

Ultrarunning World

ROAD, TRACK & TRAIL MULTIDAY & ULTRA DISTANCE NEWS
ISSUE 24



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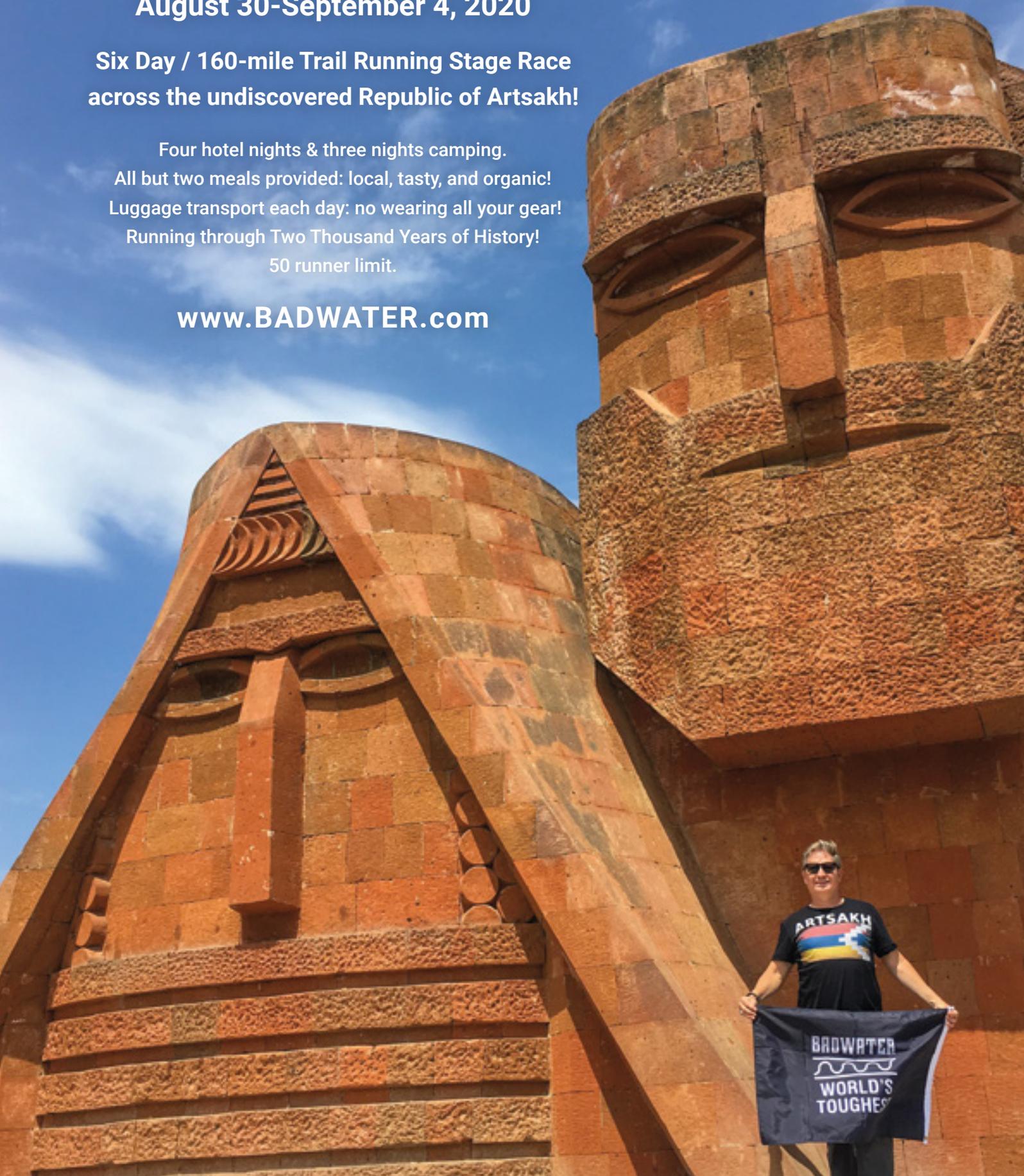
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We would like to welcome a new team member, Emily Adams who has kindly agreed to review some books for the magazine and we begin with two new books, Runderland by Sophie Rooney and the Tour du Mont Blanc guidebook by Kingsley Jones.

This issue features a fascinating selection of articles and we start off with Andy Howett, mountain bike racer and reigning 24 hour Singlespeed World Champion who adapted his endurance abilities to running the Castle Ward Last One Standing.

The dramatic cover photo taken at the Minack Theatre saw Will Harper-Penrose venture forth along the Cornish coastline attempting 50 miles for the first time at the Arc of Attrition, a tough challenge.

Regular correspondent Sarah Cameron made the most of her opportunity at the Albi 24 hour Open race finishing second woman, congratulations Sarah and a great story.

Adventurer Peter Van Geit traces routes through the Western Ghats in the Indian state of Maharashtra and the historical location of 200 forts built by the Maratas in the 16th century.

Thomas Mountney set a FKT running 455 miles up the three tallest mountains in the UK Three Peaks Challenge, Edit Berces, former 24 hour world record holder shares news about the Race Across Taiwan. Rachel Gorajala went to the Arctic Circle in Sweden to take part in the 230km Ice Ultra while Alecsa Stewart introduces us to some of the people and events making news in the Romanian ultra scene. Gary Dudney has a great article on the H.U.R.T. 100 in Hawaii and Miriam Gilbert, currently running the virtual Tip to Tip Great Florida Traverse 128 Mile Ultra, writes about another Laz classic, A Race For The Ages (ARFTA) in Manchester, Tennessee. Anna Seeberger introduces the Sahara Marathon, the charity run for Sahrawi refugees.

A real variety of ultrarunning action from around the world.

The House:

• Editor

- Abichal Sherrington

• Staff

- [Marcella Dragan](#) - Graphic Designer
- Helen Hayes - Copy Editor
- Emily Adams - Book Reviews

• Correspondents

- Sarah Cameron
- Gary Dudney
- Mick Farrar
- Tim Hardy
- Helen Hayes
- Leila Majewska
- Helen Pike
- Sharon Gayter

• Cover

- Start of the 2020 Arc of Attrition 50 mile race at the Minack Theatre, Cornwall.
- Photo by [No Limits Photography](#)

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Send inquiries, original and previously unpublished race reports/articles to the above email address. Last dates for article submissions: June 22nd, July 31st and September 5th. 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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Contents

- 6 News Round-Up
- 7 Media
- 8 Recent Races
- 12 My First Ultra, Last One Standing
By Andy Howett
- 19 Tour du Mont Blanc (TMB) guidebook review
- 20 Arc of Attrition 50 Mile Winter Endurance Run
By Will Harper-Penrose
- 24 Tales from the Battlefield
By Sarah Cameron
- 26 Trans Sahyadri 2019
By Peter Van Geit
- 31 Rundinavia – book review
- 32 Running the UK 3 Peaks Challenge
By Tom Mountney
- 40 5th Run Across Taiwan Nonstop 246 km
By Edit Bérces
- 44 Ice Ultra 2020 - My Race By Rachel Gorajala
- 47 Romania - the best kept secret of trail running?
By Alecsa Stewart
- 50 HURT 100 Mile (1/18/2020) Honolulu, HI
By Gary Dudney
- 53 Ann Sayer – Obituary
- 54 A Race For The Ages
By Miriam Gilbert
- 59 Hall of Fame - James Zarei
- 60 Sahara Marathon
By Anna Seeberger
- 62 Contributors





100 km - Race

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News Round-Up



INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF ULTRARUNNERS

2020 IAU Championships update for IAU Member Federations during Covid-19 Pandemic.

2020 IAU Championships and Challenges - Current status in Early June 2020

18th April: IAU Nordic Challenge, Denmark - postponed until autumn 2020.

23rd May: IAU Balkan Challenge, Romania - **cancelled**

16th/17th May: IAU 24H Americas Championships, Argentina - **cancelled**

18/19th July: IAU 24H Asia & Oceania Championships - **cancelled**

12th September: IAU 100K WC, Netherlands - **cancelled**

19th September: IAU 24H European, Italy - **cancelled**

27th November: IAU 50K WC, Jordan - decision on cancellation at the end of July.

12th December: IAU African 50K - decision later in the year.

As the IAU 100K World Championships in Winschoten have been cancelled, the IAU Congress 2020 and the IAU

Executive Council elections are now postponed to 2021 and will be held at World 24H Championships Romania in May. Therefore the current IAU Executive Council will remain in place during these difficult times and the election process will commence early in 2021.

Hilary Walker

IAU General Secretary

07/06/2020

The Anglo Celtic Plate 100K Home International Team Race will take place incorporated into the Boddington 100K on Saturday 26th September 2020. Boddington is near Cheltenham in Gloucestershire, England. For more information or to enter online log onto <http://www.beyondthelimitations.org.uk/>

Zach Bitter (USA) now owns both the US track and treadmill 100 Mile World Records- setting both within the past nine months. His new 100 mile treadmill World Record was set on May 16th 2020 in 12:09:15. The previous record was 12:32 held by Canada's Dave Proctor.

Upcoming Races

With lockdown restrictions being eased in France, one of the few races still taking place at this time started on June 14th in St. Malo in Brittany. First held in 2008 the race crosses France from the English Channel to Sète on the Mediterranean coast.

The runners have 288 hours, until Friday June 26 at 07:00.

Follow live: <https://sw3.solustop.com/courses/suivi-milkil2020-carto>

UW

INOV-8 Worldrun

A team of runners brought together by Lake District Running brand inov-8 has completed a 25,000-mile virtual lap of the world within a week.

The #inov8worldrun started on June 3rd (Global Running Day) and saw runners from all over the world begin to log their daily miles on the [inov-8 website](#). This continued every day until the late hours of June 9th when the team of runners, which by this stage had grown to almost 1,000, reached a grand total of 25,000 miles – the equivalent of the distance around the Earth's equator.

Michael Price, COO of inov-8, whose HQ is in Staveley, said: "What a fantastic achievement amid these difficult times. The challenge has proven to be integral in our Play Your Part campaign, set-up at the start of the Covid-19 pandemic to support, motivate and inspire running

communities worldwide. The campaign has also seen us support nurses and key workers who reached out with requests for bags and face coverings, and use our Get A Grip event van to assist local support groups delivering food."

On Day 1 of the challenge, inov-8's fledgling team logged 2,135 miles. As the team grew day by day, so did the miles logged. By day 4 they had reached 8,346 miles, before a day 5 push (Sunday) saw that accelerate to 14,634 miles.

Over the final two days the international team grew again with runners from Canada to South Africa and many countries in between pulling together to log the remaining 10,366 miles and cross the virtual finish.

Throughout the challenge inov-8 awarded daily spot prizes to runners, many of whom posted up their inspiring photos and videos to social media.

UW

Latest Podcasts and Videos Page

The [Outdoors Station](#). Sophie Rooney
– Rundinavia

May 24, 2020 Episode 32 with
[Jim Mann: Trees Not Tees](#) British
[Ultrarunning Podcast.com](#)

5 June 2020 [Black Lives Matter &
Black Runners in Ultrarunning](#)
Centurion Running

June 3, 2020 [Runner's Gut
Microbiome on the Endurance](#)
Podcast Hosted by Ian Sharman

May 30 [Everything Endurance #34 |
The Man Who Ran the World](#), with
[Nick Butter](#)

Kristian Tsantoulas is a videographer from Greece who has created the last four official films of Spartathlon, the historic ultra-distance foot race that takes place in September of every year in Hellas. It is one of the most difficult and satisfying ultra-distance races in the world because of its unique history and background which commemorates the battle of Marathon in 490 B.C., a starting point in the history of Western civilization. SkyPixel 5th Anniversary Aerial Photo & Video Contest, 2019 entitled "Journey Beyond the Sky" awarded Kristian's submission first prize in the Sport Category from over 30,000 entries from 120 countries who competed in four categories for video, City, Travel, Nature and Sport.

The Sport category ranged from extreme sports, such

Jun 3 2020 [Oli Russell-Cowan chats
to trail runner Edward Chapman](#)
about the Kalahari Augrabies Extreme
Marathon.

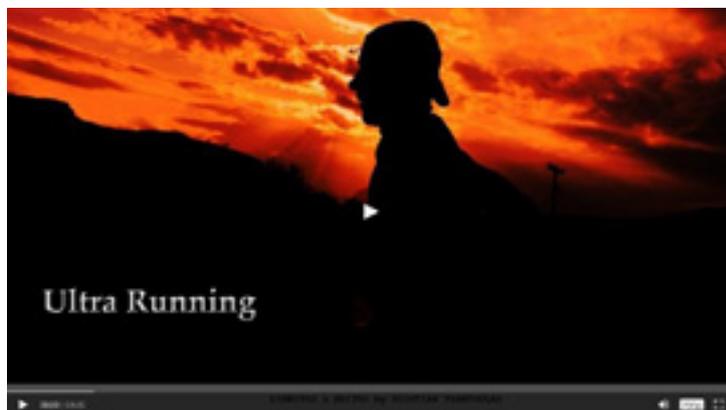
4th June 2020 [John Kynaston
Interview with James Elson](#)

Regular podcasters

[Everything Endurance podcasts](#)
[The Inspirational Runners Podcast](#)
[Science Of Ultra Shawn Bearden](#)
[East Coast Ultra Podcast USA](#)
[Fastest Known Podcast](#)
[The Bad Boy Running Podcast](#)



[The Pylon Ultra Pod](#) Hosted by Paul
Giblin and/or James Stewart.



as skydiving and wing-suit flying to athletics, rhythmic gymnastics, swimming and many others. <https://www.skypixel.com/contests/2019/winners>

UW



Recent Races

01/01/2020 30mi Hardmoors 30 (GBR)

Kicking off the New Year for many was the 10th Hardmoors 30, a 30 mile loop around Whitby, starting in Robin Hoods Bay, Ravenscar, and Cloughton on repurposed railway lines and parts of the Cleveland Way. First home was Michael Smith in 3:52:52 and first woman home was Claire Howard, 10th overall in 4:33:51. 166 finishers. [Full results.](#)



11/01/2020 45mi GB Ultra Country to Capital (GBR)

The Country to Capital Ultra begins at Wendover in the Chiltern Hills before joining the Grand Union Canal and finishing in Little Venice in London. With 3 points for ITRA/UTMB events this is a popular race and drew almost 400 people to the start line. First to arrive in London was Sage Pearce-Higgins in 5:15:20 and first woman was Carla Molinaro, 4th overall in 5:32:33. 388 finishers. [Full results.](#)

11/01/2020 50km Blade Runner Ultra Winter Edition (GBR)

The Blade Runner Ultra Marathon is a 50km fully way-marked race set in the SAS Selection heartlands of the Brecon Beacon mountains. The race winner was Graeme Hatcher in 6:13:09. 21 finishers, no women participants. Results.

11/01/2020 200km Pier 2 Pier 200km Ultra Run (USA)

The inaugural Pier 2 Pier 200km Ultra Run starts at the Naples Pier and follows the Tamiami Trail (Route 41) running on sidewalks, paved bike trails, dirt roads, trail and wide open road shoulders until you reach Miami finishing on the South Pointe Pier. Grant Maughan 26:34:00 took the honours with Caryn Lubetsky 2nd overall in 27:41:00. [Full results on Ultrsignup.](#)



16/01/2020 135mi Brazil 135+ Solo - 5 Marathons (BRA)

First held in 2007 the Brazil 135 takes place in the Serra da Mantiqueira mountains starting in São João da Boa Vista.

Considered the most difficult foot race in Brazil, it is run on a challenging section of the Caminho da Fé (Path of Faith or Way of Faith), the Brazilian pilgrimage path. Runners have 60 hours to complete. In this year's event Leonardo Sant Anna Antunes Maciel (BRA) was first to cross the finish line in 27:09:17 and first woman was Florence Morisseau (FRA) finishing in 36:21:25. 57 finishers. [Results on the DUV.](#)

19/01/2020 50km Gloucester 50km (GBR)

The ninth edition of the Gloucester 50km which starts in Quedgeley taking in Haresfield and Colethrop is an out and back single, mainly flat 9km loop which runners cover five times. The race was won by third placed finisher in 2019 Ollie Garrod winning in 2:57:58. First woman was Chelsea Baker who finished in 4:02:34. 27 finishers. [Full results.](#)

25/01/2020 48mi Peddars Way Ultra (GBR)

The Peddars Way Ultra starts at Knettishall on the Suffolk border and follows the Peddars Way to Holme-next-the-Sea on the North Norfolk Coast. First held in 2014 this year's race saw Tristan Steed home in 6:18:27 and the first woman was Kate Bennett in 7:05:52. 151 finishers. [Full results.](#)



25/01/2020 298km Hong Kong Four Trails Ultra Challenge (HKG)

The 8th edition of the Hong Kong Four Trails Ultra Challenge covers 298km and 14,500m D+ elevation, in a solo and self-supported event that has a 72 hour time limit. The four trails are Maclehose – Wilson – Hong Kong and Lantau trails. Race winner was Yamanath Limbu in 54:26:00 and the first woman was Man-Yee Cheung in 62:47:00. 12 finishers. [Results.](#)

26/01/2020 100/50km/12hr Flich Way 100km split (GBR)

Three events on the Flich Way in Essex starting at Braintree train station car park. The course is a 10k out and back route, designed to be flat and fast. The 100k was won by Alex Tate in 7:29:42 and the first woman was Alison Walker finishing in 9:40:40. [Full results.](#)

31/01/2020 102.5mi The Arc of Attrition 100 Mile (GBR)

The Arc of Attrition is a 100 mile point-to-point race from Coverack to Porthtowan. The Arc50 is also a point-to-point race starting at the Minack Theatre, Porthcurno finishing at the Eco Park, Porthtowan. The 100 miler was won by Steven

Wyatt in 21:24:31 and women's winner was Anna Troup in 25:21:14. The 50 miler was won by Jamie Stephenson in 8:27:44 and the first woman was Natalie Taylor in 11:02:29. [100 results](#). [50 results](#). (See article on p 18)

01/02/2020 66mi/2 Stage Pilgrim Challenge North Downs Way Multistage Ultra (GBR)

The Pilgrim Challenge is a 66 mile, two day stage race along the North Downs National Trail, the oldest trade route in England. The event starts in Farnham, Surrey. First person home was Jonni Suckling in 9:36:07 and women's winner was 2018 winner Sarah Hill in 10:05:55. 190 finishers. [Full results](#).

09/02/2020 70km Brecon to Cardiff Ultra (GBR)

The Brecon to Cardiff Ultra, is a 70k, one way, fully marked race that winds its way from Brecon following the Taff Trail and finishing at Coleg y Cymoedd in Nantgarw. Runners have 12 hours to complete the distance. The race was won by Samuel Richards in 5:18:32. Women's winner for the third year in a row was Melissa Venables 6:30:43. 336 finishers. [Full results](#).

