





# TRAILRUN

AUTUMN 2012

**Trail Run is published quarterly >**

Winter / Spring / Summer / Autumn

**Editorial correspondence >**

Trail Run Magazine

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# CONTENTS

## 8. Editors' Letters

### TRAIL MIX

#### 16. Column >

Diary of a Trail Widow

#### 20. Event Preview >

Northburn 100, NZ

#### 24. Event Preview >

Spiny Cray Ultra, Qld

#### 26. Event Review >

Shotover Moonlight

Marathon, NZ

#### 68. My Backyard >

*Matt Bixley* in Dunedin, NZ

### REVIEWS

#### 12. Now's A Good Time to Buy >

The best in trail kit

#### 86. Shoe Review >

Japanese slippers  
and other lightweights

### INTERVIEWS

#### 30. Q&A >

Southern Belle >

*Linda Doke*

#### 42. Profile >

Team No Roads'

*Mick Donges + Brendan Davies*

### FEATURES

#### 36. Issue > Organ Grinder >

the dangers of overdoing it

#### 52. Trail Tale >

Cross-Tasman trail training >

Born To Run team get a taste for NZ

#### 60. Barely There >

Our new minimalist regular

Garry Dagg bares all

#### 74. Mega Mission >

New Zealand's Team

Salomon trio tackle Taranaki

### THE LOCKER

#### 92. Trail Porn > It's dirty

#### 96. Head Coach >

Getting in the trail mindset

#### 82. Shoe Guru > The heel story

#### 100. The Larder >

Eating for recovery

### TRAIL GUIDES

#### 106. Peaks of Bel Aire >

Adelaide, SA

#### 108. Diamond Lake +

Rocky Mountain >

Wanaka NZ

#### 110. Big Hill Circuit >

Arrowtown NZ

# Not heroic, just stupid.



“I can run faster than you, so that means I will get there quicker. And I have 100 of energy (sic), so I just know I can run the whole way, Dad! Pleeeeeease let me come.”

Ah, the logic of children. So beautiful, so boundless.

My daughter – all of four years old and more than “100 of energy”, whatever that wonderful sounding unit of measurement is – wants to come running with me.

In fact, she wants to come on a particular run with me, the one that is staring me down from less than five days away and scaring the crap out of me.

It’s a 130km monster through Australia’s Red Centre, in the summer heat. Nothing logical about that, to be sure, especially being that I’m no ultra runner. Trail runner, yes. Ultra runner no. Nevertheless in my approach I’m on my daughter’s wavelength – so very, very childlike. I tend to think big and worry about the weight of reality whenever it smacks me back to earth.

It’s the “she’ll be right, mate” approach that survival expert, Bob Cooper, warned me kills more people every year in the wilderness than any other single thing.

Yet that foolhardy approach has, to date, defined my (hah) trail running career, undertaking actions that are far from admirable, nor heroic. Just stupid.

There was the The North Face 100 Incident. Although I blame the kernel of this act of stupidity on the PR who instead of dropping me at the final 10km mark to meet and interview Dean Karnases (I like to call him The Polariser), dropped me at the halfway mark.

Okay, so I could have still just run a lazy eleven to the next checkpoint. Here I take full responsibility. But ‘Karno’

was struggling. I’m not sure why I thought a journalist running alongside him for the next 50 kays would be any kind of incentive (more of a threat really), but I struck a deal that started with me querying “would I do any serious damage if I ran the remaining bush marathon with you in light of the fact I’ve done next to no training?”

And so I became sport to Dean Karnases as he shrugged and said “Nah, take it easy, and you should be right.”

Of course this is the man that did exactly that: got drunk one night in a mid-life crisis binge, thought better of it and went and ran a marathon off the barstool.

Wrong person to ask.

Roll around 10.30 at night and I did eventually make it over the line, an unofficial half finisher, limping in with cramp (which if you ever see me out there, is becoming of my trail trademark).

Then there was my drafting into an Oxfam team by an old schoolmate. I got there, but while most ultra runners of note disregard the Oxy as a fun run for novices, I considered it at the time the hardest thing I’ve ever done.

There have been other stupidity-gilded missions – mostly considered so due to an absence of training and “she’ll be right” attitude.

Let’s now jump forward in time to the moment, like the flickering instant of a rock skimming water, where I thought I was going to die. I know. Drama queen. Let me have my moment, pass the concrete pills please.

Ninety kilometres in on the first of our Run The Planet challenges ([www.facebook.com/runtheplanettv](http://www.facebook.com/runtheplanettv)) with Kiwi ultra queen Lisa Tamati, I vomit (no problem – part and parcel).

Then I go into spasms. Then pain wracks my body. It’s like someone is sawing off my legs while driving spikes up the middle of them with a sledgehammer.

“You’re going into a tetany seizure,” shouts Lisa, who marshalls the troops, pulls the pin and readies for the dash to hospital, 40km away in Alice Springs.

“What’s a fucking tetany seizure?” I garble through plenty of other expletives and explosions of pain, as every muscle in me is exploding outwards. She knows what one is. She’s had one.

Low on potassium. Yup, a coupla bananas between me and this not happening.

I think of my daughter’s “100 energy” and stave off a blackness that was coming at me like a steam train tunnel.

I should have had a medical before running. I should have drunk more (I hadn’t urinated properly in about five hours). I should have taken my nutrition a whole lot more seriously. (As always, I should have trained more, too.) I should have read Andy Hewat’s piece on kidneys in this edition before leaving, as he suggested. I should have listened to Bob. You’ll survive an average trail run clocking in 5–20km, but when it comes to ultras, she’ll not be right when you go in half cocked. Ultras are serious business. Lesson learned.

When I get home, I give my daughter a 100 hugs with more than a 100 energies. The gift of those hugs and the very thought that I risked them at all means that on future adventures in the ultra sphere, I’ll ditch the stupidity and hopefully I won’t ever get smacked back to reality with quite such a sickening thud.

**YOUR EDITOR,  
THE (VERY) ORDINARY TRAIL RUNNER  
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# You lucky, lucky sods



**Last night I was sat watching TV**, taking time out from my quarterly fret about what to write in my editorial for this fine magazine of ours. Several possibilities had been kicking around my addled brain but nothing was sticking. Then on the screen came a story that moved me and set me thinking about what a lucky sod I am. I'm lucky because I can run, albeit slowly and always with a few creaks, groans and niggles. But I can run. I can experience places, people and things that only runners can. I can feel the soft, glowing satisfaction that comes from having given my legs and lungs a bloody good workout. I really am a lucky sod. I can run.

The story that so moved me was one about Coen, a 14-year-old Australian boy with cystic fibrosis. The illness has robbed him of 70 per cent of his lung function and severely limits what he can do by way of physical exercise. But the thing he said he most missed was running. Now I don't suppose for a moment that he meant running competitively or even as a sport in its own right. He just meant running around the park with his mates, chasing a ball, getting up to pranks, that kind of thing. But that only serves to reinforce how fundamental the act of running – which we the trail running community takes for granted – is to us as a species.

This brave kid needs a double lung transplant if he is to have any chance of survival, but the incidence of organ donation in Australia is apparently one of the lowest in the developed world. So what does he do? Well, he shows us that while this cruel illness has taken away so much of his capacity for physical exertion it has robbed of him none of his spirit. Instead of sitting around and feeling sorry for himself he jumps on a jet ski and travels the length of the Murray River, en route convincing a thousand Australians to become organ donors.

I thought Coen's story was brilliant and inspiring. It got me thinking. What if all us lucky sods, who collectively run hundreds of thousands of kilometres each year in pursuit of largely selfish goals could channel just a small percentage of that effort into helping the less fortunate out there? We all know people who, because of a terrible accident or an insidious illness, have been cruelly robbed of the ability to enjoy the stuff we take for granted. There are many charities set up to help these people, all struggling for money. Can't we, as a caring community of lucky sods, help by using our passion for the trails to raise funds for these deserving causes?

Many of us I know are already doing this. In 2009 and 2010 I pulled together over a 100 runners who collectively raised \$260,000 to assist leukemia sufferers. We did this by running trails. Later this year I am teaming up with English runner Tom Bland to raise money for Mental Health charities in the UK and New Zealand by attempting to run the UK's longest footpath – the 1014 km-long South West Coast Path – in just two weeks (see [www.coastpathrun.co.uk](http://www.coastpathrun.co.uk) for more). I don't pretend for a moment that these are noble or selfless acts. I do not intend to present myself as any kind of hero. After all, I do these things because I love trail running and because I love Big Hairy Audacious Goals. But it doesn't take much extra effort to turn an essentially selfish act into a worthwhile contributor to the greater good.

So, who will you help in 2012 you lucky, lucky sods?

**MAL LAW, NZ EDITOR**  
[www.runningwildnz.com](http://www.runningwildnz.com)

# THE NORTH FACE FLIGHT APEX CLIMATE BLOCK



Svelte. Underused word that. But it's what came to mind when I slipped this slinky number on. This fully windproof jacket is perfect for when it's blowing a gale: wear it alone in the dry cold or if clouds start to spit, match it to a light waterproof shell. The secret is in the Apex Climateblock fabric, a technical polyester fleece rated at zero CFM for absolute windproof protection. Here's the downside – it also keeps the heat in, which means if you're working hard on the trails, and sweating, you'll going to fog up a little on the inside. The Apex breathes a little, just not enough to cope with max-out sessions. It was a great option in super chill, where no matter what my work rate I couldn't get hot, but when I was working at intensity, I needed a little let-out – a CFM rating of 2-4 may have been better.

I hear what you're saying: just open the zip.  
Good point, well made.

Reflective seam tape with glow zip pulls and reflective logos provide night visibility. A hem cinch cord and drop tail hem blocked drafts. The rear pocket was good for the odd \$10 bill (latte on the way home), but not for anything bulkier (phone/keys) – too much jingle jangle. The comfort factor is high courtesy of stretch elastane knit at the sides and a shaped, lined collar that eliminates abrasion around the neck. An instant favourite bit of early morning/late night kit as temperatures cool on trail.

RRP > \$269.95

[www.thenorthface.com.au](http://www.thenorthface.com.au)

# NUUN ELECTROLYTE TABLETS

When it comes to hydration, there's a movement toward carbo-light (or free) electrolytes. Why? Because that bloated feeling you get that ends up preventing you from getting in enough hydration during the course of your mega-ultra-mission – that's down to the carbs, which slow the rate of stomach emptying. Low-to zero-carb electrolytes like Nuun are absorbed faster into the body than carbohydrate-heavy sports drinks so you can suck it down all day. For short runs hydration is as much about taste as anything. In this, Nuuns rock with flavours from expected (Lemon and Lime, Tri-berry, Fruit Punch) to quirky but good (Lemon Tea, Strawberry Lemonade, Kona Cola). For ultra runners, hydration gets more serious. I know: I stuffed up on a 140km run that ended abruptly at 90km. My meltdown wasn't specifically due to electrolyte choice (I wasn't on Nuun at the time). But it was an electrolyte imbalance (caused by my human error and lack of preparation). Fact: sodium is key. Hyponatremia anyone? Pre-incident, on training runs up to 35km, I was downing the sodium rich Nuun for up to three and a half hours on hot, sweaty, sodium draining runs and it served me well. The tabs dissolve quickly and fully leaving a refreshing non-carbonated drink. Not once on my training runs did I come away feeling dehydrated. A key thing about Nuun is the tablet form – no messy powders, exact doses and handy storage tubes. It also doesn't leave sticky residues in bottles or bladders, like carbo-laden options do.

**Editor's Note** > We will endeavor to publish a more comprehensive briefing and comparative studies of hydration products on the AU/NZ market in the near future.

RRP > \$15 > 12 tabs (1 tab/500ml) / \$45 > 4 tubes (48 tablets)

[www.moxiegear.com.au/store/nuun](http://www.moxiegear.com.au/store/nuun)

[www.nuun.com](http://www.nuun.com)



# PROFILE DESIGN SYNC HYDRATION BELT

If you're running in hot, humid conditions, long distances or at altitude, then you're going to have to cart some fluids. Unfortunately, liquid sucks to carry. CamelBak-style hydration packs are popular, but can bounce around, causing rubbing and excess sweating, are hard to clean and time-consuming to refill.

Say hello to Profile Design's (PD) new Sync Hydration Belt. PD has been banging out sophisticated bike bottles for years, but the Sync is an innovation that brings the brand to the attention of runners. It comes standard with two BPA-free 8oz bottles (that's just over 225ml per bottle in our money), housed in handy holsters. Additional bottles and pouches (for carrying keys, gels, mobile phone etc) are available separately.

With the belt pulled comfortably tight there's little-to-no movement to irritate you on the trail, even when bottles are full.

Releasing the bottles is a one-handed, quick-draw operation. The belt is easy to modify – each holster is mounted via a two-piece bracket system, with removable Velcro plugs allowing you to slide them to wherever you like. Once the plug is back in place they don't shift, so set up before you hit the trail as you can't adjust on the run.

The belt has a soft Velcro back, which keeps it from sliding while not being abrasive on skin or garments. The backing pads for the holsters are injected with EVA Foam and are as comfortable and lightweight as they are practical. The belt comes in four sizes to comfortably fit all shapes.

**Tester > Patrick Kinsella**

**RRP > Sync belt with two bottles > \$69.95**  
**2 extra bottles plus holders > \$39.95**

[www.velovita.com.au](http://www.velovita.com.au)

# MAXIMUM PROTECTION TRAIL RUNNING SOCKS

## **Drymax Max Protection Trail Running Socks V4.2**

It's amazing how much technology goes into a pair of socks. The key to choosing a pair is to figure out if that exorbitant price you're choking on is paying for real innovation and performance, or just paying for some copywriter's cocaine habit.

A pineapple (\$50) is a whack to fork out for one pair of socks. It's quarter a decent trail shoe (or a quarter gram of coke).

These are worth paying for someone's habit, however. After giving my feet a hiding on plenty of wet trails and an ultra thrashing on a long distance (90km) number, my feet remained baby smooth.

Distance running in particular is where a shoddy pair of socks will get you into serious, painful trouble. That's where Drymax has a well-earned rep amongst the elite trail runners who swear by them.

These socks feature a patented Blister Guard system incorporating PTFE (polytetrafluoroethylene) fibers in the entire foot area. PTFE has a low coefficient of friction (less rub) and is also known for hydrophobic (hates water) qualities, so it takes away moisture. The super hydrophobic layer of the sock fabric is on the inside acting like a squeegee to mechanically lift moisture away from the skin to the outer layer of hydrophilic (water loving) fibre, a system which keeps the water very much on the outer. The socks' double-welted leg has extra padding around the ankle protecting and sealing to keep out debris. A flat toe seam, vented arch band, and Y-heel for better fit are all added benefits, plus there's an anti-bacterial control in built. These are my go to socks for the toughest and longest trail runs.

**RRP > \$49.99**

[www.drymaxsocks.com.au](http://www.drymaxsocks.com.au)







*Confessions*

# OF AN ULTRA WIDOW

*As The North Face 100 rolls around again, we take a look at the forgotten athletes of the long day and night ahead: the support crew and, specifically, the solo partner lumped with a large dose of multitasking to the max.*

**Workmate:** “So what did you get up to at the weekend?”

**Me:** “Well, my boyfriend entered this 100km run, so we went to that.”

**Workmate:** “Wow, that’s mad, so how long did that take him then?”

**Me:** “Oh, about 15.5 hours, but he reckons he could do it in under 14 next year.”

**Workmate:** “And what did you do while he was doing that?”

**Me:** “I was his support crew.”

**Workmate:** “What does that involve then?”

At this point I make up some version that glosses over the truth, something about cheering him on and making sure he’s got a coffee at the end. I do this because the reality of being a support crew – or more accurately, a support crew who is also a wife/girlfriend (or husband/boyfriend) of their other half (OH) – goes far beyond what anyone is prepared to hear on a Monday morning, at least before they’ve had their flat white.

So if you read on and are nodding in agreement, or perhaps sympathy, then the chances are you too are a Running Widow. And a Running Widow knows support doesn’t start and end on race day, but somehow (and it’s hard to pin point exactly when it happened) you turned into a one-person cheer squad / exercise nutrition expert / cook / chauffeur / masseuse / nurse.

Now don’t get me wrong, you may like running. Indeed, I’m quite partial to a jog along the beach on a sunny morning and have been known to take part in the odd City2Surf. But a Running Widow knows another world of running. It isn’t a charity fun run, or just a way of keeping fit, it’s a world described in words like Hoka, Garmin, S-Labs, Kilian, Skins and Glide, and where The North Face isn’t just somewhere you shop for a ski jacket.

That’s right, I’m not just a Running Widow: I’m a TNF100 widow. To be precise Widow #474.

This year I’m doing it in style and staying at the Fairmont. Prepared for the inevitable “not tonight darling, I’ve got a race tomorrow” I’m resigned to it not being a romantic weekend escape. However, there is a heated pool and a spa so I can reward myself for all my preparation and hard work. Yes that’s correct, my preparation which is as much an ultra effort as his.

It’s hard work getting up before the sun to drive to 7am ‘training’ races, miles from our Sydney home and the comfort of breakfast in bed. There’s the staying up all night at races with a such a vast selection of food as would outdo a Coles Express, just in case the OH doesn’t fancy Nutella sandwiches, but craves fish paste, cheese and onion chips and pot noodles at the 60km mark (“No problem,” she says).

There are sacrifices, such as rolling over on a Sunday morning looking for a bit of love, only to be greeted with a peck on the forehead and “I’m off running, back in a few hours.” Bedtime reading spent waiting up on stress fractures in the Lore of Running. Swotting up on and rechecking the mandatory gear list dozens of times. Enduring long discussions on whether a compression bandage for snake bite is the same as for sprains (it is by the way). Or counting out enough salt tablets, pain killers and random pills into plastic zip lock bags to put a low-rate drug dealer to shame.

So when that gun goes off at 6.55am, I know that’s it. the TNF100 people understand the ‘no support crew’ rule until check point 3 (CP3), giving us all a well deserved break to enjoy the hot tub before the carnage.

CP3: a time when even the hardest of Running Widows will be tested. The point in the race where, after emerging from the valley and something like the equivalent of 800 flights of stairs, you are greeted by your OH, likely looking a slightly otherworldly grey and possibly muttering. Time to pull out the big guns: the salty potatoes, black coffee and rice pudding, while

massaging not only tired legs but also, and more importantly, the ego. There is no shame at CP3. Full kit changes in the middle of the sports hall, odour that wouldn’t be out of place in a soup kitchen queue, and, for a special treat, runners asking their crew person to cut their toe nails because they can no longer bend to reach their feet.

So with hearts racing (ours, not theirs) we then send them off into the wilderness, slightly better than they came in, but still wondering if we’ll ever see them again.

And so it goes on.

