 21 March 2020.

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# Contributors



## Agnieszka Pamula

Just an ordinary girl who fell in love with running extraordinary distances in various conditions. Beauty of trails and mountains is what she finds really attractive in this sport. And this is so much more than just sport - it is a way of life. Privately also been a happy vegetarian for years.



## Heather Strowd

Lives in Charlotte, North Carolina and is a Realtor in both North and South Carolina. She only started running back in 2011 and has run everything from 5K's to multi day races. She has placed 3rd in her age group at the Tallahassee Marathon and continues to participate in more ultras and build her racing resume.



## Sharon Gayter

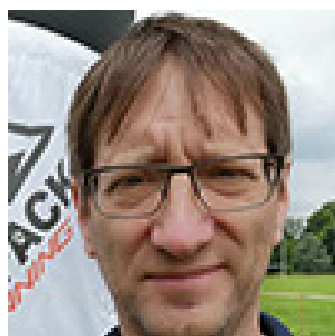
She is a member of North York Moors AC and in 1994 completed her first 100km and 24 hour race, winning gold in the National Championships at both events. Between 1994 and 2011, Sharon represented her country on 27 occasions. In 2011 she took part in the world's highest race, La Ultra-The High and later set the 7 day treadmill record. Sharon wrote a book, The Clock Keeps ticking. Visit her website <http://www.sharongayter.com/>



## Marijn Sinkeldam

As a former handball player, Marijn recently discovered the sport of ultra-running. He especially likes the mental game the sport offers. He works as a doctor in an Emergency Room in the Netherlands. His ambition is to combine ultra-running with a career in sport's and expedition medicine.

Strava profile: [Marijn Sinkeldam \(https://www.strava.com/athletes/22109542\)](https://www.strava.com/athletes/22109542)



## Mick Farrar

Mick Farrar is an ultra runner and blogger based in the southwest of UK. After 12 years in the forces and many more putting on weight he started running again in 2014 and finishing his first it's in 2016. I normally run around an ultra a month and actively encourage runners to push their boundaries.



## Sarah Whittington

Sarah Whittington is an amateur UK trail runner, based in Andalucia, Spain. Alongside her husband Steve, she runs Ultra Trail Spain running holidays. Together they introduce runners to the delights of Spanish trail running, in and around their home in Moclin, Granada. Sarah has been competing in ultras for the last 10 years, tackling everything from the 50km road distance to 100 mile mountain races, although she always says her heart lives in the mountains and is especially attracted to the lesser known races and smaller fields.



## Daniel Jones

He is an adventurer, opportunist, maximizer of time and lover of life. He raised money for Shelterbox by walking 300 miles around the Cornish coastline and in 2019 ran the Mongol 100 Ice Race 2019. He is a trained Mountain Leader. He writes "What's next? The eternal question for every adventurer. What I do know is this: It won't be easy, but it will be worth it." Checkout [Dan's website](#).



## Lili Sarnyai

Lili is a American ultra-trail runner, writer, race promoter and entrepreneur with as many podium finishes as race T-shirts. With a top degree from Cambridge, a PhD, and a clearcut globetrotting career amongst the glitterati, she decided a few years back to take the road less travelled by, and seek out new adventures. These days she is based in Switzerland, where there are a sufficient number of mountains to keep her busy for a while.



## Vicky Yeomans

My name is Vicky Yeomans. I am 46 years old. I live in Derby with my very understanding, non-running husband and our 10 year old twins and two springer spaniels. I work full time in the legal profession and running is a real passion of mine.





## Menna Evans

I am a single, self employed Mum from Carmarthenshire, Wales. I took up running 2 years ago and in 2018 I ran the full length of Britain - a distance of 1,050 miles from John O'Groats to Lands End (JOGLE), running 37 ultra marathons in just 41 days. I raised £2,385 for The Wildlife Trust and £1,455 for Children in Need. My current project is to run the length of New Zealand attempting to set a Guinness record and I will be raising funds for Mind - mental health charity.



## Nicole Atkinson

When she's not running ultras, Nicole can be found juggling the demands of raising her family of 4 children and being a GP and clinical leader. She admits it can be a struggle to fit it all in at times but loves the challenge, adventure and camaraderie that comes with long distance running. The journey of self discovery which comes with running over 100 miles is something special and unique. She is looking forward to taking part in this year's Canal Slam events and has plans to try Monarch's in 2021.



## Jakob Herrmann

Jakob grew up in the Swiss Alps in Switzerland and moved to the US in 1998. He gained a lot of experience directing ultramarathons by being a co-RD and 50% owner of the famous 5th oldest 100-miler in the USA the Angeles Crest 100. He is an avid runner who started running in 2005. Since then he has completed over 100 ultras and is now the RD of the Swiss Alps 100.



## Sanna Duthie

Sanna Duthie writes "I have been into fitness all my life, running has always been something I loved. I did my first marathon in 2013 and my first ultra in 2015. I have always loved being on the coast, my dad would carry me on his shoulders on the coast path as a child. My favourite place to run is the Pembrokeshire coast path. I love how alive running an ultra makes me feel".

**waite escapes**  
Outdoor Training and Soul Running

Let me introduce myself, I'm Tracy Waite, a personal trainer based in Cornwall. I specialise in fitness and wellness, feeling well through movement. I believe that by using our bodies well, we can truly feel happier.

During the waite escapes I will be focusing a lot on self-care and wellness. Life gets so busy, stress often takes over. We become so absorbed with what life throws at us that we often forget who we are. Let's use this time together to explore who we are again, to practice scheduled 'us times'. At the end of the day, if we cannot recharge and find strength in what's around and inside us, then how can we possibly pass this on to those close to us?

<http://www.personaltrainerincornwall.co.uk>





Dunes at the Ultra Trail de la Plage Blanche by Jose Santiago