13/02/2020 200km/6 stage São Tomé - The Hemisphere Crossing (STP)

The islands of São Tomé and Príncipe in the Gulf of Guinea host this 6 day stage race which starts at the largest plantation of São Tomé "Roca Agostinho Neto" and finishes at the equator line on the small island Ilhéu das Rolas, close to the coordinates 0°N 0°E. First to cross the finish line was Ismael Tavarez (STP) in 18:04:11. First woman was Veronique Messina (FRA) 5th overall in 22:04:49. 49 finishers. [Full results](#).



15/02/2020 41h Last One Standing Castle Ward (GBR)

The first British BYU of the year took place at Castle Ward, Downpatrick in Northern Ireland organised by the Daye brothers at Atlas Running. The race started at 12 noon, and the format gives runners an hour to complete the 4.2 mile loop and be at the start line ready to go again at 1pm. Repeat. The last person remaining is the winner and that person was Peter Cromie with 41 laps (277.129km) outlasting Eoin Keith. Last Woman standing was Claire Bannwarth with 209.536 km. 111 starters. [Full results](#).

15/02/2020 1073km/16 Stages Tour de Taiwan - Maximum range (TPE)

Starting in the Zuoying District in Kaohsiung City Taiwan the event loops around the island over 16 stages. The race was won by Wu Cheng-Hung in 137:52:00. First woman was Chen Chieh-Hsin who finished in 174:57:00. 20 finishers. [Results on the DUV](#).

21/02/2020 90mi Snowdonia Slate Trail Ultra (GBR)

The Snowdonia Slate Trail Ultra is a 90 mile (145 Km) Ultra taking place in Snowdonia in North Wales. Starting and finishing just outside Bangor, the course passes through Llanberis, Beddgelert and Betws-y-Coed. Worth 5 UTMB points, this year was the second edition of the event which was won by Tristan Steed (TUR) in 21:33:54 and first woman was Seda-Nur Celik (TUR) in 30:59:42. 24 finishers. [Full results](#).



22/02/2020 235/206km Little Edo Oedo 205k (JPN)

230/200kms starting at the Renkei-ji temple in Kawagoe, Saitama Prefecture. This is a 36 hour road race which was won by Nakata Kazuhikoin 25:41:40 and the first woman was Eri Sato in 30:04:52. 54 finishers. [Full results](#).

23/02/2020 45mi St Peters Way Ultra (GBR)

The St Peter's Way is a 45 mile race through the countryside of Essex, from Chipping Ongar to the ancient chapel of St Peter-on-the-Wall at Bradwell on Sea, thought to be the oldest chapel in the UK. Organised by Challenge Running the 8th edition of the race is mostly footpaths and bridleways with some road/pavement sections. First home was Geoffrey Cheshire in 5:38:12 and first woman was Alice Hector finishing in 6:03:32. 85 finishers. [Full results](#).

28/02/2020 48h Save the Daylight 48 Hour Race (USA)

Based in Englewood, FL Save the Daylight also features 24/12 and 6 hour options. The course is a fast, flat shell packed trail 3.1875 mile loop. The 48 hour was won by Lisa Devona who covered 333.435km. First man was Michael Shep who finished with 241.401km. The 24 hour was tied with Kandy Ferris and Steven Najjar with 164.153km. Results on [UltraSignup](#).

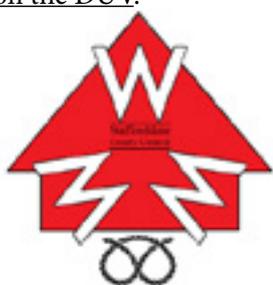
Recent Races

29/02/2020 50mi Chester Ultra 50 Miles (GBR)
GBUltrass 50 mile winter race starts in Waverton and follows trails including along the River Dee, North Cheshire Way & the Sandstone Trail. The race was won by Ellis Bland in 6:24 and the first woman was Charlotte Beddow, 12th overall in 7:44. 300 finishers. [Full results.](#)



01/03/2020 40mi Barry 40 Mile Track Race (GBR)
The Barry 40, first held in 1986, is the oldest ultra in the UK calendar and is also the Welsh Ultramarathon Championships. Held on the running track at the Jenner Park Stadium in Barry, the event has a 6 hour time limit. Michael Taylor set a new course record with 3:53:04. First woman was Helen James finishing in 5:41:34. 18 finishers. [Results on DUV.](#)

01/03/2020 41mi The Millennium Way (GBR)
The Millennium Way is a national trail. The course starts in Audley Rd, Newport and after following an old train line, the route in Stafford follows the River Sow, River Trent, River Sawburn and then the Trent Canal and finishes at the Shobnall Leisure Centre. First man was Daz Bentley in 5:52:43 and first woman was Kirsten Fasey 7:15:47. 153 finishers. [Results on the DUV.](#)



04/03/2020 269km Transgrancanaria 360° 269 km (ESP)
A 269km self-sufficient challenge starting in Maspalomas. Transgrancanaria also features the popular 128km classic event. The longer event was won by Luca Papi in 50:59:45 and the first woman was Marta Poretti finishing in 64:51:39. The 128km event was won by Pablo Manuel Villa Gonzalez and Pau Capell Gil, in 13:04:11 and the first woman was Kaytlyn Gerbin in 15:14:40. [Full results.](#)

07/03/2020 40/32mi The Welcome Ultra 40mi (GBR)
Starting in Otley, West Yorkshire and finishing in Pool-in-Wharfedale, West Yorkshire, this 40 mile trail race passes through some beautiful places. This year's event was won by Stephen Kirk in 6:07:24 and the first woman was Kim Loney crossing the finish line in 7:36:36. The 32 mile option was won by Nick Kealey in 4:43:34 and the first woman was Sian Davies 6:34:15. [Full results.](#)



07/03/2020 45mi Winter Green Man Ultra 45 (GBR)
The Green Man Ultra is a 45 mile loop around Bristol, starting near Ashton Court and follows the Community Forest Path. The event is run by Ultra Running Limited and also features a 30 mile race which starts in Keynsham. The 45 mile race was won by Barry Bryant for the third year in a row in 6:49:15. First woman was Ellie Bates, sixth overall, in 7:36:25. 186 finishers. [Full results.](#)

07/03/2020 63km Shanes Castle Ultra (GBR)
Another race organised by Atlas Running, Shanes Castle Ultra is a mixed terrain trail race on a 13.1 mile loop at Shanes Castle in Co. Antrim. First to finish was Mark Harold Walker in 4:50:52 and first woman was Frances McFadden finishing in 6:40:53. 23 finishers. [Full results.](#)



07/03/2020 48km Humanity Direct Amersham Ultra (GBR)
A one-day, 29-mile ultra raising funds for Humanity Direct, the Amersham Ultra, the route takes in many areas of natural beauty in the Chiltern Hills. The race was won by Timothy Lawrence in 3:39:30 and women's winner was Susan McCartney 04:24:35. 179 finishers. [Full results.](#)

14/03/2020 34.1mi Coastal Trail Series - Sussex Ultra (GBR)
Starting at Birling Gap and taking in East Dean and Beachy head this event is one of the Endurance Life series of events. The race was won by Joachim Cassel 5:00:09 and the first woman was Amelie Karlsson (SWE) finishing in 5:27:23. 101 finishers. [Full results.](#)



3 DIAS TRAIL IBIZA

ULTRA IBIZA

27, 28, 29
NOVIEMBRE
2020

ITRA
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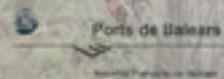


VIERNES NOCTURNA 10 KM. | SÁBADO MEDIA MARATÓN | MARATÓN | ULTRA | DOMINGO DIURNA 10 KM.

Consell d'Eivissa



Ajuntament de Sant Josep de sa Talaia



Ports IB

My First Ultra

Last One Standing, Castle Ward, Northern Ireland

Text by Andy Howett
Photos by Adrian and Sammy Daye and Alan Risk



What happens when someone who has never raced an Ultra before attempts to be the Last One Standing? How hard can it really be for a novice to compete in an event with no defined finish? Where can we find a newbie daft enough to even have a go at it? Step forward Andrew Howett, mountain bike racer and reigning 24 hour Singlespeed World Champion, let's see if bikers are any good at running.

Forget pubs (controversial opening words I know) but all the best ideas are conceived out in the hills, everyone from Friedrich Nietzsche and William Wordsworth to Steve Jobs agreed with this. We'll gloss over Theresa May's ill-fated decision to call an unnecessary election, there's always an exception to everything.

I do a little bit of fell running and one day last November I was out running

in the Pentlands with a few guys from my old running club. We got chatting and one of them, Alan, mentioned the Last One Standing. I was vaguely aware of the concept, having once read something about Laz's Backyard Ultra but I had no idea there were other ones about. 'It sounds fun' I said. 'Come and have a go then' he replied. Despite the little voice in my head saying, 'don't be so #@%ing stupid' the words which actually came out were 'OK' and then 'How does it work again?'

For those who don't know the concept is simple, if not the practice. There is a fairly short lap, 4.2 miles in this case, which everyone has an hour to complete. At the end of the hour you must be on the start line ready to go again. Anyone who is not on the start line at the allotted time is out. This is repeated every hour, on the hour, until there is just one person left.

As an introduction to Ultras it actually sounded quite a sensible one. There was almost no way I could get lost, I wouldn't have to carry any gear, I would get fed every four miles and if I did hurt myself I wouldn't be stranded on my own in the middle of nowhere.

'How far do you reckon we'll need to go?' I asked. 'Last year's winner did forty-one hours' was the reply. Forty-one hours?!? That was considerably more than I was expecting, more than I could seriously contemplate, what on earth had I just agreed to? Maybe it wasn't such a good idea after all.

In the ten weeks between this point and arriving on the start line I decided that it would probably be a good idea to do a bit of training. I had run the Lairig Ghru a few years ago, coming absolutely bog last with a knee injury, but that stood as my longest ever





race. I had once run forty miles, not in a race, but that included café stops and a pub stop long enough to watch the rugby, neither of which I was expecting to have during the event.

I therefore did a thirty-mile run, with a café stop, and felt fine after that, that was a good start. I then did a thirty-five mile run without a café stop and got myself completely lost up on the grouse moors in the dark and the fog, there's a long story there which I'll save for another time (I wasn't actually lost, I was fifty yards from where I should have been but someone had planted a new wood since my map was printed fifteen years previously and that, along not being able to see more than three feet, was messing with my head) I felt surprisingly OK after this run too. I then did one final 'long' run (well, it felt long to me) twenty miles back from the outskirts of Edinburgh to my house after which I felt utterly rubbish, and then declared myself ready. What could possibly go wrong? Well, Storm Dennis for a start. I was

working in London on the Wednesday and Thursday before the race and the train back up to Edinburgh was late (Well obviously, it's a train, of course it's late – Ed) not helped by either the storms or someone putting an electric train on the non-electrified King's Cross to Aberdeen route, you couldn't make it up. I was therefore also late collecting George from Edinburgh and then even later arriving at Alan's house in Falkirk having taken an unnecessary detour into Fife on the way by the bridge. Still, who needs sleep anyway.

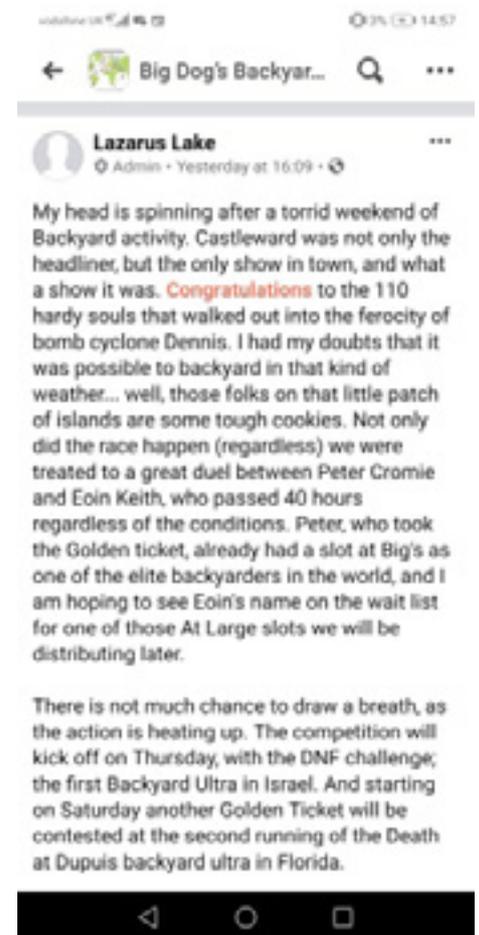
Storm Dennis made the journey down to the ferry surprisingly wobbly, a large slab-sided van isn't great in force eight crosswinds. It also turns out I'm not great in them either, feeling a little queasy on the ship and having to head up on deck for a bit of fresh air. My companions, a tug-boat captain and a chap who grew up on a very small island and appears to have spent his entire childhood in a boat, were of course hugely sympathetic.



Oddly enough this was my first trip to the island of Ireland. My first impressions of it were that, compared to Ayrshire just across the water, it was less windy, less snowy and full of road works. In a dramatic break from tradition we were the first to arrive at the venue on Friday afternoon, I've never been early for anything in my life. In another break from tradition, we had an early night, listening to the rain bouncing off the roof of the van as it swayed in the wind.

I was up early enough to be able to have two breakfasts. The medical tent had blown down overnight but nearly everything else appeared to be intact. Not necessarily where it had been left, but still intact.

I was actually quite nervous as I made my way to the start (a mad last minute rush as usual, no matter how much time I have for anything I'm always late). We've all heard of Type-1 fun, things which you actually enjoy at the time, and Type-2 fun, things which are fun with hindsight but not necessarily enjoyable whilst you are



Race Reports



doing them. I was wondering if the same distinction could be drawn with fear? Type-1 for things like jumping out of aeroplanes or being chased by a lion and Type-2 for things like this, a kind of apprehension that this is going to hurt but I'm not sure just how much and which gradually builds up in the weeks prior to the competition.

As I was still busy pinning my number on (lucky 17) when the hooter went I was the last of the one hundred and ten runners to set off. It was a remarkably relaxed start, none of the mad sprint into the first corner which one gets in pretty much any other race. I hadn't done a practice lap and so this was a bit of a mystery tour for me. There had been a practice session a few weeks previously and the big

names had used that to work out their pacing, where they had to push and where they could back off and save their energy. Being two hundred miles and a ferry trip away I hadn't taken advantage of it. This early on I was just tagging on to the rear of the bunch, turns out it's quite sociable at the back.

I completed my first lap in fifty-three minutes. I was taking it easy, taking my cues from the people in front of me, none of whom seemed to push very hard. This did, however, mean that I had much less of a rest than I was expecting, it was a much slower lap than I had anticipated but since everyone else was more experienced than me and that's what they were doing then I assumed this was the way to do it. It was still enough of a rest to



be able to get cold though, the winds of Storm Dennis not really helping in that respect.

Everyone was back on the start line again ready for lap two. The lap itself was a mixture of everything, some fields, some forest paths, some Land Rover tracks and even a short stretch of tarmac. There was a lot of standing water around, not as much as Ciara and Dennis had deposited elsewhere but enough. This early on the mud wasn't much of a problem but it was clearly going to become an issue when the course got churned up as the race progressed. Is race even the right word? I have no idea what you call this.



My first few laps were largely uneventful, just jogging along near the back, enjoying the craic (see, learning the local lingo) and making sure I was eating well between laps. I decided to go for a quicker lap just before sunset in order to buy a bit of time to change to some warmer clothing but this didn't really go to plan. I stopped for a quick pee-break about halfway round during which I managed to break the button on my shorts and then completely failed to fix them by using a safety pin from my number (They are not as safe as the name would have you believe and a little bit of blood was lost in the process). The rest of the lap was run in a style which would have certainly have got me a job at the Ministry of Silly Walks.

We lost a few people early on,



to do anything about this. Some of the more experienced competitors were saying that this was about four or five minutes a lap slower than they were anticipating. There was the option of simply running faster of course but I had been warned about going too quick, it might be fine for a couple of laps but going slowly was definitely the consensus.

I eventually conceded defeat about 2am and decided that I really would have to change my shoes and went for it at the end of that lap, right one first. The mud made it rather difficult to get the laces open but I had passed the point of no return when the two-

including a couple of big names driven off by the wind and rain. There were one hundred and four of us still standing as darkness fell about six hours in but by midnight we were down to fifty-seven. As I had expected the mud was becoming quite something by this stage. Not especially deep, mid-calf at worst, but just everywhere, there was no escaping it, no way around quite significant areas of it and my shoes were full of the stuff. The grit in it was very much like running with a piece of sandpaper between one's shoe and ankle and there was more and more skin coming off each lap.

The problem with the laps taking longer than I had expected was that I didn't really have much time to be able



minute call was given. I somehow got it off, removed the sock, hurriedly pulled a new one on and then crammed a new shoe on over it, one trail shoe full of mud and one clean, comfy and warm fell shoe, that would have to do. I sprinted for the start line, crossed it just in time and then stopped to adjust my sock and tie my laces at the other side of it, a process not helped by having pretty cold fingers which wouldn't really bend.

I quite enjoy running in the dark, just the little pool of light from my head torch in front of me, one small patch of ground to focus on. The rain was coming and going but wasn't as bad as

Race Reports



the forecast had led us to expect. The wind was still pretty strong though and the shelter of the trees was most welcome to warm up again after some of the exposed sections.

I was however going quite slowly. I was conscious of how much faff changing one shoe had been and wasn't certain I would have enough time at the end of a lap to change the other and so I just left it, odd shoes didn't seem to matter, they were both so full of mud and grit anyway. The only problem was with the new one on the right-hand side, (is that the correct term? The right-foot side is more accurate but just sounds wrong somehow) I could feel something underneath the ball of the foot, every time it struck the ground. It felt as though I had got the sock on a bit wrong in my hurry and it had bunched up, there was definitely a lump of something there and it was surprisingly sore. Maybe it was just fatigue making me over-sensitive. Due to the time constraints I was having to make the call between eating and sorting out my shoes each lap, and eating was winning every time.

I pushed on in my odd shoes for another three laps but I was in quite a lot of pain by this stage and decided that I really would have to do something about my foot. I paused just after crossing the start line, knelt down and, once I got the laces apart through all the mud, pulled my shoe

off and then a blood-soaked sock. That wasn't really what I was expecting, it wasn't a fold in the bottom of my sock at all but rather a flap of skin which had come off and sort of rolled

up underneath my foot, no wonder it was sore. There was very little I could do about this apart from pull off the offending epidermis, replace the sock and shoe and carry on.

This had cost me a reasonable amount of time and so I had to push quite hard on that lap, well as hard as I could, not catching up to Amy, the last placed runner on this lap, until the tarmac section about two-thirds of the way round. She said that she was sure she wasn't going to make the cut-off and urged me onwards. Wondering just how much time I had lost earlier I pressed on, thinking that if I did one of these again I really should bring a watch.