When they cross that finish line, it doesn’t matter what colour the buckle is, they made it. And you know that their victory partly belongs to you. Not just for today, but for the months building up to the race – and they know it too. Time to celebrate, you both made it! But hang on. You thought that was it, you thought the impossible had been achieved. But no, before the first beer has even been sunk, you hear the immortal words, “I could beat that time next year if I…”

That’s it. You know you’re done for. I’m afraid you’ll be a Running Widow for many years to come.

Fancy a glass of wine at the Fairmont? After all, our runners won’t be at CP3 until at least 2pm... \*

**Words > Nicky Power**

**Front image > Todd Hunter McGaw**

**[www.toddhuntermcgaw.com.au](http://www.toddhuntermcgaw.com.au)**

# FEEL THE BURN

Words > Mal Law \* Images > supplied by Tom Northburn

**It comes with a fearsome reputation as one of the toughest 100 milers on the planet, and a quick look at the results from last year's inaugural staging suggests this is well founded. Consider, for instance, that Marty Lukes, a previous winner of a clutch of other mountain races, had a winning time of 25hr 44min...that's about half the average speed he'd expect to do the Kepler Challenge in. And then there's the fact that 11 of the 26 starters DNF'ed and last across the line had a very hard day, recording a time of 38hr 35min. Yep, looks tough.**

The event website pulls no punches in foreshadowing the attrition, using the headline "You don't race it, you survive it". But without seeing something firsthand, it can be hard to separate myth from reality. So, when I was recently offered the chance to experience part of the course in the company of Race Director Terry Davis and a few other hardy souls, I jumped at it. The plan was a "cruisy 50km, about eight hours". The reality was more like 29km in six hours... before pulling the pin!

There is no escaping that the full 100-mile version of this race is ruthless. With a total climb of 8000 metres and nowhere to hide from the furies of the weather, this is about as big a test of strength

and determination as you can find in the southern hemisphere. The Northburn 100 is brutal challenge for the masochists among us. Myth busted. The strap line is solid reality.

None of this surprised me. What did surprise me was the stark beauty of the Northburn Station terrain, memorable for its impressive rock tors, tussock slopes and incredible views out across Lake Dunstan to the vast expanse of the Southern Alps. It's the kind of scenery that acts as balm for a good chunk of pain. So at the end of the day, having been treated to a chopper ride over the entire course by station owner, Tom Pinckney, followed by a cold beer and a great meal at The Shed, I left tired but refreshed.



*To get a better impression of the terrain, watch the video I made during my reccie of part of the course, including some good aerial footage taken from Tom's chopper. Well worth viewing.*



The lasting impression is of a much more interesting place to confront your demons than I had previously imagined.

So, what's in store at this year's race on 24–26 March? Once again the organisers are offering a suite of three courses – the whole 100 miles, as well as (slightly) more sane 100km and 50km races.

Apparently, numbers are well up for the second running and organisers are heartened by the number of returning athletes (both those who finished and those who didn't), including Chris Gates and Mitch Murdoch, who won the men's and women's 100km last year respectively and have stepped it up to the 100 mile this year.

Don't be surprised to see some high profile international runners front up. The North Face sponsored athlete and event co-owner Lisa Tamati, New Zealand's highest profile ultra runner, has a lot of friends in the ultra running community and a bunch of them are coming to

compete, including Ray Sanchez and Molly Sheriden, both finishers at the brutal La Ultra – The High, a 222km killer in the Himalayas.

One man who won't be competing on the day is Race Director Terry Davis. He'll have other things to worry about, but he does deserve special mention for turning out in the late January heat to take on the entire 100 miles of his baby. It took him 32 hours. He did this to better understand things from a competitor's point of view, and, as he put it: "How can you give the RD full respect if he hasn't run his own course?"

That, and his unusual taste in running attire, sets Terry aside from many other organisers. I suggest you rock up to meet him in March. Oh, and while you're about, why not go for a little jog?

[www.northburn100.co.nz](http://www.northburn100.co.nz)



# RAIN FOREST, RUN

Words > *Chris White* \* Images > *Muzza*  
[www.ExtremePhotography.com.au](http://www.ExtremePhotography.com.au)

The 57km Spiny Cray Ultra is a serious tropical test. Participants and their calves, quads and lungs confront the daunting prospect of 1550 metres of climbing to a turnaround point 1220 metres above sea level. Yet what better reward for one's efforts than to be welcomed by the natural air conditioning of the deeply shaded, World Heritage listed and astoundingly biodiverse Mount Lewis National Park. A wild chunk of North Queensland protecting highland rainforest in which shelters rare and threatened fauna, including the Golden Bowerbird, Southern Cassowary, Mount Lewis Spiny Cray, Lemuroid Ringtail Possum and Daintree River Ringtail Possum.

Starting and finishing at the Highlander Tavern in Julatten, 54 of the 57 kilometres are heavily shaded by rainforest canopy and crystal clear rainforest creeks provide water cooler, sweeter and more physically refreshing than a drum of electrolyte-juice. A couple of very occasional breaks in the canopy reveal the depth of the Daintree wilderness and afford the chance to appreciate rambling through the rainforest, jogging in the fog and climbing through the clouds.

The Spiny Cray Ultra is the third and final event each year in the Dirty Northern Trail Running Series. Its third running will take place this year on Sunday 24 June. Check it all out at:

**Adventure Sport North Queensland**

# A Shot of Moonlight

*Pure South Shotover  
Moonlight Marathon.  
There can be few more dramatic  
beginnings to a trail race  
anywhere in the world.*

*Words > Mal Law \* Images > Courtesy of Adrian Bailey / Active QT*



Just to get to the start line the already nervous competitors need to walk across the 160-metre span of the Pipeline swingbridge that straddles the Shotover River some 73 death-defying metres above the water, and then scramble down a steep bank to a small rocky beach at the water's edge. This assumes they have already survived the vertigo-inducing drive along the precipitous thin strip of gravel road that leads along Skippers Canyon from Queenstown to the bridge. To call it dramatic is about as big an understatement as describing the run that follows as 'challenging'.

It's an evocative scene on that rocky beach by the side of the Shotover River, deep in gold country, where hardy folk still eek out a living sluicing and panning the creeks for specks of the precious metal. There stand sixty-seven fidgety runners and one even more fidgety Race Director, awaiting the start of this inaugural event. For us competitors what lies ahead is a daunting 42kms of trail and over 2000 metres of ascent. But more telling perhaps will be the equivalent amount of descent, for we are warned that much of it is steep, narrow and technical trail, the kind that can only be made by sheep.

The first couple of kilometres are rough and slightly overgrown but the smell of wild marjoram is intoxicating. Running close to or beside the Shotover River there are lots of gold mining relics to distract

competitors, who really need to be concentrating on foot placement, so a few stumbles are seen and the first curses of the day are heard.

With barely enough time to have warmed up the first big ascent is upon us. This is on scree and leads out of the main river valley into the Stoney Creek, picking up the line of an old water race built and used by miners during the heyday of the gold rush 150 years ago. It's still rough underfoot, there are more spills but now the whoops of joy drown out any muttered curses. It's at this point that I'm reminded just how special it is to be running on private land that is normally closed to the public. It adds massively to the sense of adventure. And when it's a High Country Station of such breathtaking and daunting beauty that sensation is multiplied several times over.

Another steep climb takes us into another high valley in which the cooling waters of Murphy's Creek and patches of beech forest would offer pleasant relief on a hot day. So far we have been fortunate as the southerly airflow is keeping temperatures manageable. At the head of the creek is a short loop that climbs to almost 1000 metres through rough, untracked tussock lands before descending on a short stretch of farm track. We are now just a third of the way through and becoming increasingly aware of just what we have let ourselves in for.



More varied terrain, all of it single-track running, leads to Moonlight Lodge and beyond that is a thrilling climb and descent over a rocky knoll that opens up dramatic views down the Moonlight valley. Another quad-crunching descent delivers us to the halfway point and the warm smiles of the Foster family at Ben Lomond Lodge, which in summer doubles as their home and overnight accommodation for guests. We had been amongst the lucky ones staying here the night before and had fallen in love with the ambience and setting of the place – a truly magical spot that is hard to leave, especially given the knowledge of what comes next.

This is where the race really begins for ahead lies the meanest climb of the day. Over just a few kilometres the farm track ascends some 600 metres, at times so steep you wonder how any vehicle, 4WD or not, can safely negotiate it. The reward is a long, undulating traverse along a stunning ridge with views into the depths of the Shotover River on one side and the Moonlight on the other. The farm track turns to single-track which gets progressively narrower and rougher then steeper as the highest point on the course, 1005 metres, is reached. This is a 'top of the world' moment but after smiling at Bruce the photographer there is no choice but to start the never-ending descent on rough sheep tracks that eventually delivers smashed legs on to a wobbly stock bridge across another creek. There can be fewer tougher descents in trail running races anywhere on the planet and the consensus amongst many was that this represented their breaking point. From hereon in, with mangled legs and aching ankles, it became very much a mental battle for most.

The final 10km follows Moke Creek to the lake of the same name. There are some forty river crossings to be made but by this time of the day, with things warming up a bit, they offered much-needed relief for swollen, sore feet. In a final surreal – some would say cruel – twist, we were directed around a lap of a large lakeside paddock in which Jane Campion's latest film set has taken up semi-permanent residence. Taunting us over this final stretch were the sight and sounds of the finish area, set up in the Station's woolshed. The last hurdle was a couple of hundred metres of gently ascending gravel road, the easiest and the hardest running of the day, but lined as it was with supporters and spectators it made for a great finale.

The fastest time of the day was recorded by British fell-runner extraordinaire Martin Cox and it's a measure of how tough the course is that it took this mountain goat 4½ hrs to complete. In second place was Grant Guise, who with 4 hours 52 minutes was the only other runner to go sub-5 hours. In the women's race, Anna Frost did as she often does, dominating from start to finish despite claiming trashed legs after her record-breaking exploits on Taranaki the previous weekend. Anna finished fifth overall in 5 hours 15 minutes, half an hour ahead of Louisa Andrew.

Despite the demands of the course, and perhaps because the weather was so benign, 65 of the 67 starters made it to the finish line, the last one home taking almost 10½ hours. In a year when the temperatures are more typical of a Queenstown summer I'd expect the attrition rate to be higher. But that should not put anyone off having a crack at this memorable mountain race. That said, if the prospect of a full marathon

is too daunting then there are three other distances offered. There's a Half Marathon, a 10km and a 5km race all starting and finishing at Moke Lake. Collectively these drew a further 245 competitors and helped create a very special, family-friendly atmosphere at the finish.

Another great feature of the race organisation – one much appreciated by those of nervous disposition who might fear the aforementioned drive along Skippers Canyon – is the option of taking a jet boat up the Shotover to the start. Or if looking to arrive in even grander style, the deluxe package provides a night at the convivial Ben Lomond Lodge, experiencing the warm hospitality and fantastic country cooking of the Foster family, followed by a spectacular helicopter flight to the Pipeline Bridge the next morning.

So there you have it. A new iconic event in the making has been born. It takes a special kind of vision, a deep passion and steel-plated determination to conceive, plan and successfully pull off a race like this. But the combination of Race Director Adrian Bailey from Active QT and the Foster family who own the Ben Lomond Station over which the race takes place, and who had first conceived the idea of a running race over their not-so-little slice of paradise seven years ago, made this first edition of the event a massive success. It would seemingly now be guaranteed a spot on the 'must do' list of the international trail running community for future years. See you there next year.

[www.activeqt.co.nz/events/shotover-moonlight/race-information](http://www.activeqt.co.nz/events/shotover-moonlight/race-information)





# OUT OF AFRICA

LINDA DOKE —

If you've heard whispers of the name, you'd know she's one of the growing coterie of stars emerging from across the Indian Ocean. Roger Hanney speaks with South African Doke about how to run 100-milers, partnering with Ryan Sandes, and her recent Skyrun success.

*Interview* > Roger Hanney

*Images* > Linda Doke + Craig Kolesky/

Nikon/Lexar > [www.craigkolesky.com](http://www.craigkolesky.com)



**Images, left to right >**

*The Skyrun heads into dusk;*

*Linda smiling while miling;*

*Ryan Sandes paces Linda.*



### **How long have you been running ultras?**

I've been running ultras since my first Two Oceans 56km in 1996. That was in my second year of running and I was a pure roadie in those days. Over the following nine years I clocked up loads of marathons (I've long lost count of those) and road ultras, until I moved to Cape Town and discovered there was a whole other world of running out there: trail. I leapt into trail with gusto, and haven't looked back!

### **What events have really maxed you out?**

I'd say probably my two Tuffer Puffers (a 100-miler that is 75 per cent trail, 25 per cent tar), and then probably because I wasn't as prepared for them as I should've been. In both events I finished first woman and second overall, but my times could've been way better had I known how to run a miler. Ignorance was bliss, but both times I paid for it with exhaustion in the second half.

### **Would you say you now know how to run a miler?**

#### **What would you say are the guiding principles needed or, conversely, the worst mistakes you have made over the distance?**

I reckon the most important aspect of running (very) long distances, besides putting in the training, is getting the nutrition right – not only planning it, but executing that plan. That's always my biggest challenge and I'm still learning how to get it right. Even with my latest ultra, Sky Run, which was just 100km (and I say "just" because that barely compares to a 100-miler), I didn't get my nutrition right. I'd planned it all so carefully, and I was carrying everything I needed stashed in the various pockets of my Skin pack. Problem was, I became so distracted trying to cover as much distance as I could before darkness fell that I forgot to eat. By the time I realised, it was too late – anything I tried to swallow wouldn't stay down. It meant my energy was steadily sapped, I became slower and slower, and over the final ten kilometres of the race the best I could do was walk. I lost huge time, and I kick myself for that. Fortunately throughout the day I had widened the gap between me and the next lady enough to see me over the line first, but she certainly gained on me in those final few hours. It taught me a major lesson – and one I really should've known. You've got to keep putting fuel in the tank.

### **Have there been any runners who inspired you to go the extra mile? And how would you characterise the trail scene in South Africa?**

Without hesitation my inspiration these past few years has been our local trail running champ and now world ultra trail champ, Ryan Sandes. I've run with him often, and also had the privilege of partnering him in an eight-day stage race in Europe. Of all he's taught me, what impresses and inspires me most are his dedication and humility. He's an incredibly talented athlete, but never rests on his laurels – he trains more diligently than anyone I know. And the best part is his ego, or lack of one. Usually guys who're top of their game are full of ego, but Ryan has remained the same Ryan he always was – he's quietly confident, he knows he's good but he never says so. That's pretty damn special.

### **When did you become part of Team Salomon and did it come from a standout performance or consistency?**

I first represented Salomon when they sponsored me and my team mate in the in 2007 Cape Odyssey, a five-day, two-person stage race. We won the women's category that year. But it was in 2009, after I won the Midnight Hell Run 50km (outright win and new record for men

and women) and the Hout Bay Trail Challenge (first woman) that I became part of Team Salomon. So this is my fourth year. Salomon's a fantastic brand and it's a privilege to be a part of the team.

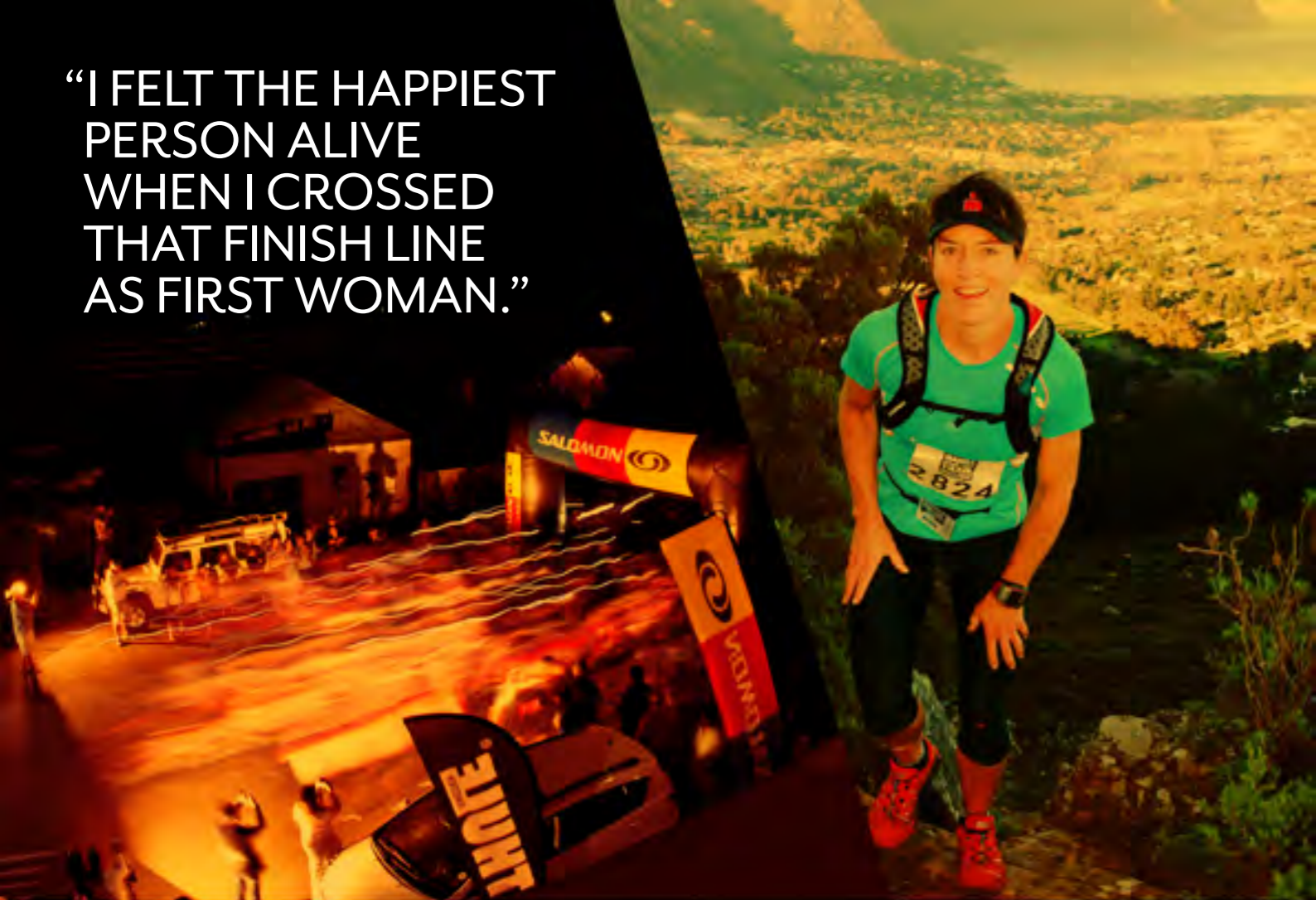
### **When deciding your races for the next twelve months, what is your process? What are you looking for from individual events and how do you decide what's in or out of your calendar?**

It's fairly loose, really. Salomon South Africa don't dictate what races the athletes must do – they're confident we know our individual strengths and they support our choices. Personally, I tend to look for new challenges (like my Namib Desert Challenge in 2011), or challenges that I view as unfinished business (like SkyRun).

### **What would you say is your career peak so far is: Nine Comrades' hardcore desert stage racing, third at Europe's TransAlpine teamed with Ryan Sandes, or outright third and women's win at the SkyRun in November last year?**

I suppose in many ways it was SkyRun – not so much because I finally put unfinished business to bed, but because it was against the odds. The year had been a rollercoaster. It had started really well with

“I FELT THE HAPPIEST PERSON ALIVE WHEN I CROSSED THAT FINISH LINE AS FIRST WOMAN.”



my women's win (fourth overall) at the Namib Desert Challenge, but I'd spent the next four months nursing a grade three stress fracture of my femur. It was my first serious injury in 17 years of running, and it knocked me big time. I was able to start training again in late July, and it was damn hard work clawing back my fitness. So my success at Sky Run was very much a personal victory – I felt the happiest person alive when I crossed that finish line as first woman.

**The SkyRun is striking because we see the winner completing 100km in close to 17 hours. Obviously 5200m is a fair bit of ascent, but what are the main elements that make it such a tough race?**

Two aspects make SkyRun such a damn tough race: firstly, it's completely self-navigated. The entire course is unmarked, and competitors do their best to run the shortest distance between checkpoints; and secondly, there's virtually no seconding allowed. Over the 100km course the only place outside support is allowed is at the 65km mark – other than that, you're self-sufficient. The course is run through an extremely remote area of the Eastern Cape in South Africa,

crossing vast expanses of rugged farm land and high mountain ridges (average altitude 2300m above sea level), and runners go for hours without seeing another soul. It's a very special race.

**As much as your writing seems a perfect accompaniment to your running, how do you beat the post-race fatigue to get your writing done, and make sure it's quality?**

As much as I love writing, I still battle with deadlines, particularly if I'm having to write on dry, boring topics. But through my blog I'm able to combine my two passions, running and writing, and when I'm writing about something I love, it's never a chore!

**Are Australia or New Zealand on your wish list and do you think we might see you racing over here in the next couple of years?**

Definitely, I'd love to experience some of your trail ultras, particularly in New Zealand. But my next international ultra is in France/Spain – the Grand Raid du Pyrenees (160km) in August. So, maybe Down Under in 2013/14!

[www.lindadoke.blogspot.com](http://www.lindadoke.blogspot.com)



## GRINDER

Like no other sport, ultra running creates incredible stresses on your body, particularly on your kidneys, those most crucial of organs. If they stop, you stop. And it hurts.

Words > Andy Hewat \* Image > Chris Ord / Heidi Hibberd

“Your CPK test shows a value of 52,000. Normal levels are approx 140. This means your kidneys are going to have to work hard to clear the debris from the muscle damage you sustained running Western States.

“Continue to hydrate with water and electrolyte fluids to keep your urine clear. Do not go to bed for 12 hours and not hydrate. Continue to drink at least every hour to maintain clear urine. Should you suddenly feel ill with flu-like symptoms, you should go to your local emergency room and have your CPK rechecked.”

This message was sitting among many emails when I got back to Australia two weeks after running the Western States 100 in 2007. At the time the elation of completing WS100 drowned out any warning signals my body might have sent me. And rest assured, with a contingent of 20 Aussies having just completed WS100 there was plenty of hydrating going on that evening! But it so easily could have been a different outcome.

Kidneys are fickle but vital organs. Lose them and you either end up on dialysis or you die. Simple as that. Running ultras places incredible stress on our kidneys and to compound the problem many of us routinely take anti-inflammatory painkillers to help us get through our races. These Non Steroidal Anti-Inflammatory Drugs (NSAIDs) suppress kidney function at a time when they are already struggling. The end result can be catastrophic. I figure my saving grace at WS100 in 2007 was that I didn't take any NSAIDs despite my quads being totally shredded after going into the race undertrained coming off an injury.

Not everyone is that lucky. And to avoid a trip to hospital there are a couple of terms you should be familiar with: Rhabdomyolysis (Rhabdo) and Exercise Associated Hyponatremia (EAH). If you aren't familiar with these and you run long trail races then you're asking for trouble. This is one case where ignorance will be no excuse. Like I said: dialysis or die. Simple as that.

While totally different pathologies, possibly brought on by opposing causes, they can present with similar symptoms. And if you have EAH but the medicos think you have Rhabdo and they plug in simple intravenous fluids without checking your blood-sodium levels first, it could make things much worse. Cerebral oedema is fluid on the brain and can lead to seizures, coma and death.

Maybe a little melodramatic, but true. You need to know what these conditions are and how to avoid them. And if you collapse at the end of your race you want to hope the first aid attendants know what they are and how to treat them. Chances are if you have done a few ultras you have already experienced some degree of one or both. And here's the kicker: you can have both at the same time!

“I’m of the opinion now that if you’re hammering yourself that hard to cross the line - to ultimately end up in hospital, you’ve failed.

What’s the point of racing if you can’t enjoy a beer with your mates afterwards.”

But let’s look at each separately first.

Exercise Associated Hyponatremia: is when the sodium levels in your blood get too low. Put simply if you drink too much water (or even sports drink) before, during and/or after exercise you can dilute the sodium levels in your blood.

Rhabdomyolysis: is when muscle is broken down due to the pounding of running and the protein by-products (myoglobin) clog the kidneys. It is exacerbated by dehydration, heat and undertraining.

And while we are doing definitions: NSAIDs are the non-steroidal anti-inflammatories. The most common of these contain ibuprofen with brand names like Nurofen and Voltaren but they also include the aspirin and naproxen families of painkillers.

It is probably appropriate that much of the work done on the effects of ultra running on the kidneys has been carried out at Western States, the oldest and grandest 100-mile trail race. Medical Director from WS100, Dr Marty Hoffman is very vocal on educating runners about the dangers of kidney failure. He has been involved in several studies and papers on their findings. One such article co-authored with Kevin Fogard published in 2011 was based on a material gathered from surveying runners at WS100 and the Vermont 100 in 2009. In that study they said that the “concern about use of NSAIDs is that these drugs reduce glomerular filtration rate through local inhibition of synthesis of the prostaglandins responsible for vasodilation. They also potentiate the action of arginine vasopressin on the kidneys increasing the risk for the development of exercise-associated hyponatremia, which may

subsequently enhance the development of rhabdomyolysis. As such, the risk of acute renal failure is heightened with the use of NSAIDs.”

While the education of ultrarunners has reduced the use of NSAIDs it is still way too high. At WS100 entrants receive educational warnings with their pre-race material. Despite this runners continue to use NSAIDs. From his 2011 data Hoffman cites: “The overall NSAID use was 34 per cent. Interestingly, the use of NSAIDs was at 57 per cent in 2009, so hopefully this represents some progress with our educational efforts.” Ironically there is no evidence to support the theory that these painkillers are actually making any difference to performance. Hoffman again: “I don’t believe we have any solid evidence that NSAIDs actually reduce pain. I’m only aware of one paper that looked at this (Dave Nieman’s group from a study at WSER), and they found no benefit in terms of pain relief or reduced delayed-onset muscle soreness.”

But the message is spreading and the studies are expanding. At last years Great North Walk 100 around 20 runners took part in an EAH study. We gave blood before the race, twice during the race, at the finish and then 24 hours after the finish and were quizzed on various factors including the use of NSAIDs. These results will be shared with the international community to better understand the management and avoidance of EAH.

But what do you look for and how do you avoid kidney drama?

Symptoms of EAH include bloating, puffiness, headache, nausea, vomiting, altered mental status, agitation, confusion, respiratory distress, seizures and coma due to fluid on the brain. Urine output

can be reduced or even stop. While there is generally weight gain with fluid build-up, there can still be weight loss so this is unreliable.

Symptoms of Rhabdo include muscle soreness and pain, generalised malaise, fever, tachycardia, nausea and vomiting, altered mental status, confusion and low urine output can also be characteristics. Sound familiar? A classic sign is the coffee grounds colour urine. The darker the wee, the worse the Rhabdo. And remember that the onset of symptoms may be delayed. You could go home feeling tired and washed out from the run, go to sleep and wake up in trouble the next day.

If during a run you find yourself with any of these signs or symptoms you need to stop. If severe you need to seek help. If mild and you are just starting to get nauseous and swollen hands stop drinking and take some salt and wait until you start weeing again. If you have noticed your wee getting darker you need to increase your fluids but if you have really dark urine and major muscle soreness consider pulling out.

How do you tell whether you have Rhabdo or EAH? You don’t. The plan is to not get to that state in the first place. If you do then you need a blood test to determine which you have before they start running intravenous fluids. If you have EAH and you get a normal saline IV (once a common practice if the medicos encountered an endurance athlete in a depleted and distressed state) you will exacerbate the problem and can cause serious damage. You should be aware of how much you have been drinking: water, sports drink or whatever. If you feel you have been drinking plenty and your quads aren’t shredded the chances are you have EAH. If you feel dry and your quads are smashed and you are in a death shuffle strong

possibility that you have Rhabdo. But remember you can have both at once so don’t count on anything until you get that blood test.

Avoidance is the key. EAH is largely the result of drinking too much. The new rule is drink according to thirst. Monitoring your urine output is always important. Salt supplementation is necessary and you can’t rely on sports drinks as most are hypotonic to plasma (too low in sodium).

Coming into an event undertrained or off an injury is a common cause for Rhabdo. Muscles are unprepared for the pounding they suffer and increased breakdown overloads the kidneys.

Using NSAIDs should be avoided at all costs. If your body is in pain then something is wrong. Pushing too far beyond that pain barrier might lead to dangerous consequences. And taking painkillers to allow you to continue has been proven to not really help with the pain but can also screw up your kidneys.

Think it won’t happen to you? Think again. Gun trail runner, Chris Wight has a story to tell. After WS100 was cancelled in 2008, Chris made the pilgrimage in 2009. But injury severely limited his preparation. Entries to WS are hard to come by so he knuckled under and crammed as much training into the five-week lead-up that he could manage.

Chris recounts: “By Mile 80 (Rucky Chucky) I felt like I had rail road spikes jammed through the front of each leg and every step was very painful. Still I kept running (shuffling) all but the ups until highway 49 (mile 95) after which point I could only run the flats (too tired for ups and too sore for downs). Ran the last mile or so of road to finish in 22:09.



"About an hour after finishing I began to feel nauseous and lay down on the infield and slept for about an hour. I let the medicos know I wasn't feeling great and was administered an IV.

"After being checked out at Auburn Hospital I was advised that I had early signs of renal failure and that I would require further treatment.

"Over the next week I was administered constant fluids via IV in an attempt to flush out my kidneys. Four days after the race I weighed an extra 28 kilo. After one week my kidneys were still not responsive and I was put on dialysis. I had dialysis sessions every second day for a week after which time I showed signs that my kidneys were about to get working again and I was discharged and flew immediately back to Melbourne. On my flight back to Melbourne my kidneys started working again and I went to the bathroom every 45 minutes (including through the night) for the next four days until I was back down to my original weight (actually a bit under my original weight). During one night I lost in excess of six kilograms of fluid.

"When back in Melbourne I had to go into the Austin hospital and get check ups daily for a week, then every second day for another two weeks. After that two weekly, monthly, six monthly." Chris' CPK reached 785 250 (normal 140). His GFR was 6L/min (normal above 60L/min), which is close to complete failure.

Marty Hoffman has another paper coming out this year with the latest results of their studies. Surprisingly, the emphasis on the involvement of NSAIDs in kidney failure at ultras is being challenged. They now feel that it is just one of the many ingredients that lead to

what they call the "perfect storm". This is when all the contributing conditions combine to shut the kidneys down. Remember, dialysis or die. While we await these findings there is little doubt that we need to be better educated and more responsible for our own wellbeing. While our sport has inherent risks that we are happy to live with, in fact embrace, there are some that we can control and should reduce.

Perhaps the most salient piece of advice comes from Chris:

"I also have changed my stance on DNFs. Previously I was of the opinion that I was always going to finish but sometimes the risk does outweigh the reward and I wouldn't push through that sort of pain to the finish of any race again. I'm of the opinion now that if you're hammering yourself that hard to cross the line to ultimately end up in hospital you've failed. What's the point of racing if you can't enjoy a beer with your mates afterwards." \*

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"I began to feel nauseous and lay down and slept for about an hour. I let the medicos know and was administered an IV... I had early signs of renal failure."

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# THE BLUES BROTHERS

THE TRAIL RUNNING TALENT POOL ACROSS AUSTRALIA AND NEW ZEALAND CONTINUES TO GROW LIKE FEVERISH MOSS. TWO OF TRAIL'S BIGGEST RISING STARS CAN BE FOUND THRASHING IT OUT IN THE BUSH (AND OCCASIONALLY AT THE BAR) IN THE BLUE MOUNTAINS, NEW SOUTH WALES. MARGARETHA FORTMANN VISITS THE PAIR IN TRAIL PARADISE TO SEE WHAT MAKES MICK DONGES AND BRENDAN DAVIES TICK.

Out of the thick Blue Gum haze, two figures emerge. Long strides, confident arms. They are silent but their bodies speak another language, communicating a bond as they manoeuvre over rocks, roots and scree.

The blonde figure is Mick Donges. His whippet-lean physique lends grace to his running gait; his steely gaze pulls never-ending stretches of road into focus, revealing the path ahead. The dark horse beside him is Brendan Davies. Power ripples through taut muscle, each step feather light, fast and confident. Both men represent a new breed of runner emerging from a growing athletic community in NSW's Blue Mountains. They are passionate about trail running and the environment they choose to play in. They epitomise the trail brotherhood every runner experiences when running with others. Of course, both men also have big goals in mind for the 2012 race season, the biggest of which is to beat one another.

Donges is a 28 year-old, self-proclaimed wanderer and coffee enthusiast, living out of his beaten-up Landcruiser when not in the Blue Mountains. He pursues mountain trails with a fever, always on the hunt for gnarlier, steeper tracks to challenge himself on. After a fairly active upbringing with a father who enjoyed "bush runs", Donges connected back into the running scene after a successful team result at the 2008 The North Face 100km.

"I surprised myself how naturally it came, and suddenly I was hooked again," he says of finding his love of trail running. Last year, Donges returned to the race as a solo runner and placed sixth behind some of the best trail runners in the world.

Davies' passion for running started with a rebellion against the public transport system when as a school kid he tore up his bus pass and declared that he would rather run to school. After trying out a lifestyle of pies and beer as a young 20 year-old, he started playing squash competitively. At first, running was a means to trim down and build explosive speed on the squash court.

"I soon realised that running was much more fun, and so the journey began. Within a year I had lost the fat, joined a running club and was running marathons," says the now 34 year-old special education teacher.

From sweat bands and squash balls, Davies progressed quickly and has achieved several stellar performances, including setting a new course record at the 2010 Deep Space Mountain Marathon, and in 2011 placed second at the Six Foot Track Marathon and fifth at the North Face 100km.

"I love pushing my mind and body to the extremes and being rewarded with fitness, healthiness and friendships that have positive impacts on all aspects of my life," he says.

The two runners met at the 'Beyond the Blackstump' Fat Arse event, held in Berowra, NSW, in 2010. Of their first meeting Donges recalls that he caught up to Davies during the race, at which point the older runner asked him who he was between deep, chest expanding breaths.

"I think Brendan was somewhat confused at my audacity to match his pace," Mick recalls.

A bond formed, cemented by a post race beer and equally smelly shoes, and has led to both racing together on numerous occasions both locally and internationally.





They race together on Team No Roads, and represented Australia at last year's Commonwealth Ultra Distance and Mountain Running championship, held in Wales. The race was held on 54km of mixed trail in the wilds of the Welsh coast; a soulful landscape of barren coastline, craggy pale granite boulder fields and even a herd of horses thundering alongside the runners. It was here that their friendship and mutual love for the trails saw them supporting each other in the lead up as team mates, and standing side by side on the starting line as competitors.

"We both knew we were evenly matched and that it was a toss of the coin who would finish in front. We just focused very much on how we could support each other as a team," Davies says of the relationship.

They shared a room together, but where some athletes would use the opportunity to undermine their opponent's pre-race preparation, Davies was only looking to how they could support each other.

"Sharing a room was really beneficial from a psychological point of view. We talked a bit about our anxieties, which helped to clear our minds of doubts before race day."

Davies did suggest, though, that his quality of sleep suffered from the smell of his roommate's well-worn shoes.

"Mick seriously needs to wash his shoes more often. The smell was so bad I swear I saw them walking out on their own one morning."

Of their time in Wales, Donges saw his teammate more as a mentor than the man to beat.

"I had the opportunity to study and watch Brendan's every move. We went to a local supermarket to get supplies before the race, and

I just stalked Brendan through the aisles picking the same items he did. It was slightly awkward at the checkout when I had all the same items: Powerade, lollies, bananas and beer," Donges says with a laugh.

"Seriously though, it was great to see Brendan prepare for the race: his tapering, carbo-loading, and motivation techniques. He counselled me, encouraged me and basically there was a lot of positive talking-it-up between us. He is a really positive, experienced and proactive guy who has an amazingly accurate idea of how he will perform and what he needs to do to get to the pointy end."

Of their performance against a field of top international trail stars, Donges says "It was difficult to gauge my performance before the race against a field I had not encountered before. I thought we would place in the last 25 percent. Closer to the race I thought that anywhere in the top 10 would be remarkable."

In the end, their friendship didn't impede either runner from racing extremely well, with Davies finishing fourth, and Donges only a minute behind in fifth place. In order to get these places, Davies and Donges had to outrun experienced trail runners like Canadian Jason Loutit, and Kiwi Vajin Armstrong.

"Running with a friend means that even when you have a shit race, you can still share in the happiness and joy if your friend does well. Racing is about building good memories; you really delve into a person's true character when you race hard against them," Donges says matter-of-factly.

Davies adds: "The best thing about racing with a friend is that you can rip up the trails, push each other to new limits, have a chat, do what you love unashamedly, and then have a beer, a feed and a good yak afterwards."

This year the two mountain men will have plenty of opportunities to stand together on the racing line, against each other and as team mates. Team No Roads is sponsored by the adventure travel company No Roads Expeditions, with the idea that their adventurous and high adrenaline take on tourism is reflected in the races that their team runners take part in.

In 2011, Donges and Davies, along with Clarke McClymont and Andy Lee, raced as a team in the Kokoda Challenge on the Gold Coast. The race is a test of the endurance and courage of the teams participating. It is a 96km epic that aims to honour the values of the men that marched the Kokoda Track in 1942: mateship and sacrifice. These values are not lost on any trail runner that has competed in an ultra that has tested their capacity and will to the limit.

Team No Roads smashed the course record by an hour and a half, a testament to the men's friendship and continual support of each other.