Running at that sort of pace with that much skin missing underneath my



foot and the associated ingress of mud and grit into my flesh took its toll. My next lap was much, much slower, I was really starting to struggle, mainly the pain in my foot but my thighs were also hurting and getting stiffer and stiffer. I kept telling myself that this would be the final lap in the darkness, the sun would be up next time round and if it was anything like a bike race this would be accompanied by the arrival of my second wind.

However, unlike a bike race here one cannot afford to have a single bad lap, the format is utterly unforgiving, one substandard circuit and it's game over, as it proved to be for me. 17 laps, 17 hours 16 minutes 31seconds and I was out. Time to sit down, eat and try to get some feeling back into my extremities.

This is where I would usually end a race report but of course, the race itself was still going on, after I timed out there were twenty-five runners still circulating. Alan, George and myself had agreed that whoever was out first would be allowed two hours sleep and would then become a helper for the remaining runners. So, a quick shower, try to staunch the blood flow from my foot, a far too brief nap and then I was up again and on pasta, porridge and potato duty. Why do runners eat so many potatoes? There was no sign of the rice pudding us bikers use to fuel ourselves.

It is a surprisingly good spectator sport, especially once it gets down the last few. I was hiding from the weather in the bunkhouse with a bunch of far more experienced runners, listening to their tales from other races and their speculation as to how this one would pan out. We were getting through a rather large quantity of Guinness and inventing the Bunkhouse Buster Back-Yard Cocktail, a combination of Irish stout, Scotch whisky and ginger beer, basically whatever we had lying around. It tastes a lot better than it sounds.

Alan survived twenty-five hours, George made it to twenty-nine and



had become something of a celebrity in the bunkhouse by this point, an outstanding effort for both. They are experienced runners but this was their first Backyard. In the closing stages of the race, everyone was mucking in to help all the remaining runners, the

spectators were keen to see it dragged out as long as possible, there was some, possibly over optimistic, talk of making it to fifty hours.

By thirty laps we were down to the last five and it was getting really tense.



Race Reports

Veteran Pat Staunton timed out at the end of lap thirty-one, by nineteen seconds! So close, every second really does count. Four are still standing.

Clare Bannwarth was the next to break. She set out on lap thirty-two but had to abort it. She looked like a wreck when she staggered back into the bunkhouse shortly afterwards, collapsing into a chair and then vomiting rather profusely. To be honest that was what we, the spectators, liked to see, not vomit per se, but someone who really had given it everything they had. She was the first girl and an extremely impressive fourth overall. Three are still standing.

Gwynn Stokes' supporters had moved into the bunkhouse to find a bit of warmth and shelter for him, he was looking strong right up until the moment he very suddenly wasn't. He appeared decidedly queasy at the start of lap thirty-five and almost refused to go out again before being pushed out of the door and towards the start line by his wife. Ten minutes later he was back, he had made it as far as the bottom of the hill before his body just gave up completely. Two are still standing.

Eoin Keith and defending champion Peter Cromie were fighting it out for the win. They were being very cagey, keeping themselves separate as they returned from each lap for food and encouragement and apparently they were fairly separate out on the course too. We could see Peter each time he came in, through the kitchen where we were and into the lounge where his supporters had set up camp to get a bite to eat and to sleep in three minute bursts. Eoin and his helpers were keeping themselves to themselves in the back room, the mind games had started.

It was past 1am. I had been awake for forty of the last forty-two hours and had drunk rather a lot of whisky, along with a Bunkhouse Buster Backyard Cocktail which mysteriously seemed to be topping itself up as I drank. With the speculation that this could go over



fifty hours, I decided to head off to bed for a bit of sleep and then get up early to hopefully watch the finish.

I was sadly disappointed in this respect. Arriving back in the bunkhouse just after 7am I found that the race was already over. Eoin had made it to forty hours before calling it a day. Peter had gone out for one final solo lap to seal the victory at ten to five on Monday morning, having been running since noon on Saturday. An extremely impressive performance by both.

Peter had won the privilege of being able to do it all over again, a coveted Golden Ticket entry to Laz's Big Dog Backyard Ultra in Tennessee. With forty hours completed it looks likely Eoin will get a wild card entry too.

One final word about this, my first ever Ultra. I had shown up as a complete novice, vaguely knowing only two people and with absolutely no idea what I was doing. By the end of the weekend I had met pretty much everyone and they were all lovely. I had been made to feel most welcome and had a great time despite the storms, mud, and loss of significant amounts of skin. I do feel that I underperformed somewhat, it turns out that running muscles are indeed different from cycling muscles, so I have unfinished business and will be back again next year. I'm really looking forward to it. Thank you to everyone there for welcoming me so heartily into your mad little world, it wasn't such a bad idea after all.

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Tour du Mont Blanc (TMB) guidebook reviewed

By Emily Adams

Kingsley Jones is no stranger to the Alps, as a UIMLA International Mountain Leader, he has guided running and trekking groups around the Tour du Mont Blanc many times as well as racing several times in the Ultra Tour du Mont Blanc (UTMB). Kingsley has published a Tour du Mont Blanc (TMB) guidebook and accompanying map for anyone considering a self-guided trip.

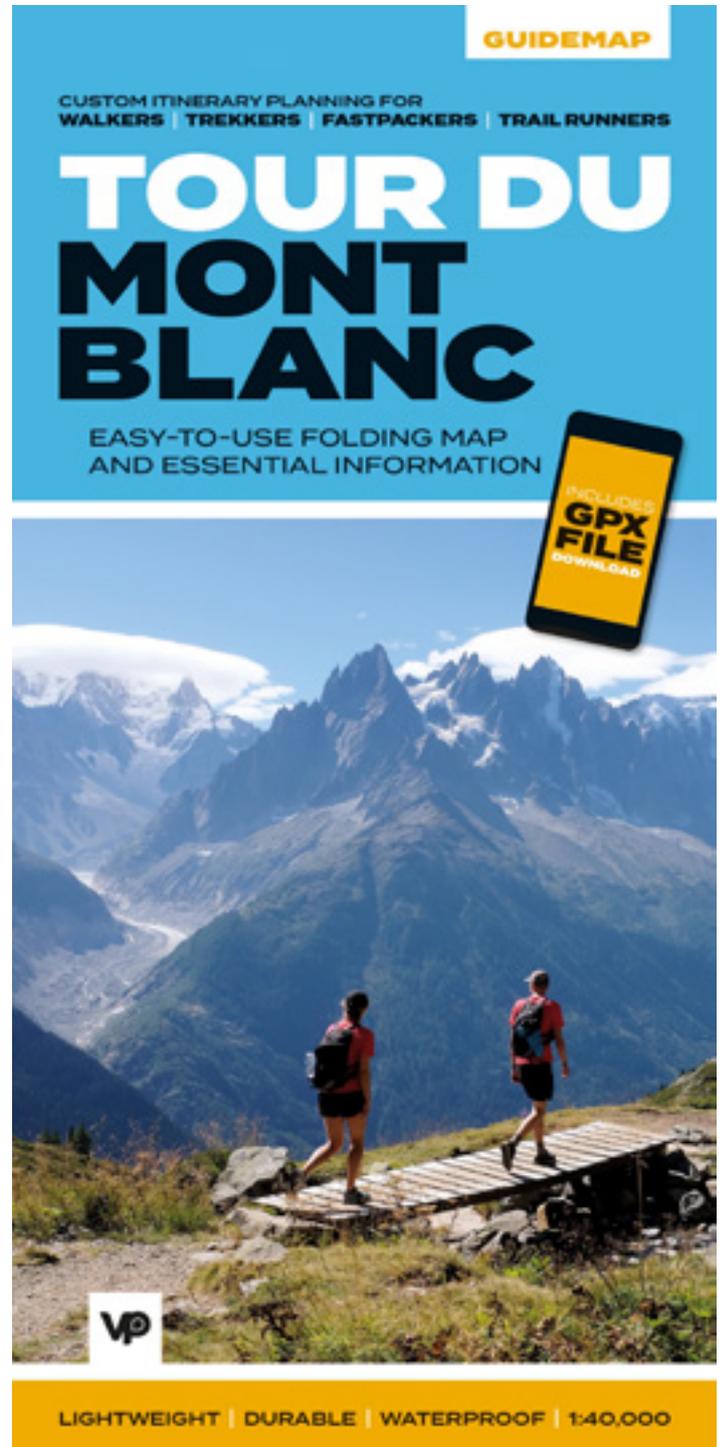
The first thing I noticed about the guide book was its size. It is compact enough to handily fit in your pocket without taking up much room or adding weight yet large enough to provide adequate and concise details on each page. The book is logically laid out and begins with providing some practical considerations which will help you to begin planning your trip such as when to go, seasonal weather, how to get there and safety information.

Now you've decided when you're going it is time for the exciting part, the planning. The guidebook provides descriptions of the terrain along the route as well as potential dangers which is handy for anyone who has not visited this region of the Alps. There are detailed equipment lists covering the recommended kit for safety, essential items, clothing etc.

There is a comprehensive section about the accommodation available along the TMB, highlighting the benefits of the various options. Contact details and seasonal opening information can be found in the appendices. One thing I really liked was a section regarding environmental awareness, something which is particularly pertinent to the Alps with the impact of climate change and shrinking glaciers.

The bulk of the guidebook is the detailed route map and description. Each step is broken down into a section with a description and directions along the route which correspond with a marker on the map. In addition, there are a number of variations on the route which may avoid particular features such as ladder sections. Whilst I am not in a position to put this to a practical test (as much as I'd love to), from reading the route along with the map, I feel I would be confidently armed with this information to navigate the TMB.

If you don't fancy carrying the guide book with you, there is an accompanying fold-out map which condenses down the essential information along with a full map of the TMB route. The map (scale 1:40,000) has the benefit of being lightweight and waterproof which may be preferred for those who are weight conscious. With the purchase of the map, you also get the versatile option of a GPX file download so you have backup should anything happen to the paper copy.



Unable to put the durability of the map to the test, I will mention that it feels a lot more lightweight than an OS map. Whether this would stand the test of bad weather I do not know, however this is where the GPX download comes in helpful.

Tour du Mont Blanc guidebook –RRP £16.95

Tour du Mont Blanc folding map –RRP £14.95

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Arc of Attrition 50 Mile Winter Endurance Run

Race Report

Text by Will Harper-Penrose

Photos courtesy of Mudcrew.

“The coast path is a single track from here to Land’s End so if you’re one of the faster runners you want to get yourself to the front now... not you, Will Penrose!” announced Andrew Ferguson (Cornwall’s answer to Lazarus Lake, race director and all round sadist), over the bloody microphone.



That’s the confidence boost everyone needs seconds before their first attempt at running 50 miles. Not just any 50 miles either, some of the most brutal, churned up, soul destroying miles imaginable. Mudcrew’s now legendary Arc of Attrition has become known, quite rightly so, as one of the toughest races in the UK. For some perspective, the DNF rate of the 100 mile race is roughly 50% and you have to qualify for the race in the first place so it’s not pretenders with no business being there getting chewed up and spat out on the rocks, it’s seasoned ultra runners.

The Arc, as it’s affectionately known in Cornwall, was the first Ultra Marathon I heard of, long before I

started running. My brother had shown some interest after completing an ironman and my reaction at the time was that of the classic non-runner, “All in one go? Surely you’d have to sleep somewhere on the course? I bet people actually die doing that!” Well it turns out people don’t actually die, they don’t sleep and they definitely do it all in one go, although many take years of failed attempts to do so. Some of the fastest runners do it in under 24 hours, earning themselves the coveted ‘black buckle’. Sections of the course from Coverack to Porthtowan have gained infamy over the 5 years the race has taken place. Runners shudder at the words Pendean Watch, Zennor and the Dunes of Doom.

It's a long road to get to the start line of the AoA. First you have to have completed an ultra worthy of qualification and this is where my foray into ultra running began.

Way back in the annals of time when Brexit was a new word and Boris Johnson was just a silly t*** riding a bicycle around London I googled, 'How to qualify for the AoA'. This is when I saw that Mudcrew were putting on a new race, 'The Arc 50' which if completed would earn you ring fenced entry into the full 100 mile Arc. Perfect... or so I thought until I reached my first stumbling block, qualifying for the 50 mile race. All of these hoops should have given me an idea of how difficult this race was going to be. So, to qualify for the Arc 50 you need to have completed at least a 50km race. This is all very sensible. If Ferg allowed anyone to turn up and run the Arc, the DNF rate would likely be close to 100%.

After some more googling, the ball was rolling. I entered another Mudcrew race, 'The Black RAT 50km,' and started training. I earned my place in the Arc 50 but would have to wait until 2020 to take it on. I worked as a valet on the Arc in 2019 and got a flavour for it, so I knew what I was letting myself in for and promptly entered the 50 as soon as registration opened for the following year.

12 months of racing and training passed and thank goodness it did. I think if I'd attempted those 50 miles when I'd first wanted to, I'd undoubtedly have crumbled at St Ives and gone home with my tail between my legs. So now it's Saturday the 1st of February and I'm standing in a crowd of nervous energy being mocked by the race director.

We scramble up the steps of Rowena Cade's iconic Minack Theatre, carved into the rocks at Porthcurno, with the sun now shining and the waves smashing into the cliffs below. Marshalls hold flares that pour blue smoke into our faces. It's a scene of panic and... choking, not dissimilar from news reports of riots in Hong Kong. Through the smoke and we're moving, jostling for position through the carpark and out onto the coast path.

The first mile passes in what feels like seconds with nobody saying a word. 100% focus is required on some technical terrain right from the gun. The race leader, Jamie Stephenson, manages to put a 100 yards between himself and the chase pack in no time at all and by the time we're round the first headland he's gone. I'm sitting comfortably in the chase pack, sticking to the plan of going out easy and hoping to finish strong rather than broken. Some people pass, then drop back and after five miles, we've spread out into small groups. Now guards can be dropped a little and we start talking. It looks as



though we might be with each other for some time so we may as well get to know each other. Fortunately for me, in this pack is my friend Dan and we soon form an unspoken agreement to run the entire race together.

As we reach Land's End we run straight through the weekly parkrun. Dan being a gentlemen shouts words of encouragement to every single runner we pass. I save my energy. The next section is really runnable, all the way through Sennen, Gwynver, Cape Cornwall and onto Pendeen. It's just before Pendeen that I realise the person I'm running with, other than Dan, is last year's winner Neil Martin. I decide to quietly back off the pace and let him go. Dan kept up the chase, but I knew all too well what was coming... the Morvah bogs and boulders of Zennor.

Everyone hates that section of the race. You can't get a rhythm going. It's up and down, ridiculously wet underfoot and relentless all the way to St Ives. If you don't know it, you can hit a real mental low in there. You feel like you've stopped and no matter how hard you've trained you're limited to 8 minute kilometres at points. Sure enough the bogs of Morvah take their toll on one of the race favourites, winner of the Cotswold 100, who drops shortly after I pass him somewhere in the thick of it.

Race Reports

I catch up with Dan just before the Gurnard's head and we run like a peloton for the duration, taking turns to pull from the front while the other plugs along behind. It's incredible how having someone to chat to can turn a real suffer fest into an extended comedy sketch. I felt like a chuckle brother as we navigated our way over and around boulders trying not to slip over or collide with one another for miles of mud and wet rock.

Just get to St Ives. Surely that's what everyone is thinking? The race is split in two by a checkpoint in the town offering all sorts of fruit, drinks, massages and encouragement from a team of incredible volunteers. If you've heard of the Arc then you've probably heard of the Arc Angels. The team of people that pitch in to help every year are something else. Each individual is there for the love of the sport, the community and to be part of something more than just running.

I, however, have my own crew in the form of my dad waiting for me with a change of shoes and socks in Porthmeor Carpark. This is a godsend and if you can do it, you must. I have run 29 miles in Hoka Evo Jawz by this point. This minimal shoe, with incredible grip has served me well but the hours of pounding them into the rocks have battered my feet into submission and I need something with a bit of cushion to get me through the unavoidable tarmac between St Ives and the Dunes of Doom. My dad is there like a bloody F1 pitstop, helping untie my laces and sending me on my way. What a hero.

I find Dan inside the Guildhall checkpoint atop a massage table being roughed up by Kate Skipper, infamous torturer of legs. We don't waste too much time and head back out through the town and onward to Carbis Bay. I've got a spring in my step from the fresh footwear and Dan's had his legs put back where they should be. Things are looking up. I'm also thrilled to be getting close to the dunes as it's where I train with my crew every Tuesday.

After St Ives we start passing some of the 100 milers who by this point have been 'out there' for 25+ hours, and their faces show it. Each time we exchange words of encouragement while trying not to look too fresh as we run past. It must be pretty tough if you know you're walking it in with 21 miles left to go and 150 runners are going to spring past you. It's then that Dan and I agree that 100 miles is just outrageous and we'll never do it. I wonder who will be the first to make a u-turn on that.

The road section seems to go on forever and the fresh footwear feeling wears off incredibly quickly. Finally, we reach the dunes and run the whole section to Godrevy at a good pace. The ground is easy on tired legs and I actually know where I'm going for once. Life

is good.

Too good it seems. Just as we stop with our crew chiefs in Godrevy car park for a watering, a runner passes us. We had been so confident that we had at least a mile between us but the tracker must have had a lag. No time to lose we take up the chase and by the time we reach Hell's Mouth we're back in front and pulling away. We drop the hammer for a couple of miles. No talking, just running until there's nothing but empty coastline in the rear view.

At this point we're in 5th and 6th, or joint 5th we had decided. It was clear that we were going to finish together so we now referred to our position as if we were one person. We get complacent again and we're caught by our friend from Godrevy just before dropping down into Portreath. It is the dropping down that's the problem. Dan's knees start to give him trouble on the downhills as both his IT bands stop working. He's in agony, although he masks it well and we carry on with our chuckle brother routine.

It's only about 3 or 4 miles from Portreath to the finish but that has to be some of the hardest running in the whole race. The descents are cruel on battered quads and the climbs consist of eroding steps made for actual giants. Just before we get to Porthtowan, about 1 mile from the finish, another runner comes past us. He must have been hunting our tail lights up and down Sally's Bottom. Surely that's it? Joint 7th is still ok, especially when your knees are barely even knees anymore. As we hit the streets of Porthtowan for the final half mile, Dan's family surprise him and it's all just a big old love in under the glow of the street lights. We're not done yet though. There's still an absolute monster of a hill to climb before we can stop moving our battered legs. Now, after 50 miles and 2.4kms of vertical gain, Dan tells me to push because someone is coming up behind us. No bloody way is someone coming past now, not in the last few hundred metres. We march up the steep track, past glow sticks and little yellow flags. It flattens out and we run like we haven't been able to in hours, through blue inflatable arches to our families and the finish. 10 hours and 31 minutes of aerobic jogging, quad destroying descents, soul destroying bogs, mind bending climbs and life affirming friendships later, we stop running.

It took two years of training and racing and qualifying to realise, I probably don't want to run 100 miles, not yet anyway. Sometimes the journey to what you think you want is all you actually need.