"All the guys in the team are true gentlemen of the sport," says Donges. "They are good runners and very humble about it. Trail running is an individual sport but it's great to be a part of a team and just see how you can approach a race from a different perspective. Expect to see Team No Roads wherever there is a team aspect."

The team has now expanded to include Ben Artup (the 6ft Track record holder), Beth Cardelli, Angela Bateup, and Ewan Horsburgh. It is also no coincidence that of the eight team members, five are living and training in the Blue Mountains.



**“BOTH MEN ALSO HAVE BIG GOALS  
IN MIND FOR THE RACE SEASON,  
THE BIGGEST OF WHICH IS TO BEAT ONE ANOTHER.”**



**VIDEO INTERVIEW**

*Check out an extended video interview with Team No Roads'*

*Mick Donges and Brendan Davies*

**Interview** > *courtesy Tod Clarke / Aurora Images*

[www.auroraimages.com.au](http://www.auroraimages.com.au)



"There is a really strong sense of community in the mountains, which I love being a part of," says Donges.

Donges and Davies came to the mountains under different circumstances, but both credit the sandstone cliff landscape for nurturing their inner trail runner and their competitive success. Donges moved to the mountains as a 10 year-old, and never left.

"A huge part of my love for the Blue Mountains stems from the natural beauty found there. There are amazing walks, fantastic views, beautiful wildlife and a fusion of culture," he says.

A huge appeal of the area, well known amongst NSW trail runners, is the diversity of terrain available. Any given run will include a good mix of fire trail, walking and mountain bike tracks, some dense, long-forgotten trails, some mapped and others passed on as legend amongst locals.

"I literally have a trail going from my backdoor to the bush," says Davies, a slightly smug grin on his face at the thought of all that running possibility at his fingertips.

"Most trails in the mountains are very hilly. Seriously, there is no escape from them, and I guess this is a good thing from a training perspective as you can build strength even during an easy session."

Davies' outstanding performance at last year's Great North Walk 100km is certainly an indication of the stamina and technical prowess he has honed in the mountains. He placed first, finishing the course in 11hr 36min, a new course record. It's an impressive result given that he raced after straining his calf two weeks prior.

"By 95km I was pretty well running on empty and really shuffled into the finish. It's a brutal race, not just the terrain and climbing involved, but also the intense heat and humidity."

Both runners have found themselves in the midst of a growing pack of trail lovers: a motley collection of athletes, some in tie-dyed apparel straight from the carnival atmosphere of Katoomba's main street, others in lycra and compression gear. What they all have in common is the inspiration they draw from the landscape and surroundings.

"I find it inspiring and motivating to have such nice trails close by. It has even influenced my choice of living entirely. The mountains and running go hand-in-hand for me," says Donges.

Runners in the mountains now have strong groups to train with, including the Blue Mountains Marathon Clinic, whose formation saw many runners meeting and connecting. Running Wild NSW also hosts numerous weekend trail races in the mountains during the running season, and has been instrumental during in promoting the sport.

"They have helped to build a strong trail running community in and around the mountains," says Donges, who has participated in (and won) a few of their races.

With such an amazing community, training ground and the support of each other, the future is coming into focus for both Donges and Davies and it is looking pretty sharp. Both will be standing together this year, facing the challenges the 6ft Track and The North Face 100km as friends and competitors.

While Davies wants to step up and tackle the Great North Walk 100-miler, Donges has aspirations to compete at some of the international races.

"I want to win UTMB," says Donges with a grin. "Or come second. And maybe beat Brendan once or twice, too." \*

# WE ARE INVESTED IN OUR ATHLETES.



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Krissy Moehl— UltrAspire Elite Immortal™ and Ultra Trail Runner wearing the Kinetic Race Vest.



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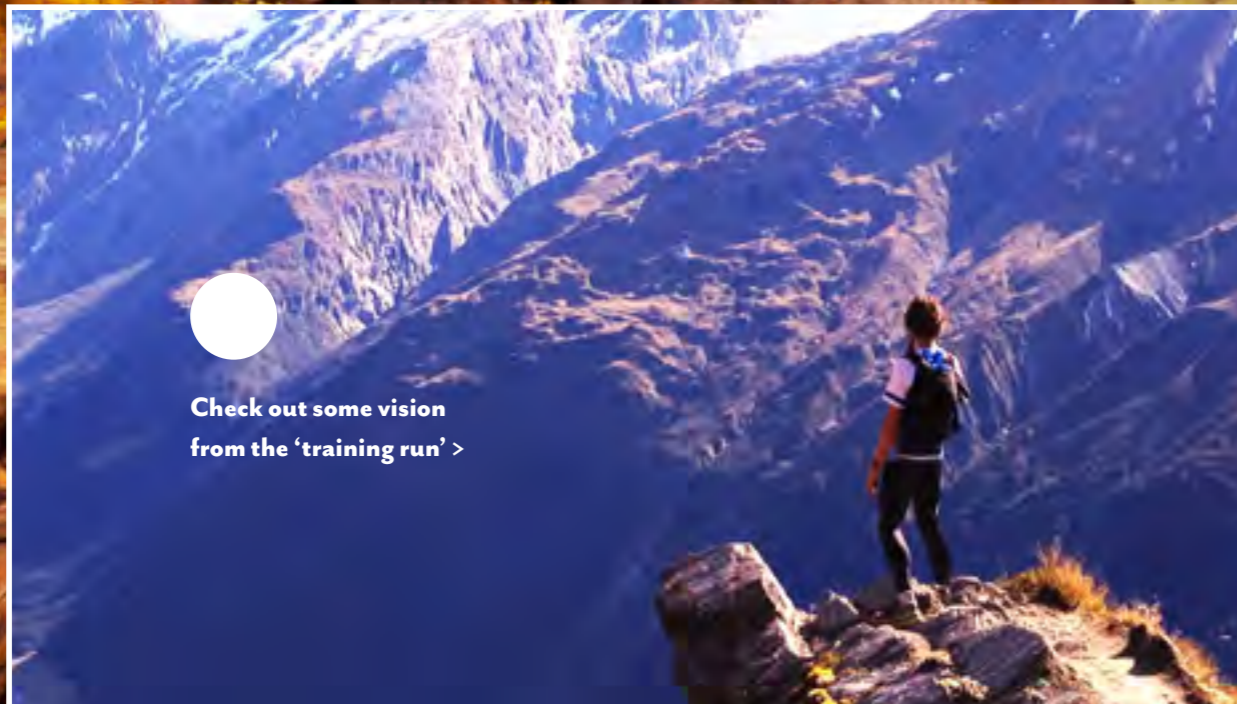
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# TRAINING DAZE

Words > Roger Hanney  
Images > Jess Baker, Roger Hanney +  
Mal Law / Running Wild NZ

Some people train around the block. Some make it to the local park. Others get to a state forest. But when you're conditioning for an adventure as grandiose as the 4Deserts challenge, it makes sense to take your hit outs to another level altogether. Born To Run trail team members, Roger Hanney and Jess Baker, take it all the way across the Tasman...



Check out some vision from the 'training run' >



**It's not a bad excuse to cross the ditch: to train. Hard. Bigger mountains. You do the sums.**

Our newly created Australian trail team Born To Run was only months off embarking on a global running adventure called the 4Deserts, a grand slam ultra challenge taking in deserts of the Atacama, Gobi, Sahara and Antarctica. So it made sense to seek out some similarly mind blowing terrain to blow our legs and lungs into shape.

There are no deserts in New Zealand, I hear you say. Technically true. Nevertheless, teammate and GNW miler runner-up, Jess Baker, thought the inaugural Pure South Shotover Moonlight Mountain Marathon would be a great testing ground, not just for our physical readiness, but also for our team dynamic: how would we operate out on the trails when things got tough? Plus, we could sneak in some juicy training on classic trails like Kepler and Routeburn and, by catching an earlier flight, we hoped to get a run past a mighty glacier along with the stunning meadow valleys, carved stone floodways and alpine crests of the South Island's Mt. Aspiring National Park.

The plan was to hook up with TRM's very own Mal Law (see his report on Shotover in this issue) who had been sitting on the mission for a while - it being highly strung on weather dependency - and was raring to go as our trail guide.

Barely three hours after arriving in Wanaka and with a clear day forecast, we were on our way knowing a day of dropped-jaw running lay ahead.

After negotiating a road pocketed with hordes of directionally-challenged sheep, we left the car at a parking lot in the Matukituki Valley and turned feet toward the mountain trails. With packs loaded for a self-supported 12-hour day, a chilly and gusting headwind blasting us in warning, and a rushing river to run by, we trotted off into a grass valley bordered by towering snowcapped peaks and richly forested slopes.

Reaching the first of many alpine huts that dot the countryside, providing landmarks, shelter, and drinking water, the run became less reminiscent of

Heidi and more like Planet of Funky Gnarled Trees, Springy Beech Leaf Covered Trails, and Dirty Bastard Quad-Smashing Steep Single Tracks.

You must have seen that one? You know, the one where the road runner gets lost and dies because the one fast marathon time they recorded on a flat course in the '90s just doesn't mean shit.

Over the next 4.7km, we climbed 1300m. If you're curious what a sustained 30 per cent gradient feels like, just do 200 sit-ups on gravel, ask a housemate to repeatedly kick your arse and quads with a steelcapped boot, then run in front of a train. It's awesome.

At the top - the whole way up, to be fair - we were rewarded with increasingly pulse-racing views. It was hard to believe that this was real. We kept taking photos as though it couldn't get any more amazing and we just had to capture it all now. High up and exposed to the winds roaring through the valley, the mountainside was covered in calf-high grasses and occasional stubborn bushes, which disappeared entirely as we climbed higher.

We surprised a friendly Japanese hiker at the top. He seemed stoked at the idea of us doing a four-day trek in one day's dash. So were we. Totally exposed on a peak of shattered rocks, a mighty turquoise glacier stared at us impressively and chillingly. We applied shells and other protective gear. Clouds were building in one corner of the sky and with a booming wind we expected moody weather might become a theme for the day. But Mother Nature held her composure - no tantrums, just perfect skies for the remainder of the exploit.

Malcolm took video footage with his GoPro camera, transcoding and compacting the beauty of the gigantic terrain into its boxed circuitry, ready for YouTube viewing by those who will not smell, hear nor feel the landscape captured. Technology will never replace stepping along the real thing.

Schist and scree was something new to us Aussies, as we zigzagged down along the Cascade Saddle toward another gorgeous glacial stream. Like slate but a bit more rugged, layers of rock stuck out from the slopes.

Running over, along, and beside these jagged plates was a balancing act of skipping, rockhopping, and falling as steadily as possible. It was a lottery of landing on a rock that would slide, or a rock that stuck, never knowing which until our weight plunged down on each.

After hitting the stream and refilling water bladders, we began to pace toward the glacial ravine on narrow well-defined trails through alpine grasses, this time level enough to get some speed on.

Chasing each other down, we got closer and closer to the towering slopes of rock and ice that grew before us. Her own ultra training a testament to casually inflicted brutality, Jess shot ahead at will. With plenty of time in his legs and a deep attachment to his country, Mal was also in his element and running on-song.

He mentioned that he'd wanted to do this route as a trail run for a long time but had been waiting for the right time and for some other nutters to join the fray. We were lucky that the weather and timing and Facebook hookups worked out so well, landing us an absolute primo route on our first day on the South Island.

As we crested the last big mound ahead of us, we were floored by the view. Just like the recce photo Mal had sent when suggesting routes we could attempt – and it was really the picture and distance that locked the course in as an essential run – a massive bulldozer of million-year-old (a guess, probably wrong) ice and carved boulder rubble bore down in front of us. Stunning. Switchbacks took us lower and closer until we came around the very bottom of the glacier – a mighty, dirty blue-white frozen wall perhaps 11 storeys high.

Here, the headwaters of the river winding away from us formed. From the top of this mighty stone valley, with the glacier behind us, sheer stone walls loomed above. Highly eroded and rubble strewn grassed slopes dodged and dived off to our left, intermittently broken by more glacial streams joining the main body of water as it built and surged, running across a wide barren floor, an alien landscape of crushed and broken rocks seemingly without break to the horizon.

As we ran into this overpowering landscape – running away from a retreating glacier, Mal joked – the forces around us became more evident. Parts of marked trail on


the rocky grassland had disappeared, isolating one section of pathway from another, with a great dirty drop in the middle. White lines like ribbons down distant cliff faces became stunning spouts of water, plummeting from summits and swirling about in mischievous winds on their way down.

Running out of the rubble field we learned something. Having been ice barely five minutes beforehand, glacial headwaters are cold. Ridiculously cold. We were forced into about seven river crossings as the water weaved across our path. The first crossing was tantalizingly refreshing. The second was painful. The third left our feet feeling like they were on fire. And then with an uncertain number of deeper, wider crossings to make, loud swearing began to puncture the laughing. Eventually our team reached a series of blue pools that lay undisturbed like giant opals fallen from above. Five hours in and we still had over 40km to go.


Are you getting the sense yet that this was an extraordinary experience, and an equally incredible day and place to be alive and running?

Everything after this was just New Zealand showing off. We chased each other across more rubble-strewn grasslands into more wide open meadows, bound by more mountains and yet more gorgeous cool forests. It was more of everything in a land where more is good. Mossy, rocky, ancient but fresh and lively, unexpected forest sections of the dirt track led us to more huts. Some were quite large, with bunks enough to sleep a dozen or more people. Full shower and food preparation facilities have probably been used by thousands of backpackers over the years, though we saw almost nobody throughout the day other than each other and a half-naked, chubby, chafing German backpacker.

Forest gave way yet again to wide open meadows, with all running on narrow single tracks and a welcome absence of big unimaginative fire trails. Meadows, forest, meadows, forest, complex rock formations and wide clear skies. Alright, New Zealand, we bloody get it. You have everything a trail runner could possibly want. Excuse me while I trot 50 metres along this spongy, cool, shaded piece of rolling single forest trail and drink from this pure crystal fountain bubbling out of a mossy ledge to join the cascading rivulet that runs parallel to my route until it joins the miniature waterfall another 50 metres along from here. Exhausted from drinking in so much living water and awesome mountain running, I'll just lean against this lichen-covered tree that is shaped like a sofa while an hallucinated Kilian massages my still-vibrant feet.



**“If you’re curious what a sustained 30 per cent gradient feels like, just do 200 situps on gravel, ask a housemate to repeatedly kick your arse and quads with a steelcapped boot, then run in front of a train. It’s awesome.”**



After the long and relentlessly scenic Dart Track, we reached Chinaman's Bluff. Bluffs, we learned from experience, are generally narrow trails running along the edge of a slope which may vary from gentle to sheer and which continue – or discontinue, as the case may be – beneath them.

With the river beside us growing in force and volume, we noted that we had spent the afternoon more or less running from the top of a river and watching it grow as the hours and kays flew by. Now, we had reached a point where boulders the size of up-ended houses sat to the side of the roaring water, creating moments of mineralized stillness and beauty of their own. Most of a tract of forest across from us appeared to have disintegrated in a landslide, while a small stand of survivors inexplicably clustered in the middle of a floodplain below.

Forest, floodplain, meadow, mountain, waterfall.

"Malcolm, where the hell are the views you promised?" we feigned disappointment.

"I've been looking all over for them," he responded, straight-faced, "I'm pretty sure they're around here somewhere."

Smirk.

Then, breaking our group appreciation session, a lone runner with a dog emerged through the trees below. We ran towards them along a stone cliff face, sheltered by overhangs. Mal shouted to his partner Sal, who yelled back that we were about five kays from the car.

Mal then took off ahead, outpacing us both for the first time. The cunning bugger had been saving himself – that, or it was love firing the engine. Or ginger beer. Getting to the Esky first – 500 metres, not five kilometres away – he declared that just when he thought he couldn't love Sal any more than he did, she found a way to make him. We grabbed a cold one, too, and even though we'd only just met Sal, we felt the same affection.

63km, 12.5 sweaty joy-filled hours, 2850 metres of ascent: numbers just don't do Mal's Matukituki-Cascade-Dart-Glenorchy trail adventure justice. The day still bright, the car full of sandflies which we set to slaughtering, our hearts overflowing with appreciation for the driver who made our point-to-point possible – we knew we had experienced something extraordinary in our new favourite running destination. New Zealand: Land of the Long, Wicked Trail Run \*

Check out the park > [www.newzealand.com/int/article/national-parks-mount-aspiring](http://www.newzealand.com/int/article/national-parks-mount-aspiring)



# BARELY THERE

Words > Garry Dagg \* Images > Courtesy of Barefoot Inc/Vibram FiveFingers

**YES, WE'RE CAVING. CAVEMAN-ING IT, EVEN. Going back to where it began. Beginning from the beginning, if you will. We're delving into devolution and taking a look at the origins and arguments of the whole barefoot shebang. You know, Born To Run, the New York Time best seller? Ah, you'll catch up, movie's out soon.**

Borne from the musings of a minority of endurance nuts is an intense debate that has swept through the broader running fraternity. Runners – a breed who often wear independence like a war medal upon their tattered singlet – are having a debate that takes in conformity, consumerism, science and intuition. The question is this: are we born to run barefoot or do shoes best aid our evolution?

Both sides of the debate are characterized by passionate vitriol that condemns the opposition as raving lunatics tricked by the propaganda of variously large corporate marketers, or an extreme band of fringe-dwellers.

Bizarrely, opposing arguments use the same thesis to refute the other's argument: you're wrong. (It must be said though

that the whole battle continues unnoticed by the vast majority of joggers who continue to run in high tech footwear.)

With the debate so obfuscated by ideology, it seems useful to surmise the barefoot philosophy through the eyes of a recent convert: me.

I arrived at the idea of going back 10,000 years in running technique after a decade out of running thanks to a long history of ITB injuries, resulting from spending my late teens and early twenties plodding through the run leg of Ironman triathlons. A recommendation from no less than Australian running deity Rob de Castella got me experimenting with the barefoot method and now, a year and a couple of thousand kilometers of sandal-shod running later, I have tentatively embraced the barefoot ideology.

Central to the barefoot-is-better thesis is evolution and its notion of natural selection. If you take the line that we first started branching away from our ape cousins around five million years ago and have been walking upright for a couple of million, the shaping of our leg and foot muscles has been a long process. For those who don't spend your evenings buried in evolution textbooks, there is an unsolved mystery of how we spent the 1.8 million years between first starting to eat meat and inventing the technology that would allow us to hunt animals down. The two major ideas are that the earliest human ancestors either scavenged what they could find or they persistence hunted.

Persistence hunting is the more controversial of the two. It holds it was early human's ability to sweat that advantaged them over their prey. Not to put too fine a point on it but humans are slower, have poorer eyesight and hearing, are weaker and less resilient than most successful mammals, yet despite our deficiencies we managed not only to survive the savanna but prosper and to eventually colonise the globe. This theory holds that it is not our opposable thumbs or keen senses that allowed us to obtain meat but our humble sweat glands. No other animal can thermo regulate as well as us and in a hunt that is a test of endurance an animal can be chased until it collapses from exhaustion and overheating, a skill continued to this day by a handful of nomads.