20 minutes later as we lie face down, side by side on massage tables, Dan and I start planning a track session on Perranporth beach, while wincing in pain from the fists in our calves. Running is weird.

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Tales from the Battlefield a.k.a. the Albi 24-Hour World Championships

Text by Sarah Cameron



I secured a place in the Open race, held alongside the World Championship race, which gave me the perfect vantage point to observe the best endurance runners in the world do battle on a 1.5k loop. Having never experienced an event like this before I was both fascinated and appalled by the utter carnage that I witnessed. In a regular road or trail race you are generally aware of the few people around you but are mostly running in your own bubble. In a long, lapped race like a 24-hour format you get to witness the full extent of everyone else's very public misery. There were few runners who I didn't see having a bad patch; it's very easy to gauge by suddenly starting to overtake someone who was effortlessly lapping you... or indeed by seeing them puking into a bin.

With the biggest field ever in a 24 hour World Championships of nearly 400 runners from 45 different countries, the convoluted circuit encompassing a tartan track and neighbouring football pitch was actually rather crowded. The faster runners were constantly having to weave in and out of traffic and it was impossible to take the 'racing line'. When fatigue set in, people were staggering and helplessly ricocheting off each other, like a bizarre game of zombie pinball. There were plentiful toilets but much horror was expressed at them being the French 'hole-in-the-ground' style. They suffered a lot of abuse but were kept spotlessly clean throughout, with a heroic army hosing them down and

topping up the paper and soap every hour.

Much has already been said about Camille Herron smashing her already lofty world record. She hit the 170k mark, a whopping 8k more than her previous record set a year ago. She was one of the bin-pukers too, which makes it even more impressive. She lapped me after just three tours of the loop and I knew she must have been in 'do or die' mode when I saw her down a glass of beer quite early on in the race. Team USA had more than its fair share of issues; UTMB winner Courtney Dauwalter ran conservatively from the start and was visibly limping after a couple of hours. She persevered with a limp/run strategy until the very end, with her brave score of 229k counting towards the USA's team gold medal. Gina Slaby had been flying until she stopped being able to eat and practically ground to a halt. She looked ridiculously fit, she was running beautifully, she has the pedigree, including breaking Ann Trason's 100 mile record in 2016, but if you can't get the fuel on board then you can't perform. She was soon joined by her husband Steve; true love is death-marching together for 6 hours and waiting whilst each other vomits. Steve had the greatest resurrection since Lazarus and got running again, but it was too late to pull back a huge number, so he ended up clocking 'just' 204k, nearly 50 kilometres shy of his PB. Pam Smith and Micah Morgan were both mega-consistent, with Morgan admitting she still had a lot to learn about 24 hour racing with it only being her third attempt. She was running as a reserve so her score didn't count for the team, even though it was the third highest by an American woman.

Germany's Nele Alder-Baerens ran 254 kilometres to take second place, which would be impressive in itself, but what makes the performance even more special is that Nele is both deaf and partially blind due to her premature birth. She is the world record holder over the 6-hour distance, with 85



kilometres. Just to put that into perspective, it is 85k at sub 3-hour marathon pace. It's basically slightly better than two 2:59 marathons back to back.

Another partially sighted athlete who competed was Irish runner Sinéad Kane. Sinéad has less than five per cent vision and as a result is in the visually impaired category for athletes with a disability. She requires a guide to run alongside her in races. She achieved the Irish standard and was selected to run for the team, but the IAU deemed her sighted guide to be 'outside assistance'. They overturned their decision just 3 days before the race so Sinead was allowed to compete for her country and her result of 185k counted towards Ireland's overall score in the team competition.

The individual men's race was closer than the women's, especially after Camille slipped down from the 2nd place overall that she had been maintaining for the first few hours. Around the halfway point, she almost caught men's race leader and eventual winner, Aleksandr Sorokin of Lithuania. In 2017 Sorokin became the first Lithuanian athlete to win the Spartathlon and 278.9 kilometres at Albi was a huge 24 hour PB for the 38-year old. The French crowd were disappointed that home favourite Eric Clavery was relegated to 4th place by Tamás Bódis of Hungary and the USA's Olivier Leblond who took individual silver and bronze. The top male runners often whizzed past me running in tight formation, constantly pushing the pace. Perhaps because there was more of a disparity between them, the female athletes generally ran solo.

Team GB had mixed fortunes; Jess Baker was impressive throughout and clocked up 227 kilometres, followed by Cat Simpson with 220 kilometres. Cat had looked really strong until she was slowed right down by the GI monster and turned visibly green. Wendy Whearity was the final points scorer achieving 217k by an extended fartlek session in which she was either 'flying or dying', with Ali Young not far behind. 2019 South Downs Way 100 champion Sarah Morwood looked uncomfortable from the start but kept courageously grinding it out, despite falling nearly 30 kilometres short of her previous best.

For the GB men, Paul Maskell and James Stewart were the highest points scorers with over 250 kms each. Dan Lawson



had been cruising until injury struck; his plan was to take it easy until the 20-hour mark and then overtake everyone who had blown up, but he never got to enjoy his final burst of speed because he was reduced to a hobble, and latterly had to be supported by teammate Michael Stocks who was walking it out himself. Despite the disappointing end to his race, Dan's score of 244k still counted towards the team result. Nathan Flear who won the Open race would have been right up there with 248k, so there's a good chance that he will be in a GB vest at the European Championships next year.

My personal favourite athletes were the Greek lady with a disability who just never stopped, the two older and larger Ukrainian women who doggedly walked from the start, the 57-year old German lady in the floral dress, the Dutch man in Jesus sandals, the whole Taiwanese team in flip-flops and the laid-back Cape Verde trio who looked as if they were out for a Sunday jog. I was less keen on the Japanese runner who was carrying a bicycle bell and dinging it at everyone so that they would move out of his path and the German guy who pushed one of the Open athletes out of the way because he felt he was entitled to use the toilet first. Some seemed to think it was acceptable to emit viscous gobs of spit without making sure they weren't going to directly hit anyone else and there were discarded cups and gel wrappers on the track, despite there being bins everywhere. I had to stop twice to remove spat-out date stones that had become wedged in the sole of my shoes.

In other observations, the amount of rubbish (especially plastic cups) generated was shocking, but only to be expected and it was dealt with almost continuously by a very slick team. The main aid station ran out of mint cordial, which was perhaps a surprise hit. I normally think it tastes like mouthwash but it was the perfect foil to sugary gels. They were also serving gems such as salty mashed potato, miso noodles and gingerbread. Team NZ had a disappointing day, perhaps deflated by the rugby score that was regularly being announced over the tannoy.

As my worst complaint is date stones in my Vaporflys then you might have guessed that my own race went smoothly, with few absolute highs or lows. I didn't get blisters but I did get a nappy rash that was so bad it bled, I didn't puke in a bin but I did retch every time I forced down yet another gel, I didn't run 270 kilometres but I did make it to a respectable 215.8. Thankfully I'm pleased enough with that to ensure I don't feel compelled to do another one. There is so much luck involved in this type of racing; perfect training can only get you so far and the death march can strike anyone at any time. I'm not sure I have the courage to keep slogging on like so many I saw despite considerably missing their goals. Dreams were made but more were dashed, and unlike shorter races it's impossible to put the demons to bed by entering another one the following month. In fact, the next World Championships isn't until 2021 as it is only held every two years. Perhaps it takes that long to forget about the pain, the nausea and the pervading stench of urine.

Trans Sahyadri 2019

Text by Peter Van Geit



I used offline Open Street Maps and contours to find my way through the steep mountains and dense jungles post the Northwest monsoon. A food ration was taken along the way in remote hamlets dotted across the Sahyadri where friendly farmers showered me with heart warming hospitality. During the initial 2 weeks I was running through monsoon rains which were delayed by a month this year.

I mapped the 200 forts in 4 trans routes and 10 distinct regions across the state of Maharashtra. The trans routes covered 50 forts connected through 500km of beautiful jungle trails which would be runnable. The remaining 150 forts were spread out over 2500 km which I would traverse region-wise on a motorcycle climbing up to each fort in between. At a rate of climbing 6 to 8 forts each day I would be able to complete my mission within 2 months returning home for Christmas. I set off during the last week of October and started running from Lonavala to Nasik along the Deccan ridge through remote jungle trails, climbing up to each fort along the way. In many places I was treated to mesmerizing views running above the clouds where the Deccan ridge drops down steeply 600m into the coastal valleys below.

After spending the entire summer in the India Himalayas crossing 120 high passes over 3500 km I was looking out for a suitable location for my next ultra journey. My eyes fell on the Sahyadri or Western Ghats, a mountain range that stretches over 1600 km along the Western coast of South India. In the state of Maharashtra these mountains are formed by ancient volcanoes giving rise to near-vertical rock formations. During the 16th century India faced frequent invasions by the Mughals who came to plunder the riches of the subcontinent. The Maratas, led by an ancient warrior king Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj, resisted these invaders by building 300+ forts across the Sahyadri. The forts were built on top of steep pinnacles rendering the huge armies of the Mughals ineffective with the Maratas waging a guerilla style war from these impregnable fortresses.

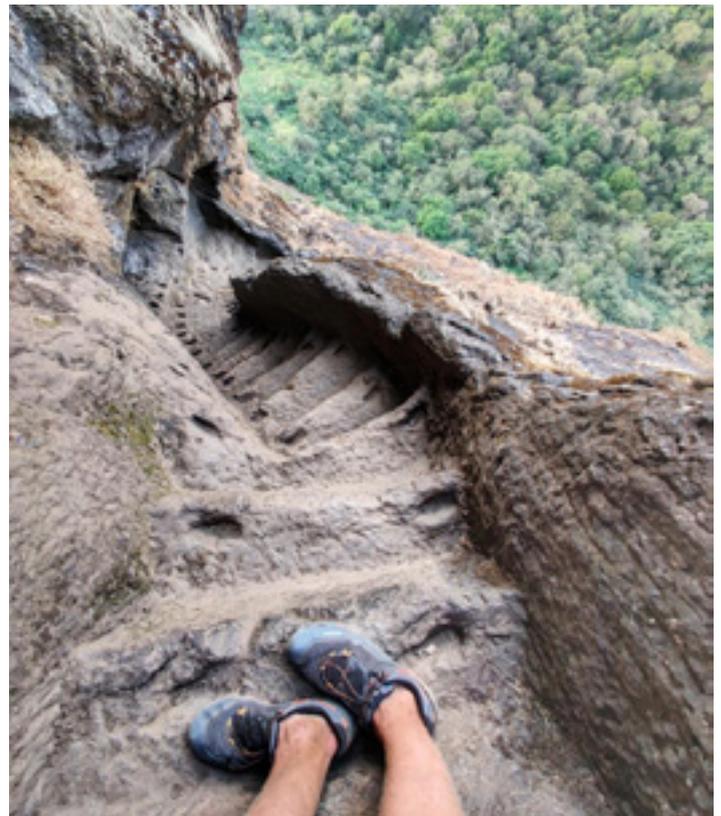
I spent a few weeks mapping around 200 forts spanning across 600km between Mumbai, Pune, Nasik and Satara. Most of the forts are located along the North-South ridge line where the Deccan plateau (800m) steeply drops down into the Konkan plains (200m). The mountains reach a maximum height of 1600 meters and forts are located in dense tropical forests with a rich biodiversity and wildlife. As usual I executed my journey in minimalist alpine style, self-supported, self-navigated (without local guides) and with minimal gear, carrying a 10L pack with a basic shelter.



While the connecting trails between forts have a fairly limited elevation gain, the final route to climb up to each fort would be very steep between 300 to 500 meters. The peaks on which these fortresses were built were carefully chosen based on their strategic location to overlook invading armies across ancient trade routes. To reach the top, one has to climb through near vertical sections along narrow rock cut steps crossing through defensive walls and fortified entry gates. On the top, each fort has large storage tanks cut out in the ancient volcanic basalt rock to store water, oil and food reserves for the local villagers to survive for months when under siege by invading troops surrounding the forts. Each fort would have multiple access routes to fight a guerilla war against the occupying forces.

Trail running between and climbing up these four century old fortresses was a unique combination of endurance and traveling back in time. Each fort has a unique history behind it, where epic battles had been fought which would define the future course of India, others were birth places, capitals and the final resting places from where Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj had been ruling his kingdom. Each of the 200 forts was distinctive in terms of remaining features found on top or the differing routes to climb up. Most of the forts had little left but ruins weathered down through 400 centuries of heavy monsoons and frequent destruction by invading armies. The defensive gates and walls were built using huge sized rocks some not much less than those of the pyramids of Egypt leaving one speechless on how they would have constructed these fortresses on steep pinnacles using manual labour centuries ago.

After running across the first 50 forts I borrowed a



motorcycle from a friend and started traversing the remaining 150 forts region-wise optimizing travel between the individual forts. Days were pretty long rising at dawn and climbing 6-8 forts every day spread over sometimes hundreds of kilometers apart connected by broken roads in the remote countryside. At the end of each day I would settle down in a small farming hamlet at the base of my next fort, sleeping in a temple or a school. Many times a kind villager would invite me into his home treating me as part of his family. A hot shower, sumptuous dinner fresh from the farm and a good night's rest would replenish the burned calories and ready me for the next day. In some homes my host insisted that I sleep in his bed while he would sleep on the floor next to me. Humanity is still intact in these remote places where people have not lost their souls to money and materialism.

In between the dense jungles in South Maharashtra around the Mahabaleshwar region finding the ancient route was more challenging. Centuries of monsoons and years of disuse had destroyed parts of these steep trails and covered them with dense vegetation. At times I felt completely lost but then, when pushing away the vegetation, I would discover the 400+ year old rock cut steps confirming that I was on the right path. In some places forts on opposite mountains were separated by large lakes in the valleys. To optimize travel time I packed up my small 10L pack in a dry bag and swam across some of these beautiful natural water features. In many places I came across wildlife including snakes and larger animals which usually fled as I was approaching them. Finding drinkable water was never a challenge given the presence of numerous streams, village

Journey Running



wells and water storage tanks on top of the forts. In some remote sections I slept on top of the forts and in jungles using a sleeping bag and lightweight bivy tent.

On some forts the rock cut steps along the steepest sections had been destroyed with explosives by invading forces (British, ...) to render them less defensive having faced stiff opposition and heavy casualties while trying to conquer the forts. The same sections now require technical gear and ropes to reach the top. During the monsoon months from June to September the entire Sahyadri are covered with a green carpet of lush vegetation which quickly turns to golden brown in the months after the monsoon. The prolonged rains cover the steep rocks with a slippery layer further complicating the climb up while exposed to hundreds of meters of vertical drop into the valley below. Majestic defensive gates along these steeper sections are built in an L-shape preventing any straight, forceful attack on the 20 feet high solid wooden entry gates. Attackers were exposed to arrows, rocks and burning oil from above while approaching these gates.

Further into my journey I covered some 50 forts along the Konkan coast North and South Mumbai built to defend the Maratha against invading fleets of the British, Portuguese and Dutch colonial forces. Some of these are built on small islands inside the sea protected by 50 feet high defensive walls built to survive attacks by enemy cannon fire. Unavailability or expense of renting fisherman's boats made me swim kilometers inside the sea to visit some of these forts which are still beautifully preserved after



being battered for centuries by sea waves. While traveling between these coastal forts on my motorcycle I came across some of the most idyllic beaches I had ever seen, white sands, crystal clear blue ocean waters bounded by thick forests of palm trees and lush green hills reaching up to the





coastline. Perfect night stays watching the bright stars and sleeping next to a campfire on the beach dreaming to the sound of the soothing waves.

As I progressed on my journey to travel throughout the ancient kingdom of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj, the news



quickly spread throughout the state of Maharashtra where people carry the legacy of their great king in their heart. Today he is still worshiped by most people for standing up for their freedom and fighting oppression. His bravery and strategic talent to fight off large armies of tens of thousands of Mughal warriors with a few hundreds of men still lives in



Journey Running

the imagination of the common man. Now suddenly they got to hear the news about a foreigner climbing 200 forts in just 2 months which is more than most could imagine doing in a lifetime. Soon news interviews, public talks and ceremonies followed across various cities in the state and within a short timespan 20 thousand new followers were tracking my journey on social media adding a totally new angle to my experience.

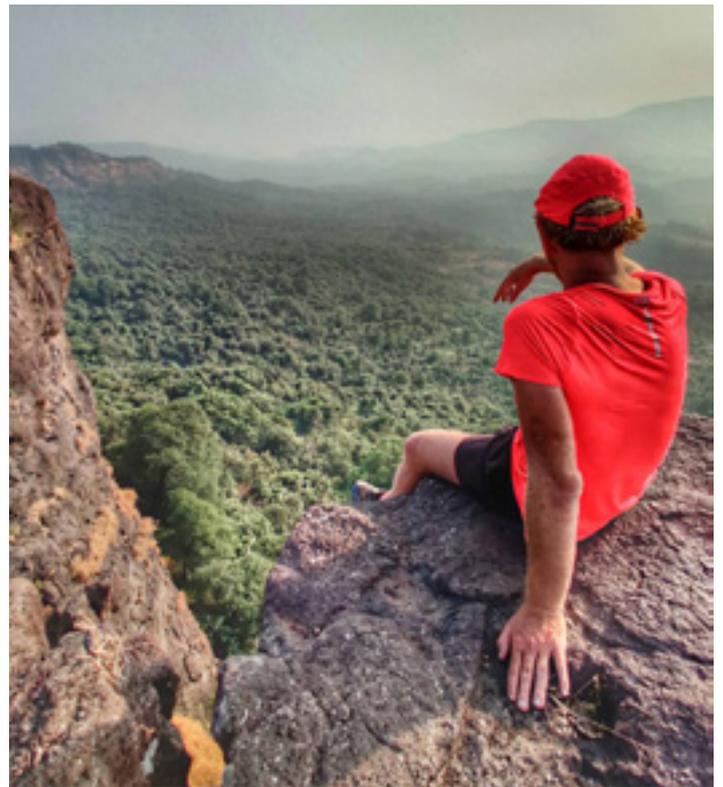
There are so many magical natural wonders all across the state but the local people flock only to the tourist destinations and forts. The beautiful Sahyadri and its rich legacy should inspire the young generation to fall in love with the outdoors. If the Sahyadri doesn't, then what else can save the youth from falling victim to screen addiction and running behind unquenchable thirst of owning materialistic pleasures.

Special thanks to Saini Krishamurthi, Kedar Joshi and Vikas Kaduskar who were instrumental in planning my journey.

More details at: ultrajourneys.org

Follow me: [instagram.com/petervangeit](https://www.instagram.com/petervangeit)

UW

An advertisement for shoe recycling. A hand is holding a colorful, knit sneaker against a background of a green field. The text is in large, bold, pink and white letters. A circular icon shows a shoe being recycled into a building. The website URL is at the bottom.

STOP!