If this was a significant practice it is probably the most fundamental leap we made as human beings. The exertion of a 6–10 hour footrace through the savanna not only increased our endurance, it also led to the need to cooperate closely with tribe members, communicate through language and, most importantly, strategise. This led to the development of the delayed gratification impulse, as if you were prepared to push your body beyond pain, to cooperate with others and to show patience, then dinner would be yours. If persistence hunting let us do this then barefoot running holds a central place in our evolutionary ascendancy.

Other biologists believe scavenging provided essential meat protein. Like persistence hunting, scavenging is still practiced by tribes in sub-Saharan Africa and involves the audacious marching towards a pride of feeding lions to shoo them away from a meal. It is a commonly referred to practice in tribal folklore and remains an important part of some remaining initiation rites. If this is the way our ancestors spent 1.8 million years of meat eating then the role of endurance running is reduced, giving way to the hardwired propensity of young adults to take incredible risks and push the boundaries of behaviour. Running still has a place in the scavenging theory for it was running and being able to cover vast distances enabled our ancestors to find the site of the kill.

Given that we have been sedentary agriculturalists for only the last ten thousand years, a blink of the eye, what we hardwired into our body across this vast period of time is unlikely to have altered much. Still, once agriculture began its march humans could devote less effort to the daily search for calories. This led to specialisation, craftspeople who had enough time and resources to invent easier ways of living and soften the demands of nature, and so we get the first shoe – most likely a leather moccasin fashioned somewhere in the Middle East – and feet are hidden away.

According to Leonardo da Vinci the arches of the foot are a masterpiece of engineering and a work of art. Twenty-four bones are connected to



Image > Nathan Dyer

a block of muscle in the leg by a mesh of tendons and ligaments, all designed through a beautifully flawed process of trial and error undertaken over aeons to hold up the bipedal body. The three arches of each foot are designed to be loaded with weight as we move forward and then hold in much of that kinetic energy before releasing it as your stride pushes off. The arch of the foot stores the essential force of nature that keeps us pinned to the earth – gravity – then releases it to launch us forward. Forget energy gels or moisture wicking singlets, here is the bonus you're looking for.

Somewhere in the 1970s and 80s when consumerism reached the point that more became synonymous with better, shoe designers decided to replace the human's foot arch with a foam one and then sell it back to you. At a markup. For some reason runners bought this.

Barefoot advocates believe it wasn't replacing the arch that led to the rash of running injuries that fills podiatrists' and physiotherapists' waiting rooms, but the consequential weakening of the scaffolding that supported it. Funnily enough it is often these health professionals who encourage their patients to go bigger still with their shoes. It's like telling a kid with ADD to drink more Coke.

Shoes also come with a thick rubber sole, ten centimeters of removal from the earth, and this cancels out critical feedback to the brain. Proprioception is the body's ability to make incredibly rapid calculations and adjustments based on the information feeding back from its extremities, mostly the feet whose number of nerve endings is rivaled only by the face and hand. These nerve endings have evolved as have the arches, refining themselves across millennia so that the faintest signal underfoot sets off a response mechanism to adjust the slant, scope or speed of the foot. Rubber is an insulating device, a material which has gained wide usage because of its ability to distance two objects from each other. The human foot in a running shoe, naturally shaped and programmed to feel the earth, is separated from the very inputs it is seeking to understand.

At the back of the shoe the rubber ramps up to create a cushion, ostensibly to soften the impact a runner makes on the earth. From here our enquiry must move away from the laboratories of Japan, Europe and California and back to rural Africa. African runners grow up never strapping on shoes yet running far more in their daily lives than the average Westerner does through their childhood. The absence of school buses, the need to deliver messages to neighbouring villages and the sheer joy of being able to sail effortlessly over terra firma give many Africans a childhood where running is a means of transport, play and pleasure. Without the encumbrance of a laced shoe, scientists have found Africans tend to land much flatter or on the balls of their feet, the legendary forefoot strike which allowed the Ethiopian Abebe Bikila to race to Olympic gold unshod over the rough cobbled streets of Rome.





**“ENDURANCE RUNNING IS  
OUR GREAT EVOLUTIONARY EDGE,  
THE ADVANTAGE THAT ALLOWED  
US TO HUNT IN PACKS, FORM SOCIAL  
COMMUNIONS AND LANGUAGE  
AND ULTIMATELY DEVELOP OUR BRAINS.”**

Contrast years of having PE teachers repeat mantras like 'no shoes, no play' and forcing our growing feet into running shoes for something as simple as a lap of the oval means that if you are like me, you're a heavy heel striker, launching yourself up and out and coming down jarringly on the rear of your foot. With a few inches of padding the impact is lessened but by the time it is repeated tens of thousands of times across the course of a training month, the accumulated stress leads to overuse injuries like shin splints, patella syndrome, ITB syndrome and a myriad of other nasty runner's afflictions.

In any argument there are those who can only be convinced with reliable science while others rely more on intuition to guide their thinking. Competing studies have challenged both camp's claims yet no study has conclusively proven that either barefoot or shod running is a universally beneficial way to run. In a way this strikes me as proof in itself. To run for a long time is what makes us uniquely human, a thing we have practiced for nearly two million years. So to redesign this should require some damning evidence, proof that it is necessary. To pad the foot and fundamentally weaken the muscles supporting it in a way never before tried surely warrants some convincing evidence.

Intuition tells me a lot and the feel of this idea - the notion that running unshod was the way we were designed to run - and the way eased into my mind, was enough to get me curious. And my experience has repaid that curiosity with healthy running.

No doubt stewing back and forth in the reader's mind there is intuitive evidence that runs counter to this. We now run on concrete, far from the dusty savanna of our evolutionary laboratory. Now we have been long removed from Africa, European bodies (for me at least) which evolved far from their persistence hunting past, where bulky upper bodies are an advantage and dexterity with spear and axe have been more of an advantage than an ability to outswat a gnu. Now it is not our partially malnourished ancestors gliding over the land but protein-filled middle class westerners hammering weekly mileage on uneven concrete and heavily tarred road. All valid points, yet endurance running is our great evolutionary edge, the advantage that allowed us to hunt in packs, form social communions and language and ultimately develop our brains. What is ten thousand years of shoe-horned change against these millions of years of beautiful evolutionary design?

Just as most human arguments are decided, almost everyone will fall on one side of this debate according to their preconceived ideas.

Political bias, love of technology distrust of corporations and trust in the ingenuity of the mind will all play into how you feel about an idea so simple: run like your ancestors.

I decided to try it out, with as open a mind as is possible. After three decades of wearing shoes and now living in a place where the minimum often stays above 30 degrees, actual barefoot running was impossible for me (although the local Indigenous people walk unshod through spinifex, midday bitumen and gravel without changing stride). So I turned to minimalist sandals, no more than a three millimetre strip of rubber to save the pads of my feet from the omnipresent glass and temperature. My technique took weeks to develop but by the time I had it crafted I was standing taller, opening my lungs wider and touching the ground so much lighter. By month three I was into double digit kilometer runs and going for a run was, for perhaps the first time, enjoyable.

I am not built like a runner and my triathlon past made me see run training as a chore. I would dutifully strap on the heaviest running shoes I could find, put in my ridiculously expensive orthotics, strap on a heart rate monitor and try and ignore the struggle my brain was going through as I threw one leg out in front of the other.

Now, in flimsy sandals, I think deeply about what I am doing. I concentrate on touching the ground lightly and pushing off, activating my glutes and core strength. I watch the ground closely for any hint of a variation and am totally aware of everything that goes on around me. Running feels light.

It is true that Bikila did later don shoes and run faster and there is an array of techniques visible in any Olympic final, from heel strikers to toe runners. Yet it has never been in my ability to win a local fun run let alone a worthy title, so my experiment focuses on running as much and as often as I can. Barefoot running allows me perhaps not to run faster but to run longer and more often, as it has allowed me to remain injury and pain free.

There is no more individualistic sport than running and everyone brings their own history and strengths to their style. Many a minimalist is now nursing an injury, but I believe by entering it glacially slowly and staying true to the simple principles of barefoot running that it is difficult to get injured running barefoot.

A counter argument says that focusing on technique is equally possible in running shoes. But in running shoes it is optional.

Once ferocious mind chatter takes over and you add up your weekly mileage in your head and wonder what happened to that guy who rode past you earlier with the zip undone on his backpack and what you are going to do with the...and oh, the form is gone.

With barefoot or ultra minimalist shoes there is no such option. Land on your heel in thin sandals and your next stride is going to be a lot shorter and more nuanced. In running shoes the injuries I acquired were many and all of them came post run once the warmth of adrenaline and endorphins had worn off. With the padding of arches and heels it takes time to feel that your shins are turning into sticks of dynamite and that your ITB is swelling itself into an unusable balloon. In sandals or barefoot, feedback is instant and each stride lets you know where the flaw is and your body's innate, intricate and unfelt process will correct it.

But there is something more to running unshod. Something more experiential. You feel part of your run. You feel what your body is doing and how it is interacting with everything around you. Some say the extra discipline and focus that barefoot running implores makes it a style of 'awarefoot running'.

In a world cluttered by screeching background noise and buzzing minds, when a moment of calm is seen as time wasted, barefoot running feels like a refuge, a time where the brain is actively focused on the simplicity of moving, taking in its surroundings and adapting to them. The freedom of running down a sandy path and up a rocky rise in unshod feet, lightly picking your way along the terrain is liberating. The brain feels like this is what it is meant to be doing, absorbing the world around it and adjusting itself to it. Aware and bare. \*

*As Trail Run Mag's resident barefoot/minimalist sage, Garry Dagg will continue to write on issues, opinions, styles and techniques of barefoot/minimalist running. And he'll test the bejesus (a sandal wearer) out of all and sundry models now flooding the market. He's on board not to convert, but to offer a perspective, much the same way our Shoe Guru, Simon Bright offers his. Agree or not, better to be aware, even if you're not a fan of being bare. We welcome your opinions on the barefoot debate – fling them through on [info@trailrunmag.com](mailto:info@trailrunmag.com) or Facebook them at [www.facebook.com/trailrunmag](http://www.facebook.com/trailrunmag). Garry will also write regularly on the topic online, so sign up for his blogs and news feeds at [www.trailrunmag.com](http://www.trailrunmag.com) —Ed.*



**“Barefoot running feels like a refuge,  
a time where the brain is  
actively focused on the simplicity of moving”**

# My Backyard > Doin' Dunedin

Kiwi and Team Salomon trail rep runner Matt Bixley may have made a name for himself killing records on a volcanic mountain in New Plymouth, but his daily jaunts back home in Dunedin are what put the steel in his legs.



## Main Image >

Recently picked up by The North Face, rising Dunedin trail running star Whitney Dagg knocks out some distance on the Otago Peninsula's Highcliff Track, one of Matt's favourite trails.



**Words + Images** > Matt Bixley  
Main image by > Derek Morrison  
[www.derekmorrison.co.nz](http://www.derekmorrison.co.nz)

Given Kiwi trail runner Grant Guise quoted me as saying “Castle Hill is the best training ground in New Zealand” (*TRM, Second Ed.*) and the third edition featured the stunning Hinchinbrook Island, I felt like I’d been handed a hospital pass and thrown under a bus at the same time when asked to write about trail running in *My Backyard*.

Dunedin is not those places and with Wanaka and Queenstown being in the neighbour’s yard, why would you come here?

But to quote Mark Twain: “The people here are Scots. They stopped here on their way to heaven, thinking they had arrived.”

So while it’s no island paradise or mountain Mecca, there’s some good singletrack on offer and we are blessed with one of the best trail guides a city could have. Antony Hamel’s *Tracks and Trails of Dunedin* (2008, [www.silverpeakspress.co.nz](http://www.silverpeakspress.co.nz)), is an update of *From Sea to Silverpeaks* and makes planning a local run a cinch.



## A LIGHT HEARTED LOOK

*For a light-hearted look at what a five-hour loop from Matt Bixley’s home in Dunedin looks like, see what he and Anna Frost got up to one day.*



In addition to the book a number of small groups have taken it upon themselves to maintain, develop and open up some of the more obscure tracks. Members of The Otago Mountain Bike club have also been active in developing an extensive network of shared trails. A lot of the success of those developments comes from the labour provided by the Courts. Crime does pay, for trail lovers, anyway.


Back in 2004 I began what could be described as a second, much less fat, life. I started my running on trails as I had no interest in bashing the bitumen. At first mine were little explorations, just the parks and gardens, before I stretched it out to Flagstaff, Swampy and beyond, exploring and learning about Dunedin’s rich and varied history.

Scottish migrants established Dunedin in 1848, laying it out to the same street plan as Edinburgh and opting to ignore the hills that dropped directly to the harbour. As late as perhaps the 1880–90s Dunedin held its place as a commercial centre and largest city in New Zealand with a population at the time of around 100,000. With that rapid growth there was a need to secure access to a reliable source of fresh water, the result a series of now disused water races right in our backyard. Beautiful dense bush, undulating technical single track, tunnels, weirs, aqueducts and flumes are all part of the variety of possible loops out at Whare Flat, barely 20 minutes from the city centre.

Closer to home is a default location when in need of a quick trail fix. Ross Creek and the Ross Creek reservoir (1867) were also developed as part of the city water supply. Numerous well graded and easy trails roll in and out of gullies and streams that feed the small lake. The upper end of the reserve has recently been developed with an extensive network of Mountain Bike Tracks allowing for 1–2 hours of gentle recovery running, or as a warm up to the more humbling terrain that exists beyond.

If you drive (or even run) more than 20 minutes from the Octagon, if you’re on trails, then you’ll be climbing. The first tussock-covered peak you’ll encounter is Flagstaff (668m). Depending on your start point, desire for blood or otherwise, there are at least six major routes to the summit. Once there, clearer views of the surrounding hills and possibilities for exploration open up. A traverse to Swampy brings you closer to the Silverpeaks proper. Pulpit Rock, Hermits Ridge, Rocky Ridge, Rosella, Possum and Jubilee Huts, the Devils Staircase (it’s not that bad) are all options.

Weather-wise Dunedin is not Hinchinbrook Island, nor do we get the volume of snow that Castle Hill receives. Flagstaff did play home to a skifield in the 1930s.



Anything can and will occur on a typical long run. Rain, sleet and severe wind-chill are the norm in winter, not to mention the snow. Skiing in our street is a near annual occurrence. The ABC caves are named after three young men who died of exposure. The nature of the trails also creates their own problems. Search and Rescue are regular visitors to the local hills, collecting the unprepared, the lost and the inexperienced. Perhaps that is a consequence of being so accessible to the city.

Naturally we all like to travel and race on far away trails. It's an opportunity to explore new places. But for me, a number of the local trail races have also provided that exploration and pushed me into areas that I may never have visited. The major race on our local calendar is the Three Peaks ([www.threepeaks.co.nz](http://www.threepeaks.co.nz)), taking in Ross Creek, Flagstaff, Swampy Summit, Mt Cargill and Bethune's Gully. Essentially, it's a circumnavigation of the City Horizon.

The Otago Peninsula Challenge ([www.otagopeninsulachallenge.co.nz](http://www.otagopeninsulachallenge.co.nz)) and the Dunedin Winter Multisport Series have created opportunities to experience little-visited beaches and private land. The contrast between the two events could not be greater although they visit similar terrain on the Peninsula. Snow to sea level and 150km/h winds for the winter series follows barely two months after averages of 35°C for the Challenge. I know the former won't kill the west island residents, but I'd like to see them clutching a map, avoiding sea lions as they climb sand dunes in a blizzard. It would be difficult to have more fun than that.

So no, my back yard isn't Castle Hill and it's not Hinchinbrook Island. It's all of that and more. From gentle rolling loops to hour long uphill grinds, untracked and unrunable to lung bursting hill reps. I have it all from my back door. Just don't ask me for three hours of flat. You'd struggle to get than on the road. Hamel's book is now well-thumbed, but perhaps only half of the trails have been visited. There is still so much more to explore in My Backyard that is Dunedin.

*Matt Bixley is a trail runner with plenty of Kepler medals on the shelf, some damn fine performances at trail events across NZ, a record or few on Mt Taranaki and a few NZ national representations (World 24 Hrs) to boot.*

Check in with Matt's trail musings at > [runlongergeek.wordpress.com](http://runlongergeek.wordpress.com)

You can have it all.

**HOKA ONE ONE**

TIME TO FLY

# Tough times, on Taranaki



**Rising to a snow capped tip, the volcanic cone of New Zealand's Mount Taranaki visually challenges any trail runner with a beating heart. There's something about its symmetry that makes you want to test your legs, spirit, mind and Old Man Time on its flanks. Which is exactly what happened when three trail runners from Team Salomon decided to topple a few speed records by dashing up and around its slopes.**

Some runners are egged on by the pure competition that exists between mankind: can I beat my fellow runner? For others it's about the ticking over of a clock and beating a personal best. Sometimes it's both man and time that fuels the motivation: I want to beat someone else's best.

For trail runners, there is one challenger that rushes the blood in us all, be you a racer or weekend trail warrior: the wild landscape into which we plunge on every outing. It tests us, hurts us, teases us, challenges us. Yet despite the beatings, the scratches, the mud it flings at us, we love it unconditionally. And with the chutzpah that defines the character of mankind (some may say arrogance) we always think we can get one over on Mother Nature. We think we can beat her.

Standing in downtown New Plymouth, on the south west coast of New Zealand's north island, there is one piece of geography that, perhaps due to its isolation from all other towering monuments of earth, flashes like a beacon at any runner, goading them to set foot on her symmetrical flanks. It asks: can you beat me?

**Words:** Chris Ord with Anna Frost

**Images:** Paul Petch > [OutdoorPhotography.co.nz](http://OutdoorPhotography.co.nz)

The central and only major formation of Egmont National Park, Taranaki rises 2518 metres from the plain that its own lava eruptions created over aeons. It is a beautiful mountain regarded as the most symmetric cone volcano in the world.

But Taranaki also smoulders in sullen anger. It is what experts (okay, and Wikipedia) call a quiescent stratovolcano, meaning it is active, but rather than act out in an endlessly demonstrative manner, its outbursts lie dormant; for now the only danger is its capabilities: what it could do rather than what it is doing. That's not to say it couldn't have a disastrous tantrum at any time: it is after all the same type of volcano as Krakatoa and Vesuvius.

None of that is on the minds of the three hardened trail runners standing halfway up the mountain at a hut called The Camphouse. They tighten laces and adjust gear while intermittently looking up at the peak before them. They can feel the taunts beaming down from the mountain top.

"Think you can?"

To continue anthropomorphising a giant lump of rock, you almost expect Taranaki to puff a plume of ash from its cone, like a belligerent cigar smoker eyeing you with derision: "Pffffffttt. Bring it on, chumps."