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UNWANTED SHOES
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WE REHOME THEM
WE NEED THEM
WE WANT THEM

WWW.JUSTRUNLYSS.CO.UK/RECYCLE

Rundinavia – reviewed by Emily Adams

In this strange new world we find ourselves living in, one where our own adventures and races are being cancelled and future trips are in doubt due to a global pandemic, Rundinavia provided the perfect escapism read, enjoyed from the safety and comforts of home.

The book documents Sophie Rooney's attempt to become the first woman to run the length of Scandinavia, travelling through Norway, Sweden and Denmark. After attending a talk by the adventurer Aleks Kashefi, an inspired Sophie on impulse suggests that she should join him on his upcoming expedition. With very limited running experience and a self-confessed dislike for running, she faced a steep learning curve right from the off.

In the months leading up to the trip she took a crash course in ultra-running aiming to be as prepared as possible for the challenges of multiday running. With a background as an accomplished swimmer and kayaker with dreams of becoming an Olympian, Sophie no doubt had the mettle to take on what seemed a highly ambitious goal. With everything she needs for the trip packed into a backpack which she will carry, she sets off in Norway on this epic 3000km journey.

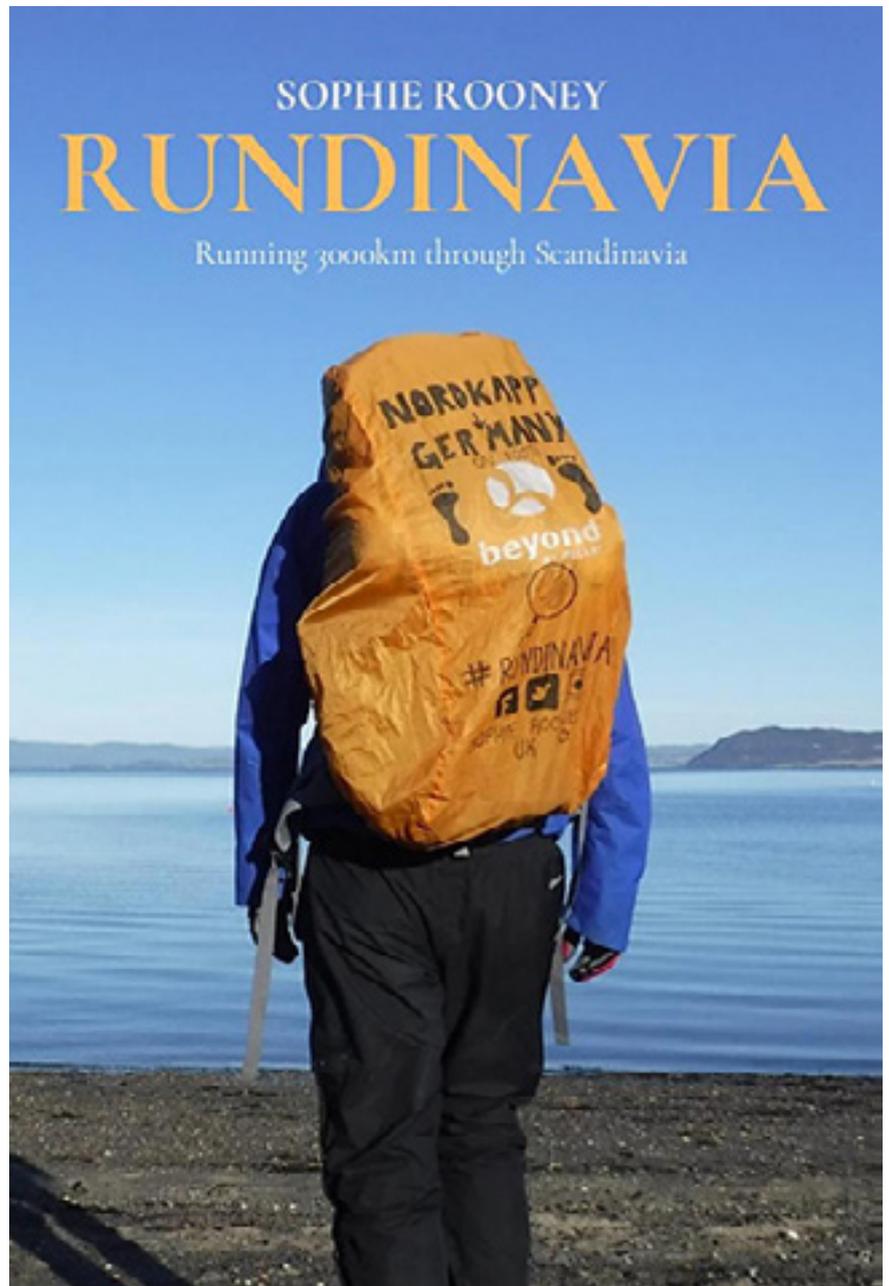
Initially she is accompanied by her running buddy Aleks, however she soon finds herself unexpectedly taking on a solo adventure which adds a new set of challenges. Facing her fears of bears and camping alone she is not deterred and embarks on the brave undertaking battling with challenging terrain, soreness, blisters, fatigue, freezing temperatures and an illness which momentarily leaves her Scandinavian dream hanging in the balance.

Along her journey she encounters the warmth of kind strangers, some just curious to know what she is doing, whilst others offer food and sometimes a hot shower and a bed in their own homes. Sophie provides an honest yet at times witty account of her experience documenting the emotional highs and lows, from the simple joy of finding coffee and cake on the trail to long days where the overnight camping spot never seems to get any closer.

Despite facing many challenges along the way, she proves that with the right attitude, you can achieve whatever it is you put your mind to. Sophie's story is one of personal growth and discovery, her trip may not have gone exactly the way she planned, she learns to adapt and put her own stamp on it.

When reading about these impressive journeys into the unknown, it can be easy to dismiss this as something unattainable due to not having the necessary experience. What this book demonstrates is that you don't need experience to start and experience is something gained through doing. This book will hopefully leave you with the desire and courage to take on your own challenges. Did she make it to the end, you'll have to read the book to find out!

UW



Running the UK 3 Peaks Challenge

By Tom Mountney

In October 2019 I completed the UK Three Peaks Challenge in what turned out to be the fastest known time (FKT) of 9 days, 11 hours and 39 minutes. I ran 455 miles with a total elevation of 45,000ft. I wouldn't consider myself to be an ultra-runner, but I've learnt a lot about what motivates me, and the processes involved in going the distance with an event of this scale.



Running on Empty Event details

Rewind one year, I was trying to sleep on the floor next to my wife's hospital bed, following one of several miscarriages. Being from a military background and experiencing the rigours and hardships that come with that, I saw myself as a resilient person. I had been blindsided by the loss of someone who I had never met, and I was shattered. A quarter of all pregnancies end in some form of baby loss, that's a staggering statistic. Why is something so common such a taboo? Having seen what my wife went through, I felt compelled to raise some awareness of the issue.

I thought long and hard about what I could do to properly represent the scale of the challenge which couples in our position face. Running is something which we've all tried, and the Three Peaks Challenge is something people can relate to but could I combine them? Only three people (to my knowledge) had ran the entire Three Peaks Challenge at that time, and for good reason. The terrain, elements, dangerous roads, injury, and punishing routine had put a stop to most previous attempts.

My research suggested that I had no hope of finishing this monster, but I hoped that attempting it would enable me to raise some money and awareness for my chosen charities.

Before I could go public, I needed to build my confidence up. I didn't have a game plan, I just began running little and often, initially with my dog. I'd run when I was tired, and in the dark, and in the rain, the distances slowly grew along with my experience. Some of those early runs were nasty, I was so unprepared. I was a fit bloke, but I needed to learn a lot of tough lessons about pace, nutrition and equipment. Maybe I should have read more magazines like this beforehand! I probably should have had a proper training plan too, I'm away a lot with work and I just couldn't find enough time to make it work for me.

Those early days made me realise that I needed to improve my mental strength as much as my physical strength. As cliché as this sounds, it's a head game and not a leg game. So I needed to tick off some mental milestones. I completed the "Race to the Tower" which was 2 marathons over 2 days, the first multiday tick and then my first 30-mile race, tick. Each race gave me a point of reference to use next time I was doubting my ability. I knew that to complete the Three Peaks in the time I had available, I needed to run up to 50 miles a day, so I entered The Brecon50 Ultra. It sounds strange to say now, but I needed this race to be as wet and as hilly as possible. I needed to go to 'the dark place' and come through unscathed to give me the

At the Brecon 50 Ultra startline with Pete. Photo by Tom Mountney



confidence I needed. The weather gods answered and we were hit by a storm which was severe enough for the 100-mile event to be cancelled halfway through. It was a battle, even approaching dangerous at times, it was what I needed and my kit and nutrition worked. I could go public at last, with the confidence that this was no longer a shot in the dark, it was now just a mere gamble!

Fast forward to late September and I found myself looking up at Ben Nevis from the startline on a dark, wet morning with a plucky support crew, a van, and some loyal friends who had come to join me for a stage or two here and there. Why was I doing this again? I'd spent months preparing, now I just had to do it and I was terrified! I'd worked out that at that time of year, there were roughly 12 hours of daylight, midge season had ended, and the temperatures were mild but dropping. My plan was to run for 12 hours a day, dawn until dusk, with 15 minute breaks here and there. I'd split the route into 10 stages, I had up to 14 days to complete the route. My mantra was that if it was daylight, I wanted to be on the road.

Day 1-3

As the clock started and I stepped off from the visitor centre on day 1, I was wracked with nerves, the previous few days had been a rush, and I felt totally overwhelmed and unrested. What could I do about it now? I attacked Ben Nevis, flanked by a small group of friends to make sure I got up and down in the clag. This was the freshest I would be so I needed to make today count. We made it up and down Ben Nevis in under 3 hours. Following a quick pit stop, it was onto the unforgiving West Highland Way (WHW) and the on/off sideways rain soon began. I tried to take in the view as I worked my way through the striking landscape. It helped to take my mind off the churn of thoughts in my head, was this too fast? Am I eating properly? Then onto Rannoch Moor and its endless bogs. The old stagecoach road was cobbled and slippery underfoot, I'd take it over a bog any day. The rain was

constant at this point, I knew these were the good times, I had fresh legs and amazing scenery, I should be grateful. I reached the end of stage 1 with daylight in hand, so I pushed onto the Green Welly stop at Tyndrum. Ben Nevis and just under 55 miles of the West Highland Way were now behind me.

Day 2 began safe in the knowledge that I was 6 miles ahead of schedule, a position that I wanted to stay in. My body felt reasonable but could I repeat it? I still wasn't sure if I could. The WHW provided the distraction which I needed and I was instantly hypnotized by the breathtaking scenery. I soon found myself at Loch Lomond with my friend Rich who had joined me for the WHW. Loch Lomond was the biggest logistical challenge for us because we weren't sure how long it would take, this made resupply from the support vehicle quite difficult. The lack of phone signal and road access on the eastern shore compounded the problem, so we just planned to cover the rocky shoreline at a slow walking pace and carried as much water as we could. Mercifully, our timings were bang on. We were scrambling over rocks for much of the time at little more than walking pace, we stopped frequently to help northbound walkers with their rucksacks as they clambered over obstacles. It was the only way to pass on the narrow single track! That said, day two was another successful day and we finished in one piece, ahead of schedule on the outskirts of Drymen.



Loch Lomond. Photo by Richard Manning

Day three was a cause for celebration, I'd proved to myself that I could run 50 miles (ish) on consecutive days and all I had to do was repeat it again...and again. However, despite being only a few hours from the end of the WHW and Glasgow, fatigue was starting to show. Any multiday event requires a bedding in phase where the body fights against you, before eventually succumbing to your insane wishes. It's different for everyone, but day three is when I woke up feeling like I'd been in the ring with Mike Tyson. The WHW delivered again, and the last 10 miles flew by. I left Rich at the end of the WHW in Milngavie, I was pleased to have made it this far. Running through Glasgow was tough for many reasons, the constant stop start of crossing roads and the persistent danger of traffic was tiring. I was pleased to make it to Kirkmuirhill that night with over 150 miles in the bag and ahead of schedule.

Ben Nevis Summit with Donny. Photo by Tom Mountney



Race Reports



Day 3 fatigue. Photo by Tom Mountney

Day 4-6

I was beginning to be in pain at night, I think I was developing an increasing calorie deficit. Mercifully, the body had stopped resisting in the daytime while running, and I began to settle into it. The timing was perfect because the route for the next day or so was entirely along roads, specifically one which shadowed the A/M74 and M6 to Moffat and Carlisle. These were some of the toughest times for me, there was no scenery, and very few landmarks or distractions (apart from a good friend who tracked me down in the middle of nowhere dressed as Forrest Gump in a Kilt and ran a half marathon with me!) I made huge gains in distance over these days, but my mental process had to change. My entire focus became the next junction, or rest stop; whatever it took to grind out the big miles. This was interspersed with occasional pant wetting fear as a bored lorry driver would spot me at the last minute. I couldn't blame them, I didn't want to be there and they were probably as bored as I was.

These few days were a blur of eat, sleep, run, repeat. Routine was king and it was relentless, but vital. My support crew kept my world turning as they intuitively began to know what I needed even if it wasn't what I always wanted. To cross into England at Gretna Green and see the Lake District on the horizon was just the tonic I needed to



With Forrest Gump on the road to Moffat. Photo by Mark Hamer

motivate me. I approached Seathwaite on the northern side of Scafell Pike almost half a day ahead of schedule. I'd even had time (and the cheek) to ask for a Radio interview with BBC Carlisle as I ran past their studios. Staggeringly they said yes, and I found myself live on air shortly after.



Gretna Green. Photo by Mark Hamer

I had always stressed to my support crew, the importance spotting when I was pushing too hard, I knew I was at risk of making bad decisions given how fatigued I was becoming. I arrived at Scafell Pike with enough daylight in hand to climb it that day. To wait until the next morning would mean that I would lose the lead I had worked so

hard to build. I had already run 40 miles that day, and there was a bad weather forecast on the high ground. I reluctantly agreed that pressing on was a bad idea, the consolation was that I had a beer, a burger and an early night.

Day 7-9

I had to get Scafell Pike out of the way so I began climbing in darkness with another friend. I knew I had made the right decision the day before, I was annoyed I had lost my lead with some of the longest days to come. This was a 40+ mile day so I knew the going would be slow until I had Scafell behind me. It was icy cold, and clear at the summit as the sun began to rise. The view was dramatic and it offered a brief respite to look at what my team and I had achieved. Despite the early finish the day before, I realised I was ahead of the existing record, maybe I could break it? Should I try? As I ran down Scafell Pike into Langdale Fell, my earlier frustrations evaporated as I slipped and stumbled my way down the icy rocks. Had I tried this the previous evening on my own, I'd have certainly hurt myself. Knowing I had broken the back of the Lake District was a great feeling as I finished that day in Warton, Lancashire. I was certainly slower now, but I was in one piece. I managed to find my good friend Vicki at Sports Recovery Kendal who took me apart and put me back together on the massage table, which worked wonders.

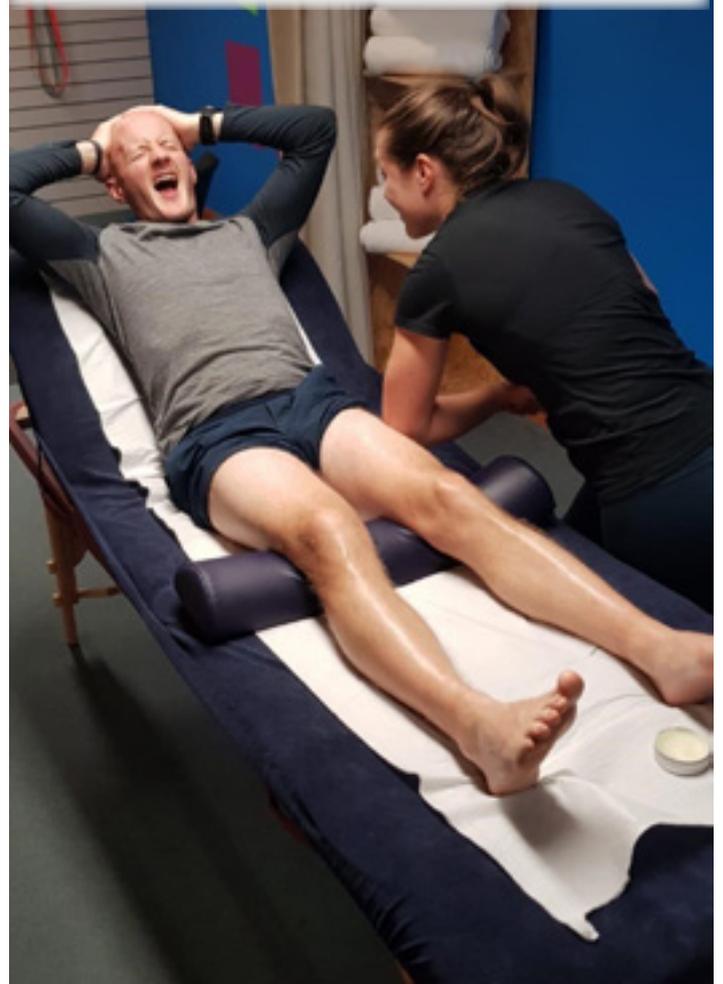
Scafell Pike summit. Photo by Tom Mountney



Langdale Fell. Photo by Elliot Reader



Seathwaite with Elliot, and with Vicki at Sports Recovery Kendal. Photos by Craig Cunningham



Race Reports

Day eight came with some unexpected challenges. I had a day of flat easy miles along lanes and tow paths with my good friend Jake who's an accomplished ultra-distance runner, I learned a lot from him. My spirits were low at the start of the day as I had nothing to focus on. The previous couple of days were geared to getting to Scafell Pike, now it was a distant memory, my next target of Snowdon seemed all that further away. I'd shaken it off by late morning and pressed on as I focused on Jake's heels ahead of me, I really enjoyed the flat ground and we ran 52 miles that day finishing in Burscough, Merseyside.

The following day, Jake and I raced towards the Welsh border with the bit between our teeth. We had to negotiate Liverpool first and we almost missed the Mersey Ferry having run a 6-minute mile to make it to the dock. Where did I find the energy to do that? This was definitely a head game and not a leg game! Despite that, I was starting to feel the strain, and a couple of repetitive strain injuries started to appear in my lower leg. I desperately tried not to overcompensate and cause an injury elsewhere. Although this was hugely annoying, I'd actually been very lucky having avoided injury up to this point, and escaping any blisters thanks to my Injinji socks.



Frozen Pea stop. Photo by Sam Tittcombe

Nutritionally, I was in my stride and felt alert and hydrated. I've never liked gels so I was finding that salty boiled new potatoes and regular glasses of milk were becoming my snacks of choice at rest stops, along with some Tailwind in my water bottles. We crossed the Welsh border and picked up some supporters who ran the last 13 miles with us to the village of Llandyfnog.