Of course the motivation to blow back at Taranaki by setting a milestone on it is assisted no end by the fact that this must be one of the few mountains in the world that has an entire website dedicated to recording speed records achieved on it, kept by Alistair McAlpine, a Taranaki record holder himself. (See link below).

Team Salomon is here to inscribe their name on his cyber diary.

[www.taranakispeedrecords.wordpress.com](http://www.taranakispeedrecords.wordpress.com)



Minds return to preparations with self-reassuring glances between the threesome filling the confidence banks. This trio are interlopers. Matt Bixley is a pointy end runner and 24-Hour national representative from Dunedin. Another Dunedin local, Anna Frost, is perhaps one of the best-known middle distance trail runners across Australia, New Zealand and now the United States having won the TNF50 in California late last year. Grant Guise is a podium racer with Great Naseby and Crater Rim titles plus some impressive results in ultras including Tarawera (3rd) and the Canadian Death Race (3rd).

The Camphouse snuggles into the bush line almost 1000 metres up the mountain. After the Taranaki Land Wars in the 1860's, when it was used as military barracks in New Plymouth, the building was transported on sledge to North Egmont in 1891 for use as accommodation. Restored and upgraded, its historic features, including hand-wrought corrugated iron with gun shots and tongue and groove timber panelling, are still visible. It is the oldest surviving building in any New Zealand national park and a perfect place for New Zealand's Team Salomon to call 'home' for a weekend of record attempts. Its wall also provides the 'touchstone' for the start and finish mark of each attempt.

For Matt the goal is to set the two-summit speed record (as none exists) and break the four-summit record. He has not just a mountain, but a mountain man to beat: Ian McAlpine, Alistair's brother, holds the four-summit record, which he set in 1976 and which has withstood many attempts at 16hr 05min. McAlpine is regarded as the master of this mountain having scaled it as a guide and as a runner, more than 1700 times. Ominously he calls Taranaki a 'hill'.





**“It’s taken her four hours, yes four hours, a time that sets her in an incredibly bad mood, not assisted by being faced with a banana, a peanut butter and jam sandwich and Matt and Paul, who refused to indulge in any sob story.”**

McAlpine is in fact, a prolific running record maker, most famously in 1981 tackling the Four Peaks challenge: climbing to the top of Mount Taranaki, the Kaitake and Pouakai Ranges before running from Oakura to New Plymouth and climbing Paritutu Rock. The time to beat was 10hr 57min. He pushed through significant pain to make it in 10hr 10min, shaving 47min off the record, a time set by his brother, Alistair.

It could be said that Matt is made from the same stock as the McAlpine brothers: after knocking off the two and four-summit records, he is looking to carry on for 24hrs to see how many summits he can claim.

Anna has in her sights the one-up, and the one-ascent/descent, the latter of which was set in 1993 at 2hr 45min by Ingrid Perols. She’s also eyeing off establishing a round the mountain (RTM) record for women.

Grant, meanwhile, is looking to crack into the 50km (approx) RTM men’s record although with landslides in 1993 forcing a diversion of the route through lower bush tracks, pundits estimate the new, longer circumnavigation will take a minimum of an additional hour, even at record pace.

Summit Day weather reveals as clear and crisp. The team says goodbye to Paul Petch, official photographer for the attempts, as he heads off solo at 4am for a summit posting.

Anna and Matt ready themselves for their Big Day Out, with plans and strategies in place. Grant will hold off until the following day for his effort. Having scoured maps and ventured out on a pre-run recce the day prior, the team settle on a first route up for Matt and Anna called, appropriately, The Puffer.

Ten minutes before starting up to Tahurangi Lodge, Anna is informed by a local guide that they should use an alternative route, The Razorback. “Too late,” says Anna. “We don’t know that route and how it relates to the upper sections.”

At 6:30am Matt and Anna set off for their first summit run.

Initially, the mountain is peaceful. Standing at basecamp looking at the summit, Anna’s heart beats in excitement. Before long it is beating in the red zone. It stays there for a long period as she scrambles up the pumice scree, over black iced rock, into the stormy, majestic snow crater and, eventually, up to the summit at 2518 metres above sea level in 1hr 29min.

At that point Anna believes that nothing in the world could make her happier. She flies down the scree, “totally out of control” with squeals of excitement and exhilaration, reaching the bottom in 2hr 16min. She breaks Ingrid Perols’ record set in 1993 by 29 minutes. Following closely behind Anna is Matt, who hits The Camphouse wall on his first round trip just behind, hugs into a quick refuel and

sets off for the second, but not last, summit of his day. Egging on the ego are 200 or so trampers on the mountain, out and about on open guided tours, all of whom offer verbal support as Matt rushes by.

Then Taranaki reveals itself forcing a rethink on Matt’s full 24-hour effort. Slick ice-covers most surfaces and at night, with a fatigued and foggy mind, it could become lethal. Wind in the Summit Crater is fierce and the chill factor has turned up with ice appearing on all windward surfaces.

Matt keeps pushing. Summit three and the mental effort of the up and back routine begins to show as conditions deteriorate and the fatigue of 9 hours on the hoof, constantly running steep up or steep down, begins to show. A fry up before Summit Four and the final decision to call it a day after the fourth summit has Matt feeling the energy pull of the final stretch and he sets off up a different route for one last time.

Eventually, 13hr 39min after his finger first left the wall of The Camphouse, Matt finishes, showing incredible discipline, mental strength and physical ability to claim the two and four ascents records. His rest time totals no more than 22 minutes for the entire period of running. He beats Ian McAlpine’s 1976 record by 2hrs 26min.





## ROUND THE MOUNTAIN

Grant's passion and inspiration for the round the mountain challenge was, says Anna, the initial driving force behind the trip to Taranaki.

The original Round the Mountain circuit record was 5hr 17min set in 1992 by Greg Barbour (who still holds the Ascent and Ascent/Descent records). Grant will establish a benchmark time for the new route, but in the back of his mind is the possibility of beating the old time as well, despite the hour-handicap agreed upon for the new route. With no female RTM in place, Anna is keen to set the bar.

Guided by Grant's research the team decide to set out from Stratford Plateau and head clockwise to chase Greg's old course time. Not long after Dawson Falls, on the Fanthams Peak Track, the rain and wind begin to drive in hard, making a long stair section even less pleasant. The Upper Lake Dive track is highlighted by stunning sections interrupted rudely by a few "you fall, you die" moments. Brames Falls track repeats the exercise.

Once out of the cold wind and rain Grant alternately flows and stumbles down the rough, technical trail. Climbing up to Kahui Hut he begins to fall off pace as his mind drifts to the climb ahead up to Holly Hut. Grant in particular enjoys the loneliness that trail running (especially this kind of run) offers, it being one of the reasons he runs at all: to be alone. To have quiet time. However he tends to bore easily, too, and the climb up to Holly Hut hits his thresholds hard.

With the Babour route from '92 cut, the pressure on Grant to match exactly the RTM time is lessened but not long after Holly Hut the realisation comes that if Grant is even going to get the +1hr record equivalent, he is going to have to start pushing harder.

His flow returns around the Boomerang Slip and Dieffenbach Cliffs - a section that he has run a number of times 4-5 years ago.

Once at Tahurangi Lodge it is all downhill and he opens up for the first time all day, registering a 6hr 8min time.

"I think there's more to lose off that, though," he quips.

Anna's second day on the mountain plays out differently. With no previous female RTM record set, she'll be setting a benchmark for others to take a crack at.

Steaming out, the toll of the previous day's success breaks her about two hours in. The ugly weather makes her feel vulnerable on the wild slopes as she tracks along solo. Landslides, bluffs, technical trail and rock cliffs frustrate her progress. Eventually she slows and then makes the decision to stop at Kahui Track - the refuel station 20km in.

It's taken her four hours, yes four hours, a time that sets her in an incredibly bad mood, not assisted by being faced with a banana, a peanut butter and jam sandwich and Matt and Paul, who refused to indulge in any sob story. They quickly set Anna back on track.

The hump moment broken, Anna rediscovers the freedom in her steps that served so well on the summit records.

Finally the sun's rays emerge to offer an embracing warmth; the menacing clouds clear and Taranaki congratulates Anna's efforts with a full show of its brutal, sun dappled beauty. Drained to the last, Anna arrives at The Camphouse in a new RTM record time of 7hr 41min, a mark that will be added to others on the website log, yet another lure for trail runners eyeing off their time on Taranaki.

*Follow the Kiwi Salomon Team at:*

**Grant Guise** > [www.grantguise.blogspot.com.au](http://www.grantguise.blogspot.com.au)

**Matt Bixley** > [www.runlongergeek.wordpress.com](http://www.runlongergeek.wordpress.com)

**Anna Frost** > [www.frostyst footsteps.wordpress.com](http://www.frostyst footsteps.wordpress.com)



# THE Heel DEAL

*The Shoe Guru explains the disadvantages of running in traditional 'high heel' trail shoes, as well as the process of transitioning to flatter shoes that allow a more natural stance and running style.*

Of all the features that make up a technical trail shoe, the downward ramp angle from heel to toe would have to be the least publicised and promoted. Well, until now anyway. Most shoes have raised heels, even the thongs you've lived in for most of summer are slightly thicker under the heel than under the forefoot. Biomechanically our bodies have become fully accustomed to this artificial stance position and that alone contributes to the heightened incidents of running injuries like Achilles tendonitis, plantar fasciitis, knee pain and other soft tissue complaints. Traditionally trail shoes have worked off the same higher heeled specifications, but, just in time to coincide with the new minimalist shoe revolution there appears to be a strong surge away from the this design and more towards a natural stance and flatter shoe.

At this point I would like to clarify that at no time during the next few paragraphs will I break into a rant about how traditional shoes are all bad and barefoot running is the way forward. However, I will encourage you to think more about breaking away from running in high heels and in doing so, start engaging some key muscle groups that have not been allowed to do their job properly.

The majority of trail shoes made in the last few years have been built on a midsole that equates to 22mm – 24mm of material under your heel and 12mm – 14mm. under your forefoot. Therefore, the ramp angle from the heel to toe is falling at 2:1. As much as that might sound like an insignificant detail, the effect that this angle can have on your running biomechanics is well worth noting.

Running along your favourite undulating track in a shoe that has similar specifications to the ones described above has some abnormal effects on your muscular functions and skeletal alignment. No matter what running style you have when running on flat terrain ie. whether you are a heel, midfoot or forefoot striker, the moment you reach a hill everyone begins to run with the same style. Running up a slope you're likely to strike the ground with your midfoot and as the gradient gets steeper you start landing more on your forefoot. In both cases the additional material under your heel limits how low the heel drops down and restricts the Achilles tendon, calves and hamstrings from fully extending and contracting. Muscles have memories and the less you use them to their optimal range of movement the more they become shortened, inflexible and more likely to sustain injury.

*Words > Simon Bright \* Images > Chris Ord*

On the descent, as gravity takes hold, that same discrepancy from heel to toe changes your biomechanics for the worst. You instinctively lean further back than you would normally because the ramp angle of the shoe and pitch of the hill try to throw you forwards. At the same time, the amount of cushioning material under your heel creates a false sense of security and you slam your heel into the ground with every stride. There's no issue with heel striking on the descent, it's the leaning backwards at the same time that will cause the knee to transition from an extended position to a flexed position in a more abrupt way. Our bodies respond really well to gradual, controlled movements and these quicker and abrupt knee movements create additional work for the knee stabilising muscles such as the iliotibial band (ITB) and quadriceps. No wonder ITB issues seem par for the course if you run a good portion of hills week after week.

So how do you break the cycle from years of trail running in a shoe built from old school ideas? Easy, update what you are wearing with something new, innovative and not just a remake of the same old. Chances are that purchasing a 2012 model shoe from a trail specific brand you will end up in a flatter stance shoe, they're all doing it. Even better, try purchasing from somewhere that takes an interest in what's new and innovative where you can discuss and understand the benefits these newer footwear directions will provide you.

For most trail runners the benefits from transitioning to "flatter" shoes are noticeable in the mid to long term. Initially you may experience an increase in post workout calf and hamstring soreness but that generally only lasts a few weeks. During this period of time those same muscles and tendons are becoming accustomed to the running technique that these shoes demand. Remember, the reason you are sore in places you had forgotten about is because those muscles were less

active when running in your old trainers. The position of your foot in the new shoes is switching muscles back on.

Those of you with more major lower limb issues outside the normal list of injuries are always best to consult a trail shoe expert before every purchase and discuss your situation in detail.

## HEEL TO TOE

*The following brands are flat out producing unpumped, low- to 0mm-drop (differential between heel and toe) trail shoes:*

**Altra Running** > the mob who coined the term Zero Drop.

**Inov8** > X Talon 190, Bare Grip 200

**Merrell** > Trail Glove and Sonic Glove (reviewed in TRM Ed#3 and online)

**New Balance** > new Minimus model soon to launch Down Under

**Vibram Five Fingers** > try the Komodo Sport for something different

**Luna Sandals** > Leadcat a favourite, custom fit

### Next Edition >

*In 2012 we will see a number of shoe manufacturers introducing new models of trail shoes with less downward ramp angle from heel to toe. Shoe Guru will look at the effect that running in these flatter-stance shoes will have on your running technique.*

[www.footpro.com.au](http://www.footpro.com.au)

*"You would be astounded at the number of working parts that make up a shoe and sometimes it's obvious that someone in the R&D department has an overactive imagination and should cut back on the Red Bulls."*



# F@#king Lite



## THE ONLY REAL DOWNSIDE TO THE 195S IS THAT YOU'LL PROBABLY LOVE THEM TO DEATH.

I've been putting Inov8's F-lite 195s through their paces for over six months now, across a wide variety of terrain ranging from beaches to deserts, dry dirt to tropically verdant bush, along slinky singletrack and across scree-splattered hilltop traverses.

And, while they're no longer going to win any beauty contests, the short version of this review is this: I've flippin' loved them from the minute I first laced them onto my plates of meat and hit the trail out the back of my house. There are – of course – some frustrations and niggles too, including concerns over durability, but let's look at the positives first.

I'm not a barefoot runner. Not yet at least. I made the mistake of pushing too hard the first few times I trialled some zero-drop running shoes, and afterwards my calves felt like they'd been slaughtered slowly with a blunt spoon.

### INOV8 F-LITE 195S

**Great for** > The 195s are in their element on hard-packed tracks, but they perform well across a range of conditions, so long as they're not going to be repeatedly snagged or brutalised by mud.

**Not so great for** > Really rough and tough terrain – especially claggy mud – will chew these shoes up and spit them out in pieces quicker than you can say 'new pair please'.

**Test conditions** > This pair have seen action all over Australia, from the forest tracks of Tasmania during the Swisse Mark Webber Tasmania Challenge right up to tropical trails in steamy Far North Queensland. They've also been my runners of choice for my regular jaunt around the trails of Bayside Melbourne.

**Tester** > Pat Kinsella. A cross-discipline, multisport, eh, enthusiast – whose best results are probably posted with his pen rather than as the result of any athletic prowess. He's up for any adventurous endurance challenge, however, and having usually spent more time out on any given course than most, feels more than qualified to write about the experience, which he does across a range of specialist titles.

**Tester mechanics** > More in the Clydesdale class than your typical TRM tester, Pat weighs in at 90kg. Front foot striker.

**RRP AU\$149**

When I opened the box and first looked at the 195s, my leg muscles attempted to run away of their own accord. But they needn't have worried. These considerate little lovelies have a rubber sole that lets you down gently, with a 3mm drop from heel to forefoot platform.

Sole design and the generosity of the padding employed within it is a much argued about subject but, for my money, this is a very happy medium between your foot being well overdressed and left rudely nude. The 195s do a decent imitation of a barefoot running shoe, providing good feedback from the trail to your feet, while still protecting your tootsies from nasty jagged things.

Although the sole is spongy to the touch, it's actually as firm as a grumpy dominatrix when you're running on it. And like any dominatrix worth their, er salt, this sole has a few tricks up its

rubber sleeve: one's called a meta-flex groove, which lets your foot flex naturally around the metatarsals, and the other is a fascia band, which mimics the movement of the plantar fascia (connective tissue on the bottom surface of your foot).

Both of these funky innovations are intended to mirror the way your foot works when not enclosed in fabric and rubber, while still offering some protection. It all seems to work nicely, adding to the feeling that you're becoming a real barefoot runner by degrees.

In terms of grip, there's no denying the fact the 195s perform best on hard-packed trails, but they're not terrible in the loose stuff and the sticky compound keeps you steady when taking on wet rocks and other such slippery challenges. Really soft conditions, such as deep mud, can be too much for them to handle though.

My work sends me all over the place, and what I absolutely love about these shoes is how versatile they are – happily dealing with almost any conditions and terrain types – combined with the fact that they're so light and easy to chuck in a bag and transport. OK, so they only weigh-in at under 200 grams if they're a UK/Australian size 8 or below (at which size they are 195 grams, hence the name), but that is pretty damn light, even with a few grams added on for the bigger sizes.

The synthetic upper, which combines TPU with a mesh lining, is highly flexible and ultra breathable, while still offering excellent support and great comfort levels during runs. In fact, the 195s are one of the most comfortable shoes I've ever run in straight out of the box.

The traditional lace-up fastening system is integrated very nicely into a decent looking overall design via five TPU stripes on either side. While we're talking appearances, they're available in a range of colours, from black, blue and charcoal right through to lurid red.

The only real downside to the 195s is that you'll probably love them to death. There are no outrageous weak points but an almost inevitable consequence of their lightweight construction is the fact that the materials employed are going to wear and tear easier than stuff used to make sturdier hoof protectors. How quickly this will happen will obviously depend on usage and terrain – and the price point is also very reasonable if you do need to replace them.

I've clocked a fair amount of miles in my pair and the most obvious damage is on the mesh uppers and in the deterioration of the soles. If you run mostly on hardpacked tracks you'll probably get a good year out of these runners – smash them through bogs and swamps and there's no doubt you'll quickly bury them.

[www.inov-8.com](http://www.inov-8.com)

[www.barefootinc.com.au](http://www.barefootinc.com.au)

# Japanese slipper

## THE NORTH FACE SINGLE-TRACK HAYASAS

**Great for** > Most trails and pavement conditions.

They have great forefoot and heel cushioning, allowing for excellent foot protection on rocky trails.

**Not so great for** > Muddy and slippery conditions.

The sole does not have great grip, so if there is a lot of descending in slippery conditions these would not be ideal.

**Test conditions** > A mix of fire trails, pavement, singletrack and loose stoney trails. I ran approximately 50km over a few different runs.

**Tester** > Peri Gray, an adventure/multisport racer competing in major races around Australia.

**Tester mechanics** > 57kg, forefoot striker (although can't get out of the habit of being a heel striker on the descents). Right side dominated when running resulting in ITB problems.