Rich and Chris join Jake and I at the Welsh border. Photo by Sam Tittcombe



Liverpool. Photo by Sam Tittcombe

Day Ten

I awoke at 3am on the final day, I needed to climb Snowdon in daylight as there was a bad weather forecast after dusk. Plus, I didn't want my heavily pregnant wife to sit in the cold and dark at the finish line. I'd mentally prepared for each stage but when it came to the last day, I'd assumed that I'd get it done no matter what. That's what I was doing, it doesn't mean I liked it. Jake and I spent hours with nothing to see but the beam of our head torches as the Welsh hills started to take their toll on our legs. We both had leg injuries at this point, I needed an emergency bag of frozen peas at the rest stops to ease the pain. This may have been the final day but the finish seemed as far away as ever. At one point we lost the path in the dark and had to Leopard crawl under some gauze bushes along a rabbit run to get back on track, it was still only 5am. There was not much conversation that morning.



The beginning of day 10 with Jake, These were forced smiles. Photo by Sam Tittcombe

Snowdon from Pen-Y-Pass. Photo by Richard White



As the sun rose, the endless grassy hills gave way to the scree slopes of Snowdonia. We were on the road from Betws -Y- Coed To Pen-Y-Pass flanked by more friends who'd joined me for the last day. Apart from one near miss with a hot headed driver at rush hour, life was good as we battled the rain and started the ascent to Pen-Y-Pass. From there we stormed Snowdon in the driving rain, nothing was going to stop me. I crossed the finish line back at the Pen-Y-Pass car park and stopped my watch. I'd finished! I had wondered what that moment would feel like for weeks, having been so focused, I'd compartmentalised everything to the point that it just felt like another rest stop. I was happy but almost numb to it all. It took a beer, some sleep and a few days for what I had achieved to sink in.

So what did I learn? Well, Ultra-distance running can teach us a lot about life. Patience is often key in running as it is in life; if one foot in front of the other is all you can manage, so be it, you will get there in the end. I also overcame something which I didn't think was possible because I developed the right mindset. We raised over £16,500 for The Royal Air Force Benevolent Fund and Tommy's, the baby charity, and even set a FKT in the process. A little over a year ago, I would have never thought I'd have been on such a wonderful, testing, life changing adventure as this. I'm not sure what my next running challenge will be, for now I am pleased to finally be tackling the challenge of fatherhood.

Race Reports

Snowdon summit. Photo by Donny Walker



Pen-Y-Pass and the finish line. Photo by Anna Mountney



Tom Mountney. Photo by Paul Couch



UW

An advertisement for the GB ULTRAS SHOP. It features three black tank tops with a Union Jack design and the text "GB ULTRAS" and "WWW.GBULTRAS.COM". In the center is a black hoodie with "GB ULTRAS" on the chest. At the bottom are two baseball caps, one black and one grey, both with "GB ULTRAS" on the front. The text "GB ULTRAS SHOP" is prominently displayed in the center.



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5th Run Across Taiwan Nonstop 246 km on the road from Taichung Harbor to Hualien

April 13-14, 2019

Text and photos by Edit Bércecs

The race

Run Across Taiwan (RAT) is much more than an international athletic feat. It offers three activities in one: running, sightseeing and charity.

CUMA and MND/ALS

The Chinese Taipei Ultra-marathon Association (CUMA) has several years of cooperating with the Taiwan Motor Neuron Disease Foundation. Their relationship does not only mean fundraising for the treatment of those unfortunate patients who lose their ability to walk and sometimes even to talk, it also reminds us runners of how fortunate we are to be able to walk and talk without difficulty. The newly elected president of the Taiwan Motor Neuron Disease Association reaches out and touches the hearts of all involved in the ultramarathon events organized by the CTPE Ultra-marathon Association.

In the first edition of RAT the



weather conditions allowed the patients to follow the race and cheer on the runners along the road. This Year The President of the association wasn't trusted with handling the starting gun and the presentation of the awards on the podium. This year's RAT raised a respectable amount of donations for the cause.

The participants

The Fifth Edition of Run Across Taiwan (RAT) started from Taichung Harbor at dusk on Friday, April 12.

Besides local Taiwanese runners, international athletes from Hong Kong, China, Malaysia and Japan toed the starting line.

Course and equipment

The scenic course between Taichung and Hualien passes by Taiwan's most popular tourist destinations such as Qingjing Farm, Puli, and Taroko National Park. Moreover, it also tests the runners stamina via the elevation gain of over 9000 meters (cc. 30,000ft) up to altitudes of over 300 meters and a 46 hour cut-off time. Mandatory Race gear is not confined to shorts and shoes, but also includes a dough jacket, flashlights, and a helmet on the last leg of the course.

Aid stations and the weather

Well stocked aid stations, staffed by local running clubs cheered on the runners throughout the course, regardless of rain, sunshine, daylight, foggy weather or night.

RD and racemascot

Race director Frank Kuo is not





only an excellent organiser, he also has a good sense of humor. Due to his creativity, this year's oldest participant was a mythical Chinese Character. His mascot was carried by a relay of experienced marathon runners throughout the way.

Language Services

Considering the language needs of the event, it is very considerate of the organisers to label everything bilingually in Chinese and English. In addition, Japanese runners were provided with a personalised real-time Japanese language service if needed. Mr. KuoJa was ready to interpret questions or information throughout the 46 hours of the race. In addition, most volunteers could speak English fluently.

Chin-TsaiChen going uphill

The finish line

The finish line experience of RAT is a show of its own kind. RAT uses three different kinds of finishing tapes: winner, best smile etc. In addition, the finishers are always welcomed by two local beauties dressed in traditional clothing.

The food and culture

After finishing, all hungry and exhausted runners could choose from a selection of local culinary masterpieces. The local food experience was enriched by the music of local aboriginal singers in the last two hours leading to the cut-off time.

First to finish

Victory in such a race presupposes hard physical work, mental strength and experience. Nomoto had them all. The Japanese lead the field from start to finish in a record winning time of 28:27:37. The former course record (30 hours 01 minute and

Race Reports



Race Reports



45 seconds) was held by Takayoshi Shigemi. Nomoto Was Followed By Kai-Pong Law from Hong Kong and Taiwan's Ting-Jiu Kang.

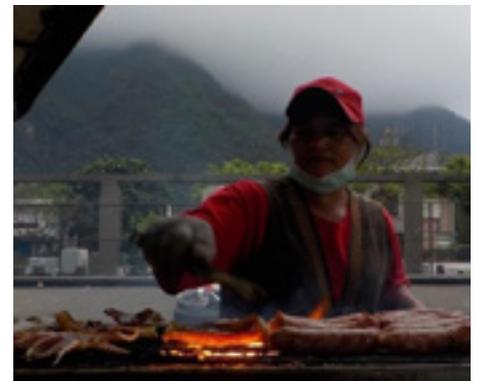
The ladies race was won by Wai-HanLau from Hong Kong in a time of 36 hours 19 minutes and 5 seconds, followed by Taiwan's Wen-Hsuan Hsiang, and Chau-MeiLeung from Hong Kong.

RAT also offers shorter sub-events such as 55 km, 110km and a 165km, starting at Qingjing Farm and Puli.

Run Across Taiwan is one of the numerous events organized by the Chinese Taipei Ultra-marathon Association. If you have run across America, Australia or Europe, Run Across Taiwan is a good start for your Asian adventure running experience.

Official race website for: [Run Across Taiwan](#)

UW



Ice Ultra 2020 - My Race

By Rachel Gorajala Photos by [Mikkel Beisner](#) and [Beyond the Ultimate Race Series](#)



This race was the culmination of a couple of year's worth of dreaming, saving, training, and researching, for me. I had wanted to do an 'ice' multi stage event, and this came up. What a stroke of luck it was this race. Five stages in Northern Sweden, within the Arctic circle : geographically close enough to fit in around work and family, extreme enough to capture my imagination and excitement.

These are the pertinent parts I recall from each beautiful, wonderful day. My aim at the outset was to complete, I came 28th out of 29 finishers and completed the long course, not fast, but I was ecstatic to get to the end. I developed ligament swelling in my ankles towards the end of the course due to the uneven terrain, and my energy levels started to sap but I got there, in my own time, and thankfully within the race time limits.

I would not want to change a single thing about my race. This event was a trip into Narnia like country, into

solitude and companionship, into vast stunning vistas. It felt bigger than I hoped for, and I am hugely proud to have taken part. The Beyond the Ultimate team were a fun, lovely, supportive group. They aimed to try and help each competitor to the end and more impressive to me, they will

plant a tree for each competitor, to try and offset the environmental damage caused by the flights. Brilliant.

Stage one (Kungsleden, 50 km)

A kind of breaking in day. I was relieved the race had begun, after all





these months of planning and fretting. A good flat road section, then a frozen lake, followed by forest and a hill. Overwhelmed by the beauty of the area, giddy to be part of the race and getting used to my sustainable race pace (not fast, unfortunately), bag still packed full and weighing heavy. Finding my comfort area near the back of the race, trying out my crazy snow shoes, they will do. Chatting with other runners, playing silly games, relishing the views, loving this, lapping it up.

Tea lights placed on the downwards run into the night camp created a magical feel. We slept in remote log cabins, eating well, feeling good.

Stage two (Kabla, 44km)

Mountain day, incorporating a climb up Mount Kabla - 700 meters.



I woke up feeling fabulous. Hot cereal and a cold start at the race line. Off we set. Flat lake, forest. Refuel at the checkpoint before the big one, before the climb. Each checkpoint manned by at least one medic and a local Sami, full of concern for you, do you need assistance? Go. Grind it out. Keep plodding up. Runners in the distance, runners behind, I feel safe. Nearly there, false summit, keep going.

I reached the top, what a reward, the lunar landscape can be seen for miles. Incredible. Next checkpoint, a frozen Mars bar, so we melted it in hot water with a coffee sachet, to make the best hot chocolate drink you've ever had. Calories down, off again. I caught up with a runner in front, comfortably into camp. We stayed in cabins on a camping ground, proper toilets, hot water... luxury. Food and then I crashed out.

Stage three (the lakes, 42km)

Hot cereal and coffee, off we go, I'm feeling good again. Through a flat forest path, laughing with the other runners. My bag weighs less as I make my way through some meals and coffee sachets.

We hit the lakes after the next checkpoint. I absolutely adored this section. We were warned about the mundanity of the surroundings but to me it was delightful. Clear sunshine, sparkling light as far as the eye could see. Flat, slightly uneven underfoot. I just continued, putting the world to rights in my head, sorting through work and family issues, making decisions I normally have no time to address. Checkpoint three, another melted-mars-bar hot chocolate. Still going. Watching the light change across the lake, the Arctic dusk set in. Watching team members occasionally pass on skidoo, waving to check that everything is OK. Hearing some shouts from the race director and medic at the finish line, I'm sure they were laughing as I fell over yet again on the ice. Running perfection, I just could not ask for more in life. Staying on a remote island overnight, hot food, a skidoo ride to the cabin. Trying to keep the wood stove burning overnight to keep warm. It was pure fun and adventure.

Stage four (Sami stage, 64km)

I had been dreading this stage all week, the long stage. Named after the Sami, the reindeer herding inhabitants indigenous to the area. Without them, the race would not be logistically possible.

I'm beginning to feel fatigue now, my ankles are starting to become sore. I found spicy noodles in the cabin which we all devoured for breakfast, a welcome break from cereal. Down to the start line. The day immediately had a more pressured race feel, we had to reach a 50k checkpoint before a certain time, in order to continue and record a race finishing position.

Race Reports

Everyone is aware of this, not quite so much laughter today.

We left earlier, with the most magnificent sunrise stretching across the entire lake. Flat terrain, a frozen lake, then forest paths. I spent the time by myself, just intent on trying to move. Checkpoint, drink, painkillers, continue. Checkpoint, food, painkillers, continue. I started to relax about four o'clock in the afternoon, when I realised I still had time to make the cut-off. Plus, a checkpoint with an insane ice throne carved by the Sami, to sit in and giggle for a moment, it just made me smile so much.

I reached the 50 km checkpoint, and was told I could continue, laughing with relief. Only 14 km to go, I've nailed it, I thought. First 8km, no problem, I'm flying. I didn't even stop to rest at the final checkpoint. Up a forest path, continue. Then... I just lost it for about half an hour. Completely dark apart from my head torch, my mind playing tricks. I was massively tired, what if I stopped moving, how long before the team realises and rescues me? I tried to eat, I couldn't remember where my snacks



were, too dark and cold to search. I take painkillers but my water bottle is completely frozen. Oh I am stupid. Keep moving, keep moving, keep moving. Do not panic, you are being tracked. Singing David Bowie songs to try and keep going, what exactly are the words to Space Oddity?

After what felt like forever, the race director drove past. I could not manage a giddy wave back, just a fatalistic nod. Keep going, keep going.

Finally lights ahead, please, please, please be at the night camp. Voices, carefree. My own personal drama

over, all OK. Up a small incline, the race director at the finish, you OK? Turn off your head torch, and there, the first showing of the northern lights that I'd seen all week. My word, what a complete swing of emotions, despair and tiredness, to complete elation at seeing the lights and finishing. This is a true, vivid endurance event.

Final stage (the sprint, 15km)

I was unable to eat last night after the long, long, long stage. Woke up, pleased to remember where my food and last coffee sachets were. Relieved also to find that at least I could move, could I undertake the last day?

The sprint stage? No sprinting for me: but a good race going at the front.

Off we go, after group photos at the Arctic circle sign. Back across a frozen Lake, a forest and a hill just to remind us that this is no easy race. Last checkpoint, I will miss the banter with the team. Through more Narnia land. Packs of husky dogs across the lake and reindeer across the forest path, into a small town, the finish line in sight.

I am so happy, thrilled, relieved, that for a while I cannot really speak much. On top of the world to finish, we all are.

Unforgettable.

UW



Romania – the best kept secret of trail running?

By Alecsa Stewart

Photos by Scotty Hawker and Alecsa Stewart



What do two of the top 4 male finishers at the 106-mile Ultra Trail du Mont Blanc 2019 have in common with last year's female European Skyrunning Champion, and the male runner-up of UTMB 2018?

They all trained on Transylvanian trails in Romania. Could this have been the secret ingredient to their success?

New Zealand-born Scotty Hawker (Vibram and Camelbak) and Salomon athlete Tom Owens placed third and fourth, respectively, at the 2019 edition of the UTMB. They had each got their "Romanian baptism" on the trails of [RetezatSkyRace](#) – a festival of mountain races with steep and technical terrain which tested their skills ahead of the more manicured

Alpine paths around Chamonix.

Romania encircles the Carpathian mountain chain, which runs through the country like an inverted L-shape from north to west and carves out the Transylvanian plateau in the middle. Within these mountains, you can find incredible diversity of terrain and landscape in the various smaller ranges described below. They are all covered in virgin forests (Romania has the second-largest surface of virgin forests in Europe, after Russia) and are home to brown bears, wolves and lynxes. You're more likely to encounter a brown bear than a vampire, but in general, the trails are safe, but also very challenging, climbing close to 2,550m at their highest. Once rich in iron, gold and silver, today the Carpathians are a source of mineral

waters, impressive volcanic lakes, caves, and undiscovered natural beauty.

When Tom and Scotty were approached by the RetezatSkyRace organisation to race in Romania, they both used the opportunity to run on some of the best mountain trails in the Carpathians. From winning the 28-km Custura race, with 2,300 m of ascent, in 2018, Tom Owens then tackled the UTMB in 2019 as his first 100-miler and finished in an impressive fourth place.

As for Scotty Hawker, 2019 was the year he finished third both at Custura and at UTMB, as well as completing some impressive summit-bagging during his Romanian trip.

What makes Romania such a great trail running destination, and a good training ground for ultra-running success?

Let's first have a look at some of the Romanian athletes that have been hitting the news headlines after finding global success while training in their home country.

Altra Running athlete Robert Hajnal placed second at UTMB 2018. The former Romanian army officer and now full-time ultrarunner thinks success is a combination of mental and physical preparation. He spent his first years in competitive running winning mountain races up to marathon distance. When he saw a flyer for a 90 km mountain race, he initially thought it was a joke. However, he was up to the challenge and went on to run the [Marathon 7500](#) (90 km with 7500 m of ascent) and win the race three times in a row. He then moved on to 100 km and the inevitable attempt at conquering 100-mile races, and specifically the most prestigious one in the world – the UTMB.



Robert runs to see the world and didn't quite take training as seriously as you might imagine to begin with. In fact, he spent a whole summer travelling through Europe with an Interrail Pass, getting off the train to run 20 or so km in every big city, and hopping back on. He then got back to Romania, entered the 100 km Ciucas X3 and won it in his first attempt, making him realise that he had a talent and ability to do well in mountain ultras.

While Romania offered numerous places to hone his mountain running skills, Robert wanted to compete against the best in the world, so he decided that he needed to enter international competitions to keep challenging himself.

However, he didn't want to enter just any ultra – but the most prestigious

one he could find. That's how his research took him to the UTMB. He likes to recall how he first asked on a Facebook group, what he would need to get into the top 10, only to be ridiculed and told he wouldn't stand a chance. He didn't let this deter him. He trained hard from his base in the picturesque town of Brasov in the Carpathian Mountains. He used more technical terrain on the ridges of Piatra Craiului, refining his technique as he prepared to attack the 2015 100-km CCC. Finishing 8th man, 9 minutes behind Pau Capell, who was the only one there younger than him, gave him the impetus to carry on with structured training for the ultimate success he would have in 2018 where he finished in an unexpected second place.

Why aren't there more successful

Romanian ultra-runners? Robert thinks it's because a lot of strong runners simply don't race abroad as much as they could, so they're not visible enough. For him, racing abroad is all about travelling and getting to pit himself against the best runners out there.

Not just a breeding ground for ultrarunning success, Romania has also recently had excellent results in the Skyrunning Federation circuit with ladies' champion Denisa Dragomir. Having won the Zacuskyrace in Italy in 2019, she set a new course record for the 27 km route with 2650m of ascent. She then won the European Skyrunning Championships at the International VeiaSkyrace, also in Italy (31 km with 2600 m of ascent).

These gruelling, steep and technical races don't fluster Denisa, who mixes training on the track with challenging ridge runs in the Carpathians, refining her steep climbing and technical descents.

Mountain running is something Denisa discovered through natural progression from track racing. She excelled at steeplechase and slowly transitioned into national and international mountain running. Her first notable success came at the 2014 RetezatSkyRace – the same rite-of-passage race that Robert Hajnal won before her, and that welcomed Tom Owens and Scotty Hawker. Afterwards, races in Italy and Switzerland followed, with subsequent triumphs. All led to a spectacular 2019 where she won no less than seven international races.

While Denisa doesn't envisage launching into ultrarunning just yet, her mountain running performances shed yet more light on how Romanian mountains provide a fantastic training ground.

So, where to run in Romania to make the most of the variety of terrain and unspoiled trails?

Robert and Denisa both recommend

the Retezat Mountains. This mountain range – whose Romanian name appropriately means “serrated” – extend skywards like a vampire’s fangs to the west of the more touristic Bucegi range. Home to glacial lakes and over a third of all of Romania’s flora species, this is a great running destination. You’ll have your pick of technical rocky climbs and rewarding routes starting from the CheileButii area where the National Park begins (c. 360 km from Bucharest, or 280 km from Timisoara).

If you’re looking for more easily runnable trails, however, you don’t have to go far from Romania’s capital, Bucharest. A 1 ½ hour train ride away, or 2 hours by car, you arrive in the quaint ski resort of Sinaia. A beautiful town dominated by the 19th century Peles Castle, Sinaia is a popular downhill skiing destination in winter, and an ideal HQ for forays into the Bucegi massif. Here you’ll find runnable trails at above 2000 m altitude, accessible by ski lifts or straight from town if you’re happy to run up. You can also pop over to Busteni – a nearby town – and start off on challenging trails from there. Climbing to 2,505 m to the top of Omu Peak above Busteni is an especially rewarding route, as you pass the wind-carved rocks showing the Sphinx and the Old Women – some of the best local attractions.

For a really technical, demanding run involving via ferrata and vertigo-inducing ridges, you’re about an hour’s drive away from the starting point to one of Romania’s most famous treks in Piatra Craiului. Starting from Plaiul Foi cabin you ascend via the “Chains” (La Lanturi). All routes are well way-marked and the tourist offices can assist with maps, and you can find a lot of information online too.

Our pick of Romanian skyrunning and ultra-races

- RetezatSkyrace : the short but challenging route of the Custura race covers 28 km of which 9 are on technical alpine ridges,



featuring steep climbs and descents too.

- Transylvania 100 : run 100 km starting from just underneath Bran Castle (also known as Dracula’s castle but in reality an old frontier castle with a rich history overlooking the passageways between the medieval principalities of Transylvania and Wallachia). Single track trails, high-altitude scenic lakes and windswept plateaus with beautiful views await.
- Ciucas X3 : Offering a half-marathon, marathon and 108-km ultra-race, Ciucas X3 will take you to just under 2000 m altitude on

the opposite side of the mountains from Brasov.

- Ultrabug : This race is a great immersion into Romanian mountain trails as well as culture and food and has made various shortlists for best European ultras. The 100-km route is split across three days, culminating in a fabulous after-party with traditional Romanian food and live entertainment. Runners stay in a traditional Romanian guest house in a spectacular location in the Moldovan side of the Carpathians, a more off-the-beaten track destination for great running and hospitality.

UW



HURT 100 MILE (1/18/2020) - Honolulu, HI Dead Back-of-the-Packer Walking

By Gary Dudney



Elevation Gain: 24,500 feet

Course Description: 100 miles over 5 laps (partial out and backs) in a semi-tropical rainforest. Mostly very technical singletrack trail with steep elevation changes throughout. Slippery rocks, roots and mud make the footing treacherous. A total of 24 stream crossings.

One of the more exotic elements of the Hawaiian Ultra Running Team's Trail 100-Mile Endurance Run (HURT 100) held on the Mauka Trail System above Honolulu on the island of O'ahu, state of Hawaii, are the long stretches of trail that pass through thick stands of bamboo. Wind stirs the bamboo stalks causing them to click and clack together, the hollow stems transform the sound into a loud cracking noise giving you the impression that the bamboo is breaking off at the base and about to fall. Numerous previously fallen and leaning stalks redouble this impression so you get this overwhelming audio-visual message that the whole forest of bamboo is about to come down on your head.

When the really big winds come off the vast Pacific at night, the roar of the wind and the unearthly cracking noise made by the bamboo swell around you as you scurry along your narrow path through what seems a clarion call of doom... it is awesome and terrifying at the same time, which pretty

much describes the HURT 100 itself.

The 20 miles of trail that constitute the course, repeated five times, are indeed awesome, showcasing a mix of classic jungle vegetation and handsome hardwood forest. There are dramatic vistas of Honolulu and the ocean beyond seen from an eagle's perspective. You pass by Manoa Falls, a 150 foot high ribbon of water cascading off a cliff above you. The race is terrifying in its massive challenge. Of the 100 mile races held in the United States rated for difficulty by one well respected source, only the Barkley Marathons, Hardrock and Cruel Jewel top the HURT 100.

Both Hardrock and the Cruel Jewel have 48 hour time limits. The time limit at HURT is 36 hours. That seems like a lot of time until you've been subjected to your first 20 mile loop and find that the course delivers death by a thousand cuts to your pace. Virtually every step you take must be considered and disaster awaits any missteps.

The obstacles come at you like a biblical plague. A long steep rock jumbled climb will be followed by a mud root wallow stretch, followed by scrambling over slippery rocks, a steep descent down slippery rocks, followed by a section of trail on the side of a ridge covered in two feet of roots with some breaks for footholds. You take a hold of the roots and crab walk from break to break as other runners climb over you going the other way. Then there's a stretch of road covered in thick mud from side to side and choked with tourists trying to hike up to Manoa Falls. The lone stretch



of asphalt in the race is short and goes by in the blink of an eye before you plunge back into the jungle.

As a first timer at HURT and an older back-of-the-packer, I flew out to Hawaii with a lot of trepidation but full of high hopes. I knew HURT would be a challenge but my slow and steady approach with a strong finish had gotten me through a lot of tough races.

Talking to veterans of the race at packet pickup killed my high hopes. I met Kuni Yamagata. He said he believed he was the race's oldest finisher at 65. I was 67. I asked about my race plan, steady 7 hour loops. No good. A first loop over 6 hours and you were almost certainly toast. Craig Slagel helpfully pointed out that you think it will get better at night but it doesn't. What about my slow but steady plan? "Won't work," another runner told me. "At HURT you have to push hard from the start and never relax."

Not surprisingly, HURT dismantled me in every way imaginable. Loop 1 took me 6 hours and 45 minutes. According to one runner I talked to just before finishing the loop, I was already beyond the slowest time anybody had clocked and gone on to finish the race...ever. I pushed hard beginning Loop 2 and made the first aid station at Paradise Park making up some time which kept my hopes alive. I thought maybe I had a slow start but what if I could keep my average loop time in range of a finish?

Then, disaster. In the next section of trail, I blew past a turn and ran about a quarter mile up the wrong trail before I realized the flags were the wrong color. In a panic I turned around and immediately took a huge fall, my head slamming into the trail. There was blood on my shoulder and blood seeping out of a quarter sized divot in my elbow.



There was also a big gray hematoma at the base of my thumb, which hurt as badly as it looked.

At the Nu'uaniu aid station, I found three willing first aid volunteers and begged them to hurry. By now I could feel the time rushing by, putting me beyond any hope of finishing. I rushed out of there choking down a sandwich even as I tottered over the biggest river crossing just below the aid station. About halfway back to the start/finish and the end of Loop 2, the jungle dark closed in and I reached for my flashlight and found it was gone, apparently having shot out of a deep pocket in my hydration pack when I fell. That left me at the mercy of the dim little beam from my emergency keychain light over the one part of the course that was vaguely runnable. I would begin to stumble and fall every time I tried to speed up.

Back at the Start/Finish Nature Center a young couple took over my preparations to continue. I avoided any analysis of what my chances were for a finish, deciding that I was going out on Loop 3 no matter what. The volunteers, God bless them, were phenomenal. They redressed my wounds, went through my hydration pack unbidden, cleaning out trash and making sure I had everything I'd need. They had liquids and food at my elbow the whole time. They were upbeat and praiseful about my efforts and my determination to keep going, but they along with all the other knowledgeable HURT old hands there probably knew beyond a shadow of a doubt that I was a dead man walking at that point. And yet no one there said a thing to me which brings me to what I believe is the other remarkable thing

Race Reports



about the HURT 100.

A large organization and network of friends have grown up around this race in its 20 years and it has resulted in an amazing tradition of community and runner support. There is a spirit about the race that seems handed down from the early days of Western States. Seeing Suzanna Bon, Kathy D'Onofrio-Wood, and Teri Gerber, stars from Western States of the 80s and 90s, certainly added to this feeling of an ultra spirit of old. Also the three aid stations at HURT are incredible. The level of support, the remarkable spread of food and drink, the supplies, and the knowledge demonstrated by the volunteers were all the best I have ever experienced at a race.

I left the Nature Center to loud cheers and good wishes. I understood there were about ten runners behind me that hadn't dropped out so I at least had the consolation that I wasn't dead last. Where exactly you stand in the field is hard to figure out at HURT because runners are going by you from both directions all the time. Runners are lapping each other and there was a special 20 mile race going on which further confused things. I had good lights now but a new problem was developing. Despite having shoes with great traction, I was suddenly slipping around on every surface. Had the mud filled in all the gaps in my soles negating the traction? Had the cooling temperatures changed the viscosity of the mud on the rocks so it was just plain more slippery?

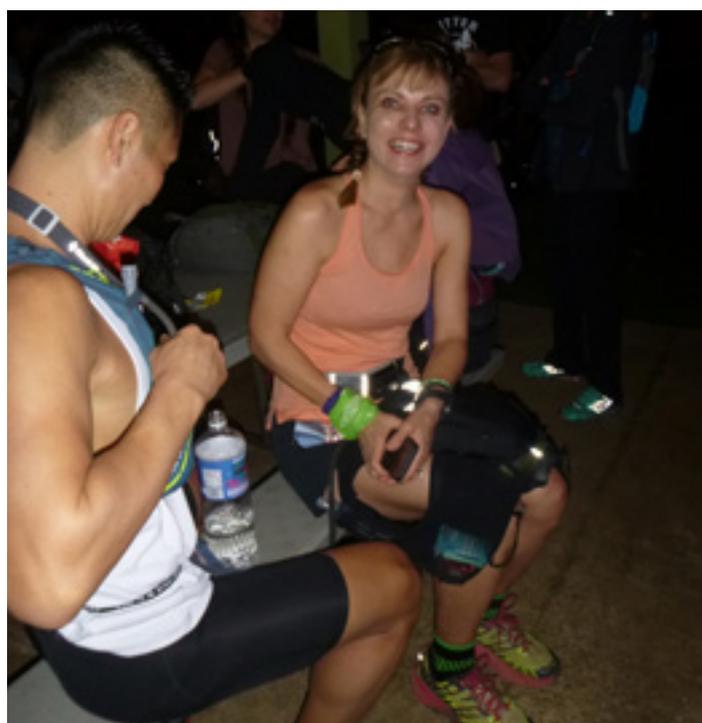
I tripped and fell and slipped and bounced through the next two sections and arrived at Nu'uaniu at mile 52.5 at about 2:30 in the morning. I wasn't feeling too badly at this point. I could imagine running on just to see how close I could come to making the 11:00 am cut-off at mile 80. I couldn't help but be worried about how I had spent several



hours by that time just barely avoiding one dangerous slip and fall after another. If I was going to continue risking my neck, it had to have a purpose. So I took a hard look at what it would take to get to mile 80 under the cut-off and as best I could figure, I would have just 5 hours for Loop 4 at best, and I'd already been told that the mile 80 cut-off was followed by an even tighter cut-off at mile 87.

In other words, I didn't have a snowball's chance in hell of finishing the race. I wasn't toast. I wasn't even a breakfast item by then. So I quit. Back home I checked when the last finisher had passed through mile 52.5, and it was before midnight, which was about three hours ahead of me. In retrospect, quitting wasn't a bad idea and I went home with all my bones in place.

In summary, the HURT 100 is a great race and should be on every ultrarunner's list of must-do races. It is an aspirational challenge for ultrarunners and an especially alluring plum for older runners who might be wondering if they are still able to train themselves up for a really big challenge. You can't do better than Hawaii as a place to be a tourist before and after subjecting yourself to the big hurt that the race has in store for you and everyone else. **UW**



Ann Sayer

Ann Sayer was a remarkable woman, an athlete of the highest calibre, a world record holder. In 1980, Ann walked from Lands End to John O'Groats in 13 days 17 hours and 42 minutes. This record remains extant. Behind this achievement were the hours of dedication to training in an era where women were discouraged and excluded from competing in long distance events.

Ann rowed for GB in the European Racing Championships in 1960, 1962 and in 1964. Women were not permitted to row in the World Championships. Ann took part in the Boston Marathon in 1968 with her rowing crew, "Everybody hated it except me because I didn't know at the time that I had an ultra distance gene..."

After her rowing career, Ann was looking for something else to do, reading the Sunday newspaper she saw an article about men walking 100 mile events within 24 hours. "Women didn't do that sort of thing but that didn't stop me".

In 1974 Ann finished 3rd in her first long distance race but no medal was awarded, her achievement wasn't recognised as it was over the permitted 5 mile limit for women.

A combination of walking in the mountains and discovering the Long Distance Walkers Association gave Ann the opportunity to walk 20, 30, 50 and 100 mile events and develop her natural ability and affinity.

"You've got to be very patient. That was one of my strengths."

Perfectly suited, 6 foot tall with a metronomic stride, her blonde hair flowing.

In 1977 Ann entered a 100 mile race in the Netherlands and became a Continental Centurion, finishing in 21.45.52. Then in the Bristol 100 mile race in 20.37.14 becoming the first female British Centurion.

In 1979 she completed the British 3 peaks as a warm up to LEJOG. Fort William, Ben Nevis, Scafell Pike, Snowdon, Caernarvan. She broke the existing men's record.

Ann continued to regularly race notably in the 1992 Paris-Colmar race and in 1994 she became the oldest woman



athlete at 57 years to be selected to represent GB in a 200km race in France.

In 2005 Ann was awarded an MBE for services to sport.

As Vice president of the LDWA she continued to participate, until recently, by leading walking groups or standing for hours in all weathers recording laps for race walkers.

Ann was unfailingly modest about her pioneering ultra distance achievements which paved the way for women today. She deserves recognition.

Ann Rosemary Sayer 1936 - 2020

UW

A Race For The Ages: A Multi-day Race Where You Run as Many Hours as Your Age.

By Miriam Gilbert

Photos: Jon Gilbert



Run as many hours as your age. What a concept. That's the idea behind Lazarus Lake's, A Race for the Ages, a multi-day ultra for geezers.

You know Laz, creator and RD of quirky and irrational ultras like the Barkley Fall Classic, Big's Backyard

Ultra, and the infamous Barkley Marathons.

Because I'm not as crazy as my family and friends think I am, and because I'll never step foot in any of these bizarre ultras and be a loser, I was happy to be a geezer and take on



A Race for the Ages (ARFTA) on a much kinder and less physically and mentally grueling one mile jagged course on an empty concrete asphalt parking lot in Fred Deadman Park in Manchester, Tennessee.

Running a marathon around a parking lot is not at all appealing but logging as many miles as I can or want in 60 hours was super appealing and I wanted to get my third 100 mile buckle.

The fifth annual ARFTA ultra took place on Labor Day weekend August 29 - September 2, 2019.

It was my third race-cation. My husband Jon and I combine my running an ultra with some hiking in nearby national parks. In 2018 we combined hiking in Cuyahoga Valley National Park in Ohio with the Burning River 50 miler. In 2017 we combined Biscayne National Park and Everglades National Park with the Wildcat 100 miler in Pensacola, Florida.

Before heading to Manchester, Tennessee, my husband Jon and I drove from New Jersey in the north to South Carolina for two days of gentle hiking in Congaree National Park. Then we spent two days in Mammoth Cave National Park in Kentucky.

The next day we left at the crack of dawn for ARFTA. Before checking into Motel 6 at \$45 a night in Manchester, we hiked the morning in Old Stone Fort State Archaeological Park not far from the race site. It was a beautiful summer day and a great hike.

We then headed to the race site to set up our tent and canopy, and pick up my bib and swag, a black Geezer hat and a black ARFTA hoodie.



Our surprisingly spacious Motel 6 room was within walking distance to restaurants and Walmart, and 3 miles from the race site.

Even though runners would be fed breakfast, lunch, and dinner every six hours with food catered by Cracker Barrel, we packed our own food. Unfortunately, we are not fans of Cracker Barrel cuisine, we eat Paleo at home.

We returned to the race site at 10 pm, I was ready to run.

While waiting for my midnight start on Saturday August 31, I sat in the dark on the tent floor with my headlamp wrapped around my head and I wrote an article, *Write*

Along the way in the park, I ran into Laz. I was honored and happy to meet Laz, the legend. We chatted about this, that, and the other. He asked how many hours I was running and I said sixty. "You'll definitely do hundred miles," he said. While I held my breath and he puffed away, I asked, "Why do you smoke?" In typical Laz wit, he responded, "My dad taught me to never be a quitter."

Jon and I set up a tent. A few participants were either running or walking the course. Some much older folks, beginning with an 87 year old male, had already logged more than a few miles. This runner had a 27 hour head start before me.

After we set up our tent and filled it with my running clothes and gear, a clear container with first aid supplies, an air mattress, a comforter, and a cooler filled with things I like to consume at ultras; seltzer, dark chocolate almond milk, avocado, wraps, potato chips, bite size Milky Way chocolates, Pepsi, and bottles filled with Nuun hydration. We headed back to the motel and ate dinner, I got dressed in my running clothes, relaxed a little and watched HBO.



Race Reports

Anywhere, Anytime on my iPad. It was later published on Medium.

As other runners ran/walked through the timing mat under the quiet black sky as music played from the timekeeper's tent, I and four other female runners started our 60 hours at midnight. There were no age 60 male runners.

I've run through the night before at 24 hour ultras and 100 milers but this was the first time I started an ultra at midnight.

The night air was cool at about 64 degrees. I wore my capri running tights and my long sleeve Dawn to Dusk to Dawn 24 hour track ultra shirt, I ran this event in May 2019 in Pennsylvania.

My headlamp was strapped around my head. After a lap, I realized the the parking lot was well lit and I removed the headlamp.

The night was uneventful. To keep me alert, I listened to Spotify music on my iPhone with my earbuds. About 6.5 hours later, I had logged 22 miles on the concrete parking lot. I was glad to see the sun rise before 6 am and the sky turn a bright blue on Saturday morning.

Breakfast was being served. I picked at the Crackle Barrel scrambled eggs, bacon, and pancakes, they were not appetizing or tasty.

The weather got warmer, I changed



into my skort and running tank, by 10 am it was super sunny and hot. It was in the 80s.

Jon applied sunscreen on my arms and legs. I applied sunscreen on my

face and nose. I wore my prescription Oakley sunglasses and I strapped my dollar umbrella hat to my head for some shade and it helped to protect me from the sun. Other runners got shade from their handheld umbrellas.

As the day progressed, the scorching heat and sun, and the foot pounding on concrete began to slow me down.

Lunch was served at noon. I've never had chicken fried steak, which is neither chicken or steak, it tasted awful, I didn't eat it and nibbled on the mashed potatoes. I kept hydrated with Nunn and ate potato chips and avocado wraps that Jon had prepared.

Around 2:15 pm I took a break, sat on my pink folding chair, and immersed my tired, beaten feet in ice water in a container I take with me to ultras. Jon filled it with ice and water from the





cooler. It felt so good.

Then I ran/walked for about four more hours under the scorching sun.