**RRP AU** > \$220



**DESIGNED BY JAPANESE ULTRA GURU, TSUYOSHI KABURAKI, THE SINGLE TRACK HAYASAS PROMISED A WELL-BRED, CLOSE-TO-TRAIL FEEL WITH PLENTY OF WICKING DESIGNED IN A LIGHTWEIGHT PACKAGE.**

When I was first handed a pair, the initial thing that grabbed me was the colour. I am well known for being brightly coloured person when running, so the blue and purple of the Hayasas were spot on.

But the most important feature for me is weight, and these runners tick that box being super light at only 204 grams for the ladies. My only concern about light shoes is how much support are they going to give you? Well, these felt amazing on the trails. Although light, the Hayasas have support in the heel in the form of a "geodesic cradle". This really locks your foot into place, and there is also a good eight millimetres of sole on the forefoot for protection.

Most of my running is done on gravel and dirt trails and on these tracks the Hayasas performed well. On a long run I had no problems at all with the comfort factor. They moulded straight to your foot and enabled you to enjoy the run. I honestly felt like I had

nothing on my feet. The runners also feature a lightly protective toe cap that stops dirt or sand getting into the shoe.

On the hills these runners were fantastic climbing, with the great cushioning on the forefoot, giving you a surprisingly light bouncy feeling. On downhills these runners held up well, but did get quite slippery on loose stones and tight corners on singletracks as they don't feature a whole lot of grip on the sole. If you are a heavy heel striker running the downhills, these runners are brilliant with the cushioning on the heel despite the uber-lightweight and slimline nature of the construction. Over rocks these runners suffered a little, not being grippy enough to hold on the slippery stuff. On the flat sections the Hayasas, with their neutral, low-profile midsole, really allowed for a natural stride turnover and you seriously feel like you were flying (even if you're not).

Importantly, these runners are nearly completely seamless. They have no rub zones and the seams that are on the shoe can't be felt when running. You would be able to go sockless in these runners with no dramas.

The Hayasa's are also extremely breathable. My feet never seemed to swell or feel hot and sweaty, even in extreme heat.

All in all, I'd give these runners the thumbs up. Being super comfy, light, but with more than adequate cushioning at the same time, they're perfect for longer runs and light enough for racing. If you are finding the new barefoot running phenomenon hard to jump into boots (or lack of) and all, then the Hayasas would be an excellent option as a middle ground.

[www2.thenorthface.com.au](http://www2.thenorthface.com.au)

# Downhill Flyer

Image > Courtesy of Lester Jones \* [www.idigyoursoleman.com](http://www.idigyoursoleman.com)



## HOKA ONE ONE STINSON B EVO LOW

**Great for** > All round utility shoe, handles rocky, technical trail really well and right at home on the smooth fire trails. Would be great for long ultras but simply they are made for running downhill.

**Not so great for** > Runners wanting the minimalist feel.

**Test conditions** > Mix of trail including loose sand and dirt, hard compacted fire trail, loose gravel and stones, hard rock, creeks, technical singletrack and pavement. Total mileage in short test period after arrival 100+km

**Tester** > Andy Hewat, an ultrarunner with 16 x 100 milers including 3 x Hardrock, 1 x Western States, 6 x Great North Walk and 5 x Glasshouse. Race Director for Great Ocean Walk 100s and Bogong to Hotham.

**Tester mechanics** > Mild over pronator with fairly wide forefoot and low arches. Major arthritis in big toe joints of both feet so appreciate protection.

**Supplier** > Big thanks to Hoka Australia for providing the Hoka One Ones for testing

**RRP** > AU\$229

**IF YOU LIKE YOUR RIDE FAT AND CUSHY THEN THESE NEW TRAIL SHOES FROM HOKA ONE ONE COULD FIT YOU TO A TEE, PARTICULARLY IF YOU LIKE TO DROP DOWN HILLS LIKE A STONE.**

The much-anticipated arrival in Australia of the all-new offering from Hoka has certainly justified all the hype. If the name "Evo" isn't short for evolution then it should be. Hoka has taken all the good points from the Mafates and Bondi Bs and added a few extras to create a really hot mix for their second-generation shoes.

While I loved running in the Mafates, the narrow toe-box and unyielding uppers with hard heel counter and ankle cuffs created lots of pressure points and potential hot-spots. The Evos sport a plush, soft, web upper that is cool, light and roomier. I have no pressure points and my toes can relax and even spread out a little in their Injinjis. I am guessing they are partying in there given the incredibly soft ride of the characteristic thick EVA midsoles of the Evos.

And that's what makes these so special: the huge EVA midsole that produces the softest, smoothest ride you could imagine. Your feet sit well down in the moulded EVA, so even though you are high off the ground you are not as high as it appears. The four millimetre heel-to-toe drop has been retained promoting more of a forefoot strike. And the rocker bottom is still there making the transition from strike to toe-off seamless. But forget all the science and physics: these puppies feel good and make you want to smile when you run. If that isn't enough reason to try them out then you are running for all the wrong reasons.

One of the limitations of the Mafates (the original trail Hoka) was that the ankle cuff would jam into your ankle bones at the first sign of camber.

Not so with the Evos. They are a genuine contender for technical trail and I pushed them on narrow rutted tracks with reverse camber and sharp angles. They ate it up. They mowed down the rocky surfaces. The new lugged outsole bit into the loose dirt and gravel and even did a decent job on the slick mud. Hoka have really listened to the feedback from the earlier models and done their best to produce an all-round beast that will outperform most of the competition.

There has to be a downside, right. Well, maybe. I am still trying to figure out the benefit or detriment to my biomechanics of the spongy ride. Meanwhile I am loving that ride. And just like the Mafates, these shoes are simply made for downhills. The only limitation on downhills is how fast you can turn your legs over. The added cushioning does tend to encourage you to heel strike more on the descents but the resulting impact is soaked up by the massive surface area and thickness of the midsole. Hence the logo: 'Time to fly'.

The raised platform increases the chances of turning an ankle but the deep-seated position of the foot within the moulded EVA gives great stability and security. That same recessing created a holding pool for water in the Mafates but the Evos have an innovative drainage bed under the insole to draw water away from your feet. There is also the option of using a thick or thin insole to better customise the fit, as well as the choice of speed laces or conventional shoelaces. I have gone with the speed laces and the lock-down mechanism works well.

My use of the Mafates was limited by the cramped, stiff fit. None of that in the Evos, so I am happy to wear them in trail ultras. Given the popularity of the Bondi Bs at Coast to Kosciuszko, I have no doubt the Evos will make their presence felt at trail 100-milers in no time. They are billed as a hybrid so there is no drama about wearing them on asphalt. The ride on sealed surfaces is as smooth as you could imagine. They really are irresistible.

[www.hokaoneone.com.au](http://www.hokaoneone.com.au)

# TRAIL PORN

*Below >*

**It's okay to walk up hills on the Hillary Trail  
(unless you're trying to set a record...and even then...)**

*Photo by Shaun Collins*



*Above >*

**TRM's NZ Editor Mal Law looking steely –  
he's gonna crack this mount –  
headed to the top of Lomond, over Queenstown NZ.**

*Photo > Mal Law / Running Wild NZ*

*Below >* A recce run along the first ten kay stretch of the new Surf Coast Century trail ultra, to be held in Anglesea, Victoria, Australia on 22 September 2012.

*www.surfcoastcentury.com.au \* Photo by > Chris Ord*



*Opposite page >* Elite trail runner, Andrew Vize training on Mosman Trails, Sydney Harbour National Park, NSW.

*Photo by Lyndon Marceau > www.marceauphotography.com*







It's cliché enough to warrant inclusion in those 'Shit Ultra Runners Say' videos doing the YouTube rounds: "You're gonna hurt after 50-kays no matter what. After that, it's all in your head."

Even on shorter trail dashes, you're bound to hit a wall or two.

So how do you push through the brain barrier?

Can you condition your mind into faster times and longer distances?

Yes you can, says sport psychology guru, Greg Layton ...

**Words:** Greg Layton \* **Images:** Greg Layton

Gobi March 2008: Alone, with the sun setting behind me in the cooling desert after what has seemed like an endless 80 km, I stumble on – wanting, hoping, dreaming of an end to this 250 km punishment. My mind is on the edge of delirium, my feet are screaming and my tongue is so dry it is pasted to my palette.

An antagonistic internal voice baits me; mocking my effort, mocking my reasons for being here and giving me the ever-present and increasingly more attractive option of quitting. But I carry on –jogging, marching, anything but stopping.

If you've been through an experience like this, you'll have also faced the question from friends and strangers: "Why do you do it?"

Instead of responding with the old, "If you have to ask you'll never know," I tell people that I do it because it pushes me into new territory, because it makes me a better man, because it helps me get away from it all and centre myself. I tell them that race experiences are unique and, quite simply, unforgettable.

The truth is, when I started running ultras I didn't know why I did it other than to prove to myself that I could. In the beginning, my goals were simply to finish select events, but within a year this had changed. I realised I could do any race at all if I was prepared to do the training and stay motivated. And to do this, I had to explore beyond simply ticking off another training session.

Be you a weekend warrior or an elite athlete, goal setting is critical to success. The old saying springs to mind, "If you don't know where you're going, you'll probably end up somewhere else."

Sport psychologists have proven time and again that if you don't have a clear vision of yourself reaching your end goal then the chances of you succeeding are significantly reduced.

No doubt you've heard of the concept of 'SMART (specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, timely) goals'. Valuable though it is to have a SMART framework to your planning, I've found these methods just aren't enough to prepare you for truly life changing, mind-set shifting, performance-smashing goals.

To help you achieve your trail running targets we've outlined here some of the most important aspects of setting extraordinary goals:

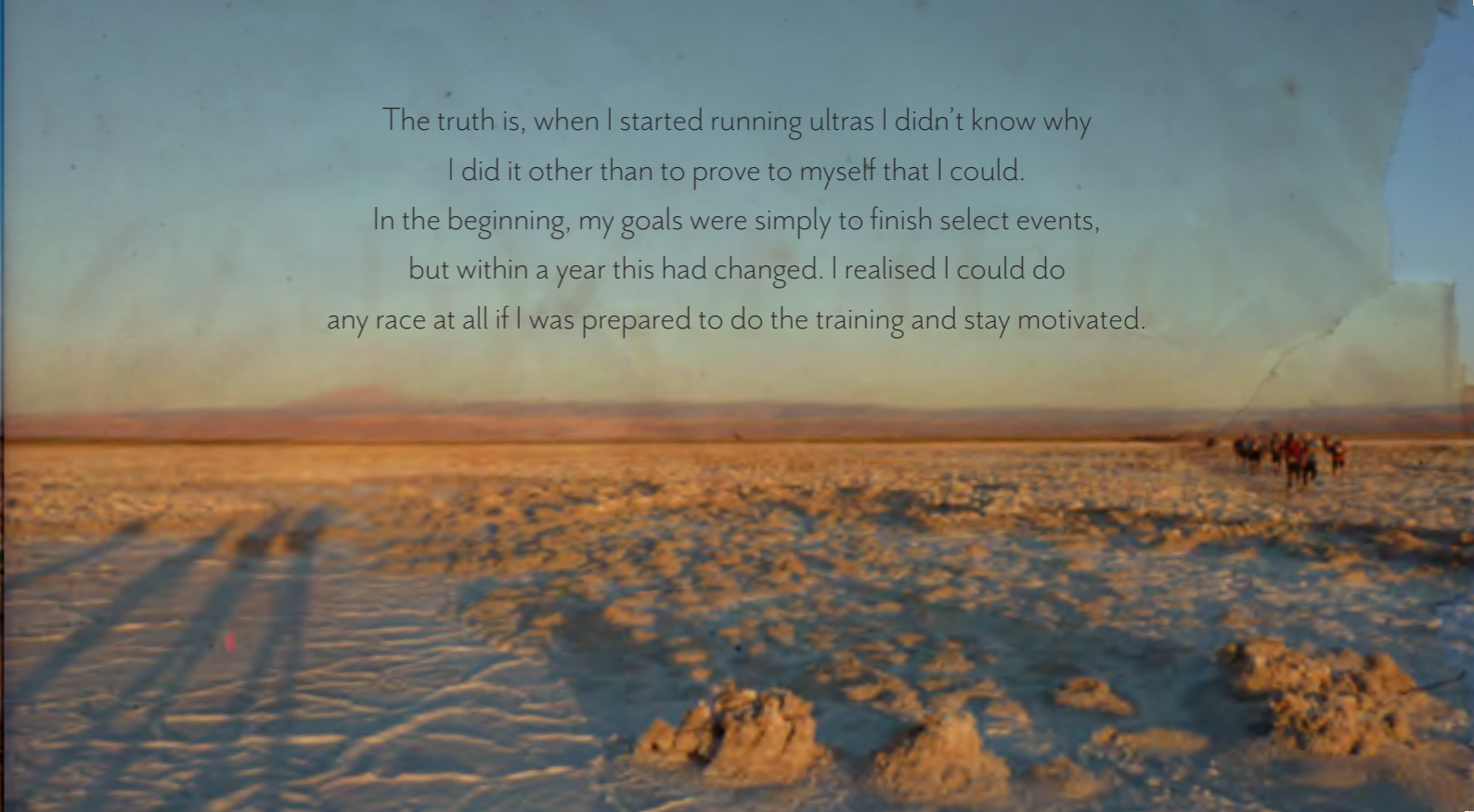
*NB > There is a Goal Setting Template with accompanying video on the Trail Run Mag website, too, found at [www.trailrunmag.com/blog](http://www.trailrunmag.com/blog)*

#### **Goal Setting Tip #1 – Make 'em big**

According to Anthony Robbins, the renowned American life coach, it's critical to set big goals that you deem to be truly amazing. Big goals push you to a whole new level and the attraction of achieving them must be genuinely compelling. Become a child again: Remove the adult limitations and just dream. Ask yourself, "What do I really want if I can have anything?"

#### **Goal Setting Tip #2 – Dream 'em big**

The next important step is to imagine what it will be like to achieve your goal. Where will you be? What will it feel like? Who will be present and what will it sound like? By creating this rich vision in your head you're creating a neural blueprint in a way that is compelling and clear.



The truth is, when I started running ultras I didn't know why I did it other than to prove to myself that I could. In the beginning, my goals were simply to finish select events, but within a year this had changed. I realised I could do any race at all if I was prepared to do the training and stay motivated.

### Goal Setting Tip #3 – Check the consequences

Sometimes setting out with a big goal can negatively impact other aspects of your life. Your relationships at home, performance in the office or study and other pursuits can slide down your priority list. This is why it's important that you define not just 'what' you are going to do but also 'how'.

Ask yourself: "If I aim for this goal, what are the likely consequences of my going for it?" To minimise the potentially negative side-effects of your goal chasing, consider adjusting the time frames for achieving it, the training schedule that is necessary or the ways that you plan to incorporate your family and friends into the training regime. Designing a pathway to your goal that is congruous with your other priorities will keep you motivated and create an even more compelling end goal.

### Goal Setting Tip #4 – Find 'The Way'

OK, your goal is now reasonably well formed but it's the execution that really counts. One excellent way to achieve big running goals is to set a series of smaller targets along the way that weave-in local events and even some bigger, exciting events abroad. An example would be:

- April 2012 – First marathon > 42 km
- June 2012 – First >50 km
- November 2012 – First >80 km
- January 2012 – First >100 km
- March 2013 – First multi stage ultra >160 km

This progression allows you to always have an event on the horizon. You'll enjoy the process of preparing for competition and will have performed quite a few times before your big race. It will increase confidence, keep you focused, increase enjoyment through the growth of your social circle, and when you achieve your ultimate goal, helps you look back to track your success.

### Goal Setting Tip #5 – Define mini-goals like an athlete

For each goal it's critical to set out the performance targets, resources and training you'll need for each of the following:

- Physical Conditioning
- Technique
- Tactics
- Mental Performance
- Life Balance

For each mini-goal, list what needs to be achieved in each of these categories and how you're going to get there.

### Goal Setting Tip #6 – Review regularly

When Apollo II was on the way to the moon it was only directly on target two per cent of the time. It can be the same with your progress week to week in achieving goals. Sometimes, you'll miss a session because of an injury or rest and this is quite normal. The trick is to review your progress every week. Check off how you're progressing with achieving each of your mini targets and ensure that you are constantly moving towards your goal.

### Goal Setting Tip #7 – Celebrate and recover

After achieving each of your mini-goals ensure that you celebrate in your own way and spend some time away from trail running fully recovering. Refresh and renew yourself for a period, then revisit your goal setting workbook, review and plan your next mini goal and get back into it.

### Goal Setting Tip #8 – Bow to peer pressure

Sometimes one of the most effective methods for ensuring you stick to your guns is to tell family, friends and colleagues what you are planning. Even better, get them involved in helping you. Of course, be selective about who you'll employ to help you; make sure they'll be the type to get right behind you the whole way.

### Goal Setting Tip #9 – Learn from the greats

John Grinder, the co-founder of the performance psychology known as neuro-linguistic programming or NLP, believes that one of the most effective methods of achieving anything is to 'stand on the shoulders of giants.' This means to follow the paths of those who have gone before you. A powerful enabler is to ask yourself the following questions: "Has anyone done this before?" and "If they were here, what advice would they give me?" Find the books, interviews, or films that can teach you the experiences of those in whose footsteps you are following. If you can track any of them down, get some tips from the horse's mouth.

### Goal Setting Tip #10 – Greatness is in your head

"Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure." – Marianne Williamson

Too right! Every one of us has experienced a time in our life when we were truly powerful; in a state that was resourceful, unstoppable, confident and just plain uber. Achieving greatness is simply a pathway that lies before you. If you don't think you're ready or have some deep limiting belief then I'll leave you with two questions:

"What are you pretending to believe to be true in order to think you can't achieve your dreams?"

"What is not stopping you?"

Now, trail time ...

### Next Edition > 'P2R2 – The Athlete's Performance Lifecycle'

Greg Layton is the founder and managing director of NeuroSport, a high performance consultancy that provides the blueprint for building sporting success through mental approach with lessons taken from the world's most successful teams, the corporate world and high performance psychology. His programs deliver customised high performance coaching and training. And he's run a lot: learn more about Greg at >

# EATING FOR RECOVERY

## POST-TRAINING NUTRITION

You've headed out for a training run on your local trail, clocked up some k's, and headed home to relax.

But what about the refuel?

Should you eat or drink immediately after running?

And if so, what, when and how much?

Accredited sports nutritionist

Alan McCubbin from Next Level Nutrition investigates.



### Recovery nutrition – what does the science say?

The last ten years have brought about some great new understandings in sports science, none more so than the ability to measure the effect training (and nutrition) has in the muscles. We've always known that training brings benefit, after all that's why we put in the effort. But now we understand how this works.

The current scientific consensus is that certain proteins in our muscles are produced in response to exercise and nutrition, with our genes as the blueprint. Different types of exercise stimulate different proteins. These proteins serve different purposes, from increasing the size and strength of our muscle fibres, to building more mitochondria (which helps you produce more energy from fat, a thing of beauty for endurance performance).

In the last five years the focus has turned to the role of nutrition. It's been shown that eating protein in the period after exercise increases the body's response to that training. All proteins are made up of amino acids, and in particular the amino acid Leucine appears to be the one driving this response: its effect has been demonstrated after weight training and endurance exercise.

But does all this microscopic protein building in the muscle actually translate into meaningful benefits for athletes?

The majority of the science to date has focussed on weight training and indicates significant benefits to muscle size and strength when protein is consumed after training.

There's much less research in endurance sports, and what exists is only scratching the surface of measuring performance that matters to athletes in the real world. So far the research suggests there are benefits from post training protein for runners, in regard to muscle power generation and increasing the number of mitochondria in the muscle. The effect on performance for endurance athletes remains to be seen.

Although the benefits of post-training protein for runners isn't yet clear, there's nothing to suggest it's detrimental. So I would suggest that taking protein after training is worth doing after all long or intense training sessions. The benefits after a short or relaxed run is likely to be minimal so don't worry about it in these situations.

### What type of foods will give me this protein?

As I mentioned the key here is the amino acid Leucine, which is thought to trigger the muscles to increase their response to training. It takes about 3-4g of Leucine to maximise this benefit. The muscles also require some other amino acids to do the building of new proteins, so taking a pure Leucine supplement won't do the job.

The ideal source of protein to stimulate Leucine and other amino acids is milk protein, and in particular the whey component of milk. If you're a soy fan, the bad news is that soy protein has been shown to have less effect on muscles compared to dairy. If it's lactose you're avoiding then lactose free cow's milk will do the job.

Other good sources of Leucine are eggs, meat, fish and chicken. Plant sources of protein are unfortunately not great, and larger quantities of food are required to get the same amount of Leucine. Nuts in particular are not a great option – achieving the desired amount of Leucine would require 1 ½ cups of raw almonds, which come along with 915 calories and 84g of fat!

### How much protein do I need?

This all depends on what you're eating. The most concentrated source of Leucine is whey protein isolate powder, with only 25g needed. If you're drinking milk you'll need about 800ml, or you could go for 4-6 eggs, 175g of meat, fish or chicken or two cups of lentils or kidney beans.

### When do I need to take the protein?

The ideal timing to take the protein is still not completely understood, but it appears that the first hour after training is important. If that coincides with a meal it makes life easy. But if you finish training between meals, or you're out in the middle of nowhere and can't get to a plate of food for a couple of hours, then you'll need to be organised with an alternative. This is where protein powders may become a convenient way of getting your post-training protein – it's portable and non-perishable. It's not always practical or convenient to have eggs, meat or milk on hand when you finish a run.

The general rule with carbohydrates is to consume 1.5g for every kilogram of your body weight per hour for at least the first two hours after running, then continue to eat a high carb diet until the next session.

For a 70kg runner that's 105g of carbs an hour for two hours, which is a lot!

### Summary

Putting this together into something meaningful, I would suggest taking protein for recovery within the first hour after long or intense training sessions. Here's a list of options of what you might decide to take - all provide enough Leucine and other amino acids:

#### After an early morning run

1. Two eggs on toast plus a large latte
2. Cereal with 250ml milk plus 250g yoghurt

#### Lunchtime

1. One sandwich with two slices of ham or chicken (plus salad) plus 600ml flavoured milk
2. Two curried egg sandwiches (one egg in each) plus a large latte
3. One small can tuna or 100g chicken with salad plus 300g yoghurt

#### Dinner

1. 200g meat, fish or chicken with any combination of starch (rice, pasta, etc.) and vegetables/salad
2. 150g tofu with one egg and rice/noodles and vegetables, plus 250g yoghurt
3. One cup red kidney beans or lentils plus 500ml milk (plain or flavoured)

#### Convenient options/snacks

- 30g whey protein isolate with water
- 20g whey protein isolate with 200ml milk
- 65g PowerBar Protein Plus or Sustagen Sport (both available in supermarkets) with 300ml milk
- DIY Protein drink - 60g skim milk powder, 300ml milk plus flavouring of your choice
- 80g beef jerky
- One sandwich with two slices of ham or chicken (and salad) plus 600ml flavoured milk

### Do I need to consider anything else besides protein?

This depends on the timing of your session.

If you need to back up with another session later that day or early the next (or in multi-stage races), then replenishing the body's stores of carbohydrate will also be important, as well as replacing fluid lost through sweating.

The general rule with carbohydrates is to consume 1.5g for every kilogram of your body weight per hour for at least the first two hours after running, then continue to eat a high carb diet until the next session. For a 70kg runner that's 105g of carbs an hour for two hours, which is a lot!

To put it into perspective the 600ml flavoured milk provides around 55g of carbohydrate. Some other non-filling, high carb choices will be needed here, including cereal bars, bread with jam or honey, bananas and even lollies.

In terms of fluids the aim should be to replace at least as much fluid as you lost during the session, and up to 1.5 times that amount in the first few hours. You can get a rough idea of your fluid losses by weighing yourself before and after the session (the difference in grams roughly translates to the millilitres of sweat lost), but remember to account for weight gain from the foods you ate and drank, and weight loss if you've been to the toilet.

The fluid needed to rehydrate could come from water, but keep in mind that you also need to consume protein and carbs. Therefore it's often easiest to kill three birds with one stone. That's why flavoured milk (or the Sustagen or Protein Plus with milk) is a great choice - it provides significant amounts of fluid, protein and carbs all in the one convenient package \*

[www.nextlevelnutrition.com.au](http://www.nextlevelnutrition.com.au)

PRESENTS

# TRAIL GUIDES

**YOU KNOW THEY'RE THERE:**

**THOSE PRISTINE TRAILS. CLOSE. NOT FAR FROM  
YOUR DOORSTEP. YOU CAN SMELL THEM...**

Or maybe that's just the sweet waft of dirt not-long ground into the lugs of your trail shoes, which sit by the front door — a welcome reminder of the weekend's mountain jaunt.

But the blood screams for more. The legs are sore, yet they pine for a warm down. A warm up. A flat out blast along some winding, wet, wonderful singletrack. But where to go? Only got an hour (which you know can stretch to three).

Trail Mag has the answer(s). Here. In this guide. Each edition we'll bring you step by step trail run guides, all within an hour of a major city or town in Australia or New Zealand, all between 5km and 30km, all worth zipping out to for a trail fix.

We've also included some post-trail goodness 'cause we're human; we're caffeine freaks too (strong latte — sometimes double espresso, but only on race days), and we love the smell of fresh eggs and bacon after pounding the paths. Welcome to the goodness guide.

## **WIN SALOMON GEAR!**

All you gotta do is be part of the action.

Yes, we need trail correspondents! If you think there's a cracking trail the world needs to know about, go research it, write it up, shoot a photo and send it in. We do have a bit of a style going, so be sure to check out the guidelines and download the pro forma before you do at >

**[trailrunnermag.wordpress.com/contribute](http://trailrunnermag.wordpress.com/contribute)**

If your guide is chosen as the 'Editor's Pick' of the issue, you'll win some great Salomon Trail Gear.

So go running, get writing and start window shopping at

**[www.salomon.com/au](http://www.salomon.com/au)**



# FRESH PEAKS OF BELAIR



## TRAIL TIPS >

**NEAREST CITY** > Adelaide. 25km (45mins on the train)

**EXACT LOCATION** > Yurrebilla Trail,  
Belair Railway Station

**ROUTE DISTANCE** >  
fast 10km out and back or 18km point to point

**ASCENT/DESCENT** > 300m of each

**TIME TO RUN** > 10km - 50mins to 1hr 45min,  
18km - 1hr 45min to 3hr

**DIFFICULTY** > Moderate

**DEFINING CHARACTERISTICS** >  
Mainly single track with some great ascent/descent  
and technical rocky terrain

**FEATURES OF INTEREST** >  
Beautiful run through the Adelaide Hills and the local  
National Park of Belair along Yurrebilla Trail, which runs  
for 56km. A faster trail with a lot of opportunities to open  
up, unless you stop to admire the stunning views, gorges,  
waterfalls, wildlife and wildflowers.

**MAPS** > [www.environment.sa.gov.au/parks/yurrebilla](http://www.environment.sa.gov.au/parks/yurrebilla)

## RUN IT >

At Belair station take a right across the tracks to the entrance  
of Belair National Park. There's a map and a trail to the left plus  
the first of many Yurrebilla Trail markers.

The route starts out as single-track through the lower grounds  
of the National Park, before passing Playford Lake. Take a left  
onto the road after the lake and then bear right. At the first  
opportunity, take the trail heading off road to the left.

Once again you're back on single-track so give it all you've got  
until you reach Echo Tunnel. (N.B the tunnel is small, so duck).  
Coming out of the other side there is a fierce ascent before  
coming out on a ridge with views into the gullies.

At a T-junction, turn left away from the upper waterfall  
(poorly signed). You'll hook up on a double-track trail that runs  
over undulating and rocky ground. Eventually you'll come to  
the gate at the edge of the Belair National Park. If you left your  
car at Belair Station and are only out for a 10km out-and-back,  
U-turn for home here.

If you're up for the longer 18km, keep running through Belair  
National Park until you reach the other side. Follow a small  
road here for 500m before turning right past private properties,  
then onto Pony Ridge Road.

500 metres on you'll see a Yurrebilla trail marker beckoning you  
to the right. Dive off here but take your time as there are steep

descents on slippery, rocky trail before you come out onto a long set  
of switchbacks taking you all the way down to Brownhill Creek Road.  
At this point, the Yurrebilla maps show around 4.5km of road, but  
at the 1km mark the trail starts up and runs along next to the creek,  
crisscrossing a few times but never actually joining the road.

Eventually you'll see the Peter Nelson Walking Trail on your right.  
It leads steeply up from the road to the McElligots Quarry area.  
Past that and up the hill you'll hit the gate for Carrick Hill Estate.  
Here single track runs through the forest diving into the Waite  
Conservation Reserve. From this point the run is all uphill.

Keep an eye on the track signs as there are a few doublebacks.  
After hitting a double track along the edge of the park, it is  
flat and fast before hooking left back on to the single track and  
through to the edge of Waite Reserve. Here the trail joins the  
road until bus stop #21. It's not the best end to a great trail run,  
but it's a great and fast run overall.

## POST RUN GOODNESS >

The area around the trailheads is lacking in eateries, but the bus  
from Eagle on the Hill to the City stops at Rundle Street where  
there's plenty to get your fill. A personal favourite is to stop-off at  
Chopstix for a big bowl of noodles...perhaps a beer or two as well.

# DIAMOND LAKE + ROCKY MOUNTAIN



## TRAIL TIPS >

**NEARBY TOWN/CITY** > Wanaka

**DISTANCE FROM TOWN CENTRE** > Approx. 15 kms

**START LOCATION** > Car Park at bottom of Arrowtown (beside Chinese Miners Camp)

**TOTAL ROUTE DISTANCE** > 9.6 kms. Short loops possible.

**ASCENT/DESCENT** > 680 metres

**TIME TO RUN** > Elite 2¼ hrs; Novice 4½ hrs

**TYPE OF TRAIL** > Loop

**DIFFICULTY** > Easy - Moderate

**DEFINING CHARACTERISTICS** > Mostly well-made trail but with some steep, slightly rougher sections.

**FEATURES OF INTEREST** > Stunning views of Lake Wanaka and the surrounding mountains

**ONLINE REFERENCE** >

View the run in detail on **Garmin Connect**

**MAPS** > Pick up a brochure at DOC Wanaka.

Or there's a good map on an information board at the car park – take a photo on your phone and carry with you.



## RUN IT >

The run starts with a short, fairly steep uphill section on a gravel access road. At the top of the hill turn left on to single track to skirt Diamond Lake.

Ignore the round-the-lake track for the moment and instead continue up hill to the viewing platform where the first of many great vistas open up. Continue uphill past the platform and take the first left turn towards Rocky Mountain.

The trail continues uphill winding through bush, under a bluff and then out on to open country. More great views now open up. At the next junction take the left-hand trail signposted to Rocky Mountain via western track. This leads you to the top of this unimaginatively named summit and panoramic views over Lake Wanaka and up the Matukituki Valley to Mt. Aspiring in the distance.

Leave the summit on the northern side following the track downhill as it winds back on itself under the summit. Within a kilometre you'll come to another junction where you turn right to once again head towards Rocky Mountain via the western track. A couple of hundred metres along here you will complete the upper loop and start re-tracing your earlier steps towards the summit for a second time – it's well worth a second look!

Once again leave the summit via the trail to the north and continue to the first junction. Last time round you turned right here, but this time bear left and follow the trail downhill.

At the next junction turn left for a very worthwhile short out-and-back to the Lake Wanaka Viewpoint. Drink in more spectacular views then re-trace your steps and continue on downhill until you reach the lake again. As soon as you hit the bottom of the hill turn sharp left to do a quick loop of this small but sparkling body of water and follow the gravel road back to the car park.

## POST RUN GOODNESS >

Wanaka has a great selection of cafes, bars and restaurants for a post-run treat. A firm favourite is **Ritual Café** on Helwick Street, which has the world's best carrot cake. Or for friendly service, great lake views and good quality fare try **Kai Whakapai** on the lakefront.

This trial guide brought to you by [www.runningwildnz.com](http://www.runningwildnz.com)



# BIG HILL CIRCUIT

## TRAIL TIPS >

**NEARBY TOWN/CITY** > Arrowtown

**EXACT LOCATION** > Car Park at bottom of Arrowtown (beside Chinese Miners Camp)

**ROUTE DISTANCE** > 20.7 kms

**ASCENT/DESCENT** > 960 metres

**TIME TO RUN** > Elite 2¼ hrs; Novice 4½ hrs

**MIN/MAX ELEVATION** > 412/1058 metres

**TYPE OF TRAIL** > Loop

**DIFFICULTY** > Moderate

### DEFINING CHARACTERISTICS >

Great variety of terrain – river bed, 4WD track, open single track and some beautiful beech forest. Part of the circuit is a marked route rather than signposted trail so make sure to take a map (and compass in case of bad weather)

### FEATURES OF INTEREST >

Lots of gold mining history and great views, especially on descent from Big Hill back to Arrowtown

### ONLINE REFERENCE >

See the **Garmin Connect** activity profile

**MAPS** > Topomap F41

## RUN IT >

From the Chinese Camp cross Bush Creek on a small wooden bridge, turn right and head up the Arrow River for 100m or so, then left onto a track just beside the pipeline of the Arrow irrigation scheme.

Follow this wicked bit of single track north for a couple of kms and cross the Arrow River on the footbridge. Then turn left on to the 4WD track. Follow this as it climbs high above the river, crosses Brackens Gully and descends again.

Shortly after crossing Soho Creek (about 6.5 kms into the run) there is a small section of single track leading to a footbridge across to the western (true right) side of the Arrow River. Keep heading up the valley on the 4WD road for about another 4 kms. There are a few places where the road fords the river but you can usually find a way through on the same side to avoid wet feet if you wish.

After about 10kms you reach the site of the derelict Mt. Soho homestead (not massively obvious) and then you'll see Eight Mile Creek (or Coronet Creek as it is sometimes known) merging with the main valley from the left. Head west into Eight Mile Creek (the route is easy but not particularly well marked) and follow the sketchy farm track upstream for a short distance while looking out for poles that mark the beginning of Big Hill Track (on your left as you head upstream).

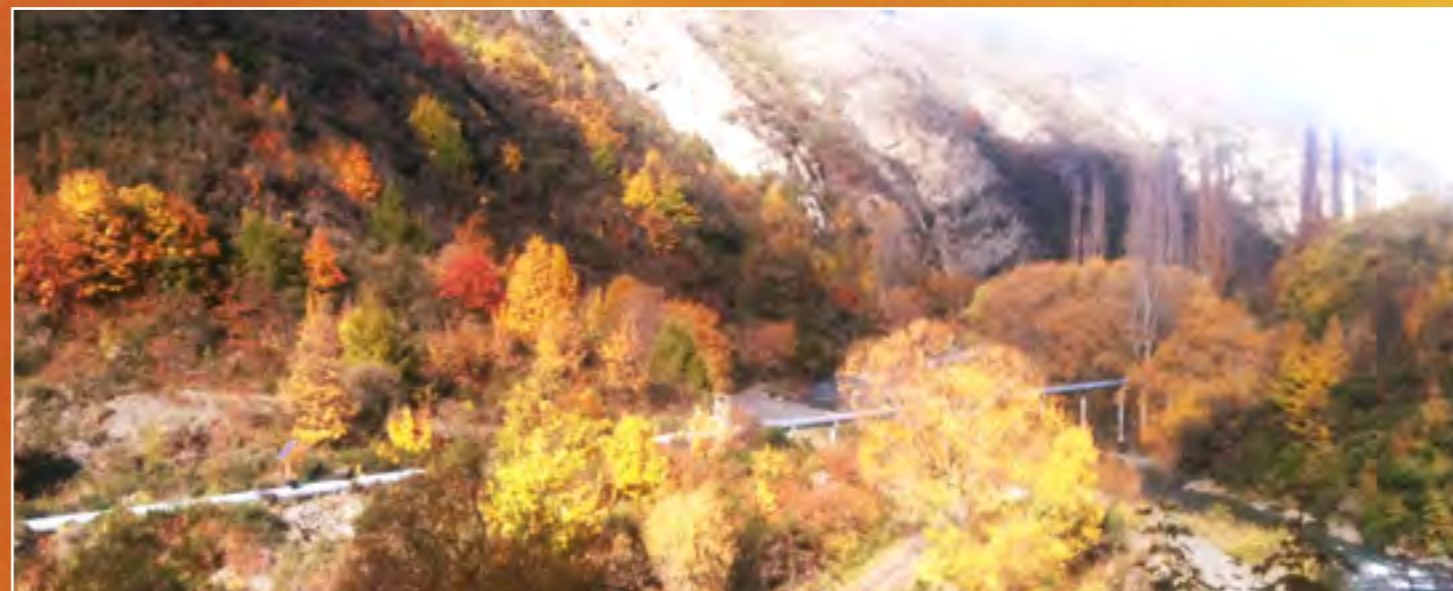
The Big Hill track starts with a steep uphill grunt (a bit scrubby in places). Follow the marker poles uphill bearing towards the south east as you get higher and follow the valley that leads to the saddle just below Big Hill. The total climb from Eight Mile Creek is 400m over about 2.4 kms.

The best bit of the run is now about to start! From here it's pretty much unbroken downhill on great single track all the way back to Arrowtown. Follow the track down for several kms until you reach the junction with Sawpit Gully Track. Turn right and keep heading downhill to the junction with Bush Creek Track. Turn left and follow the pipeline back out to where you started.

## POST RUN GOODNESS >

Arrowtown is a bustling tourist centre with lots of good eating places and some great ice cream. Try Pannikins Cafe (cake) or Lost Cafe (coffee). The bakery is a treat, too.

[www.arrowtown.com](http://www.arrowtown.com)







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