By about 5:45 pm I had logged 50 miles. It took me roughly 17.5 hours, much longer than I anticipated. My best 50 miler in 2016 at the Lake Waramaug 50 miler in Connecticut was 11:14:09

After logging 50 miles, I took a break and sat in a blow up kiddie pool we purchased at the *5 and Below* store for our grandchildren. As I sat in the kiddie pool, Jon poured ice cold water on my legs and filled the pool. I sat in the pool for about 15 minutes, it

reinvigorated me.

I don't remember eating dinner but I know I consumed enough calories to keep me going through the night.

After sunset, the temperature dropped and I put on my leggings and my NorthFace jacket, I wrapped my Burning River 50 Buff around my head.

I did about six laps with Gary, a runner from Texas and 12 years my senior. We kept each other company and a great conversation helped us to move along. Then feeling a little nauseated, I took a break.



While Jon slept in the tent, I sat on my pink folding chair and took a couple of swigs of home-brewed ginger root. We packed a jar full of it. Ginger root is great for nausea. I felt better.

I went out for another lap or two. I began to zig-zag with my eyes closed along the course. It was about 2 am Sunday morning.

Sleep deprived, I finished the lap, went back to the tent, and laid down next to Jon on the air mattress, I slept for about 2 hours.

I went back out around 4 am feeling better.

Around 6:15 am, exhausted, I took a break and I sat with a plate of tasteless breakfast eggs on my lap and no appetite. I forced myself to drink dark chocolate almond milk and eat an avocado slice between a piece of bread that Jon prepared for me.

Jon had also gone out to buy delicious homemade donuts from the Donut Palace, I had a chocolate donut.

I changed clothes, I put on a pair of running shorts and my blue Wildcat 100 t-shirt. I got back on the sunny course under the beautiful blue sky. By 7 am Sunday morning, I had completed 60 miles.

I was moving very slowly and taking my time, what was the rush?

Laz kept reminding us to keep moving via laminated inspirational quotes peppered throughout the course and taped to orange traffic cones, including, "Running slow isn't a character flaw, quitting is." I was on the right track!

Sunday was a beautiful but scorching day.

I changed clothes again around 11 am and put on my 2012 Around the Lake 24 hour ultra t-shirt. This ultra took place in Massachusetts. It was my first 24 hour ultra, I placed 3rd female with 83.3 miles in 22:10:3.

I had a blister or two that Jon drained. To give my feet and toes some relief, I removed my Asics Gel Nimbus

Race Reports

running shoes and began walking with my Birkenstocks and then shuffled my feet with my Oofo sandals.

My goal now was to log 100 miles and secure my buckle, then take a few hours break at the motel, shower, eat a good dinner, and sleep.

At about 6:49 pm Sunday evening, I crossed the timing mat with 100 miles in my Oofos in 42:49:03 - my longest 100 mile time. My best 100 miler was the 2011 Beast of Burden in New York State in 27:10:03.

With a little over 17 hours left on the clock, Jon and I left for our motel to shower, eat, and sleep. After we got to the motel, I puked and felt better. I showered, washed my hair, and felt refreshed.

Jon ordered a take out dinner, we ate pretty good chicken tenders, a salad, big fries, and ice cream.

I needed to rest and sleep, and so did Jon. He was tackling stage 4 cancer and undergoing chemotherapy.

I slept from about 11 pm to 3 am. I woke up energized and ready to hit the course but Jon was still sound asleep. I didn't want to wake him up. He needed his rest more than I needed mine.

I got dressed and put on my green 2015 Defy Your Limits Montour 24 hour trail ultra t-shirt.

We got back to the race site around 8:30 am Monday morning. It was Labor Day and the race ended at 12 noon. I had a little over 3 hours to log some more miles. I did not want to confine my feet and bandaged pinky toes in my Asics, so I slipped on my Oofo.

It was another beautiful and super hot day. I strapped on my umbrella hat around my head.

I ran side by side most of my remaining laps with fellow runner Jim, two years older than me. We had run a few miles together through our time on the course. I was feeling strong and



felt I could run all day but the clock was ticking. Jim stopped at 120 miles.

Inspired by my 81.0264 miles at the Dawn to Dusk to Dawn 24 hour track ultra in May with the last 11 hours in the rain, I came to A Race for the Ages with a goal of logging 120 miles in the allotted 60 hours.

I fell 8 miles short of my goal and crossed the finish with 112 miles in my Oofo with about 13 minutes to spare before the clock ran out and we all headed to the banquet hall and awards ceremony.

The banquet and awards ceremony was great fun. The folks who logged unbelievable miles were so inspiring. Bob, 74, placed first OA and first male with 230 miles. Lethra, 61, placed first female and 5th overall with 175 miles. I placed 46/133.

I wasn't very hungry but I devoured two generous pieces of homemade Coca-Cola chocolate cake. It was so good. I packed a few pieces for the road on our way home from Tennessee to New Jersey the next day.

Taking a long 13 hour break after I logged 100 miles was not smart. If I had returned to the race after my four hour sleep, I would have met my goal but Jon needed his rest.

And Jon tells me I would have logged more miles if I didn't talk so much with other runners while on the course. He said it slowed me down. He might be right. I'm glad I chatted on the course. I met wonderful folks like Mary Ann, a retired social work professor, Jim, a biologist, Dean from Utah, fellow Nuun ambassador Sheree from Florida, Bill from Maryland, and Don the oldest runner at age 87 who logged 109 miles. He inspired all of us.

I got to chat with Laz, 65, (and whose real name is Gary Cantrell), during the night as he slowly walked the course and logged 65 miles.

A Race for the Ages was my 27th ultra and my first multi-day ultra. I told Laz I hope to return to ARFTA when I'm 90.

Our time and my miles at A Race for the Ages were a great experience! It was another fun race-cation combined with hiking in nearby national parks.

We took turns driving 12 hours home from Tennessee on Tuesday. The next day I returned to the start of the semester and my teaching duties at the university, and Jon had another chemo infusion.

2019 A Race for the Ages Results

<https://runsignup.com/Race/TN/Manchester/ARacefortheAges>

UW

Hall of Fame James Zarei

In this new regular column, UW highlights the achievements of an ultrarunner/distance walker from previous years. Inspiration for today's challenges can be found in their endeavours.

Hall of fame may be a misnomer in the ultra community, 'fame' is not a word generally associated with many long distance women and men. There are ultra athletes over the years who have set world records and yet garnered little mainstream recognition.

Our first retrospective look at an athlete profiles an incredible ultrarunner, James Zarei.

In 1983 James was 39 years old and a 20 a day smoker, he could barely manage to run a 100 metres without gasping for breath, nevertheless he pulled on a pair of running shoes several sizes too big for his feet and finished 30th in a race at Leopardstown Racecourse in Dublin.

By 1990 James had given up smoking, continued to run and entered a 6 day race at Gateshead stadium. He came within a mile of breaking the British record held by George Littlewood in 1888 which was and still stands at 623 miles, 1,320 yards. James achieved 622 miles. He would have certainly smashed the record by a predicted 15 miles if the race had not been interrupted by a football match for 2 and a half hours. With the record in sight the race was paused, this is indicative of how undervalued long distance records are by venues, sports organisations and the general public.

James was stoical about the event, "Every distance has its own beauty, with me, it's like an old car, the longer it goes the better it cruises along."

Stoicism certainly helped in the gruelling Spartathlon. This race is

a 150 mile/246 kilometer race held annually in Greece since 1983. The distance is between Athens and Sparta and legend depicts Pheidippides ran this route to seek help. It is fitting that James, born in Iran the home of the ancient Persians, won it twice in 1994 in 26.15.00 and again in 1995 in 25.59.42. This achievement built on coming second in 1988 and again in 1991. There's a 36 hour time limit combined with five mountains to traverse and temperatures varying from extreme heat to cold, not a race for dilettantes.

This race does not motivate runners by giving prize money, there is none, only a laurel wreath placed on the athlete's head and a drink of water are offered. Today the Spartathlon has a waiting list and entry requirement, it is hugely supported by the Greeks, James is a well known Spartathlete, idolised as a hero. This event encapsulates the spirit of ultrarunning for James and his fellow Spartathletes.

James commented that the competitive side of running held no interest for him. His outlook is from a spiritual approach. He said when he is running,

"There is no time limit and you should just go as long as your body can take you. I love to run so much that I don't want to finish - it's like preparing a lovely meal, you just don't want it to end after you have put so much effort into it."

James has also won the 279 mile Hiroshima to Nagasaki Peace run three times. During this event in August 1996, he led until 2 miles from the finish of the 4 day event. He collapsed and was hospitalised suffering from heat stroke and dehydration. After being put on a saline drip for 6 hours, he returned to



the course and completed the distance. His lead was a significant amount of miles to finish runner-up. This ability to endure and prevail over several days is a testament to his strength and character.

His achievements are no less arduous in training and preparation than those for people sprinting or competing in marathon events. UW gives James recognition for his endurance running and especially the 6 day events, he is one of the greatest multiday runners of all time.

Today James is 76 and continues to run regularly and participate in events.

If readers would like us to feature an ultra runner from the years that have gone by, please send in your suggestions and we will do our best to publish their achievements.

UW

Sahara Marathon

By Anna Seeberger
Photos by Wilfried Seehafer



After four years of participating in sometimes more and sometimes less than top-class running or walking events over various distances, it was time for a completely new experience.

On February 25th 2020, the Sahara Marathon, the charity run for Sahrawi refugees, entered its 20th edition. For many participants, the journey begins as a sporting adventure and ends with great human involvement in the fate of this forgotten indigenous nomadic tribe. When Spain left the Western Sahara in 1975, Morocco and Mauritania, attracted by the phosphate fields, occupied the country and 40 years ago expelled the Sahrawi refugees. Since the ceasefire in 1991 between the Liberation Army of the Sahrawi and Morocco, about 180,000 Sahrauis have been living under extremely harsh conditions in a kind of self-government in Algerian exile somewhere in the middle of nowhere in the barren Western Sahara in tents and mud huts. Their bricks soak up the rain, and when they dry out and a storm comes, they crumble like cookies and the buildings collapse. The main problem is also a very one-sided diet by the German Agro Action with corresponding secondary diseases and the lack of prospects for the future of these people, who live a life of waiting. Hardly anyone has a job. With 50 Euros of the travel price each participant supports

urgently needed aid projects in the camps of the Sahraui, such as material for schools as well as hospitals and the promotion of sports projects, in order to reach the youth. Runners live for one week with refugee families in Smara and run from El Ajoun via Auserd back to the camp in Smara. Altogether about 400 runners from 22 nations took part in the Sahara Marathon. About 130 of them ran the marathon as I did, also about 130 ran the half marathon, the rest of them ran the 10 and 5 Km distance. I was very lucky to be the only female walker to be allowed to run the full distance due to my marathon times so far, and as the 9th in my age group I was not the last to finish... The first half of the track, which started early in the morning with moderate temperatures, was flat and on solid ground. From the halfway point, from which the half marathon started an hour after us, it was characterised by dunes and deeper sand, which was a challenge for strength and fitness, especially as it was getting hotter and hotter, but thanks to the water supply and motivation from the Italian brigade, I made it to the finish line full of pride and gratitude, albeit after a good seven hours.

For us athletes, the most important thing is to make a small contribution to humanitarian aid through human contacts, the financing of projects and meaningful guest gifts such

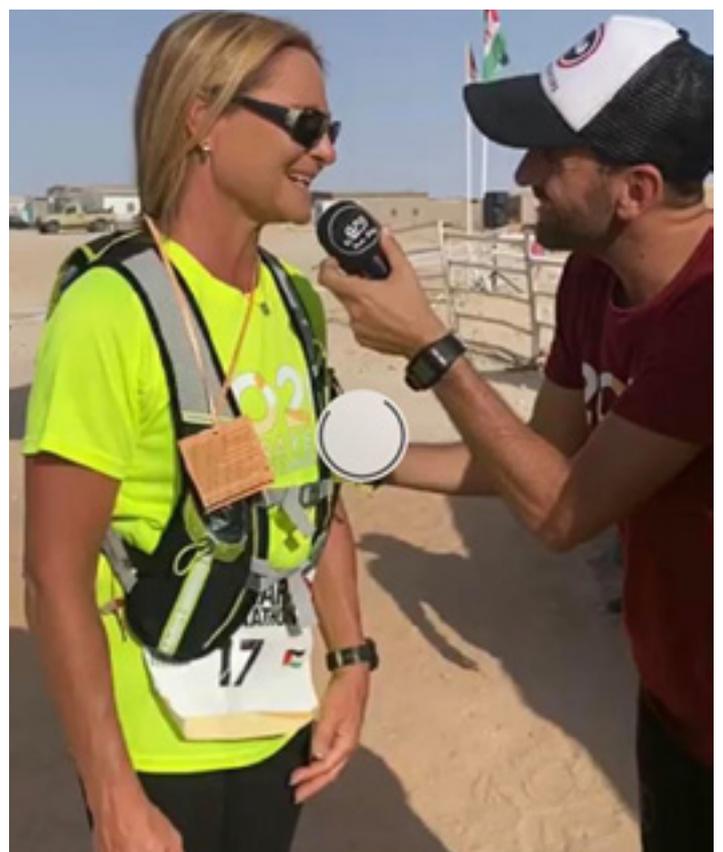


as tools and smartphones donated by many friends for the families where the runners live. For example, with our warm and incredibly grateful host family we planted a few olive trees in their yard and bought and put into operation a washing machine that hardly any other family owns.



This week was for me the perfect combination of humanitarian action and a running adventure! From time to time, arriving home safe and sound, each participant will ask themselves, what is missing with me?

UW



Contributors



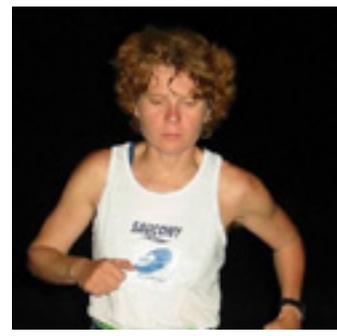
Sarah Cameron is an ultra-running vegan who lives on a vineyard in the south of France with her husband, two children and far too many pets. She juggles family life with looking after said pets, making wine and indulging in her many hobbies, most of which involve either consuming things or attempting to burn them off. Sarah is also an ambassador for Tailwind Nutrition France. www.cakewinerunning.blogspot.fr



Andy Howett A mountain-bike racer, originally from Lincolnshire (don't laugh, if Jamaica can have a bobsleigh team Lincolnshire can have a mountain-biker) Now living in the Scottish Borders, a big improvement topographically if not meteorologically. Will ride anything anywhere. New to this running malarkey but enjoying it so far and hungry for more. Blog and other ramblings Andrewhowett.blogspot.com



Anna Seeberger In my youth I was active in competitive equestrian sports and started walking at the age of 45. From the beginning I won almost every competition and extended my distances up to 100 km in a row. 2018 saw my first world championship over three days in the Kitzbühler Alps, where I won individual silver. In 2019 I started again at the World Championships, in the Salzburg Alps and for the Australian Team Koala international and was rewarded with double gold. Against this background, taking part in the **Sahara Marathon** in combination with humanitarian aid was a completely different experience!



Edit Bérces, PhD, is an ultramarathon runner, multiple world record setter, former world and European champion from Zalaegerszeg, Hungary. Her top accomplishments include her 2000 world and European 100km kilometer titles and her 24-hour world and European championship victories in 2001 and 2002, respectively. In 2002, just two weeks after winning the European Championship, she set a world record over 24 hours on the track as well as a 100-mile world record en route. Based on those accomplishments, Ultramarathon World voted her the top female ultramarathoner of 2002. Bérces is also an amateur photographer with a specialization in international runners in action. Her website can be found at www.zalaszam.hu/edit



Peter Van Geit is an explorer, ultra runner and alpinist. After roaming dense jungles in South India for more than a decade he quit his job in 2017 and since then has been into a full time solo exploration of remote mountains. He ran 2000 km solo across the Northeastern mountains of Vietnam in 2018. During the last two summers he spent 6 months in the Indian Himalayas exploring 150 lesser known high passes in the footsteps of shepherds and mountain tribes. He is the founder of the Chennai Trekking Club (CTC), a non-profit volunteer based community active in the outdoors, sports, environmental and social initiatives. <http://ultrajourneys.org/>



Miriam Gilbert (Ultra Miriam) has been running races 30+ years, the last 15 years ultramarathons. Miriam is a cancer caregiver to her husband. He is in remission. Miriam has established a GoFundMe campaign to benefit cancer caregivers - Ultra Care for Cancer Caregivers - <https://bit.ly/2SLOJWe> Miriam is running a second virtual 100K in June to continue to raise money. Miriam is also a published author.

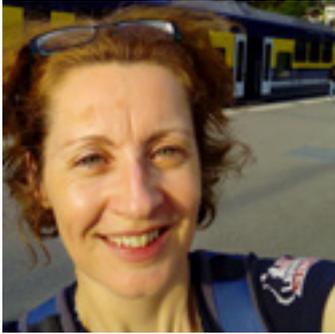
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Emily Adams has been a runner for over a decade but has only recently ventured into ultra-running. Having crewed for her husband at various ultramarathons she was inspired to give it a go herself completing her first 50km race in 2018. Her aim is to crack the Arc50 in 2021 and ultimately progress to completing a 100km race. Living in the flat lands of Essex, she is strangely attracted to mountains and hilly coastal trails.



Gary Dudney is a longtime columnist for Ultrarunning magazine in the USA. He's published two books on the subject of the mental side of running, *The Tao of Running* and *The Mindful Runner* as well as numerous articles in all the major running magazines. He's completed over 200 marathons and ultramarathons, including seventy 100-mile races. His home base is Monterey, California. [Amazon Author Page](#), [Gary's website for runners](#)



Rachel Gorajala I am Rachel, an unremarkable runner who has been lucky enough to participate in some fantastic races, including the Marathon des Sables, Everest Trail race, Spine challenger, Lakeland 100, Eiger Ultra Trail. I have some smashing family and friends who are my biggest support: I work in the NHS as an A&E nurse, where they watch, bemused, from the sidelines.



Alecsa Stewart is a writer living in the French Pyrenees, where she moved from the Midlands in the UK to pursue her passion for outdoor adventures. When she's not at her desk, Alecsa is out running, hiking, and generally exploring new trails and places to write about. Visit Alecsa's site at www.alecsastewart.com



Thomas Mountney is a married 36-year-old father of one from Gloucestershire. Despite being a fan of the outdoors, he began ultra-running by accident and was completely unprepared for what he learnt from the experience. Tom set the current FKT for running the UK Three Peaks Challenge in October 2019. [Checkout Three Peaks Challenge Records](#)



Will Penrose I'm relatively new to the running world, having only taken it up a couple of years ago, after walking from London to Cornwall and being frustrated at how long it took! I now run about 50-80 miles a week and have signed up for more races than my wife approves of. I train with a great group of guys in the sand dunes at Gwithian. "The only way to get fast is to run in soft sand." - Joss Naylor.



