



SPORTVICIOUS

JANUARY-FEBRUARY 2015

ENGLISH MAGAZINE



Interview to Bernhard Witz

Hoka One One Kailua Trail

Goldsteig Projekt 500

WHERE THERE IS A WILL THERE IS A WAY

As a true lover of sports I began the year 2014 with many challenges and adventures in mind. Among them was to improve my rock-climbing grade, to attempt a climb up the Paret dels Diabls wall (Montserrat), to cycle along the Pedals de Foc route and to climb up the Matterhorn...

I was a bit pissed off with my biking and running times and results. I felt very weary and out of shape although I was training daily. So I intensified my training to get better results but improvement never came. I felt my lungs had become smaller and, unfortunately, I started spitting blood after efforts.

On March 14th, without previous notice all plans went to hell...

After endless tests, I was detected with a few spots on the lungs and was diagnosed with Hodgkin lymphoma in stage 4. I was what my ultra trail would be from now on. I underwent two operations. I decided to extract my ova for future maternity and chemotherapy sessions soon started.

Your world becomes small; it is reduced to your loved ones and yourself. My mind kept telling me that I was only 33 years of age and I still had so much to live for!

Nobody teaches us how to face death, so I didn't want to doubt for a moment that I was going to leave. I had a family and dreams worth fighting for; the battle of the little warrior inside me had only just begun.

Months went by and I had to give up climbing. The treatment caused cramps in the feet and hands. After many tears, I stopped going.

To keep up my enthusiasm to go rock climbing again, I decided to buy a friend (a climbing anchoring system) each time I overcame a chemo session. The collection of friends kept growing and seeing them reminded me that I had to fight for my healing and come back even stronger than before.

A few months after my illness, I received a mysterious letter with no return address. When I opened it, I had a great surprise. It was a postcard with a picture of Edurne Pasaban crowning the Everest! On it, there were some lovely words, full of courage and strength to overcome my illness. I closed my eyes and smelled the letter. I could not believe it! It was signed by Edurne herself!

How was that possible? Who had told her? Within minutes my partner confessed that he was the one to blame, he had done it to make me happy. Upon seeing my face of satisfaction and enthusiasm, he sought help from great athletes: mountain climbers, runners, cyclists, triathletes, rock climbers... This was the start of endless letters, gifts and dedicated racing videos with messages of encouragement on Twitter, Facebook and Instagram. Something nice and magical had happened: everyone had joined together for a common cause: to push me to get to the top.

Although I wasn't able to go rock climbing because of the cramps, the week that I was feeling well I would grab my boots and poles to go for a trek on a beautiful path with my partner and

my dog. I was well aware that my lung capacity was scarce and my heart rate would soar, so I took things easy: I would reach the top, breath in and get my strength back again. I could not give up walking; I've walked through all the mountains in my country.

In summer I suffered a drop in defences, anaemia, dehydration and high temperatures, which forced me to stay one week in hospital to get blood transfusions to recover. Doctors and family panicked. They kept saying: 'You must rest; you shouldn't be going out onto the mountains and do what you are doing; listen to your body, your mind is very strong but you mustn't listen to it.'

I remember feeling that a superior energy was pushing me forward; I had the feeling that time was running against me despite the fact that I was being told that chemotherapy was healing me.

I felt an urgent need to make the most of the time I had, doing what I loved doing, what truly fulfilled me. I wasn't able to run, I wasn't able to rock climb... so the body was asking me to walk, to walk as much as I could, to sit on a summit and gaze at endless landscapes, to relax, to close my eyes, to imagine unfolding my wings and flying over beautiful landscapes. That is what I liked, what made me happy.

November came and with it a piece of news. We were told that our house lease would not be renewed as of January. So we decided to move back to our old house on a fourth floor with no lift. In the bustle of moving with all the comings and goings, I had the misfortune to stumble and fall to the ground while playing with my dog. An immense pain took over my body; I cried infinitely for I knew it was not a simple sprain. On arriving at the hospital, before crossing over the entrance door, I swallowed my pride and pain. No more whining. I clenched my fists and said to myself, 'Raquel you will come out of this one, find the balls!' The x-ray confirmed my fears: a broken fibula. Now I had to face my most difficult task: going up to the fourth floor without a lift. Quite a challenge!

Now I can say that in 2014 I have become even stronger, a real warrior; I brought out the best and worst of myself. But surely, I have learnt not to dream what I wish to live, but to live what I have dreamed.

How has rock climbing and mountain climbing helped me? From them I have learned to preserve my values and my principles, to manage sacrifice and overcome force, not to feel sorry for myself, not to waver in bad times, to lift my head up high and to move forward.

I would like to thank my family, my friends, my doctor and all athletes, both professional and amateur, for making me smile, for making me feel thrilled, for showing me the bond that exists in the mountaineering world, for all the gestures of solidarity they have cherished me with and for being extraordinary people.

With three more chemo sessions ahead and uncertain of will happen with my future, I uphold a statement that has been following me since the beginning and has not let me break down: WHERE THERE IS A WILL THERE IS A WAY. If you believe so, you'll have won half the battle.

Raquel Castillo

A climber eager to live life to the full





INTERVIEW

BERNHARD WITZ

Is considered to be one of the best highliners in the world today



HEALTH

WOMEN: SPORT AND THEIR LIFE STAGES



WHAT'S NEW

The DMT Nix
Sportful Cycling Gruppetto Bibtight
Head revolutionizes women's skis
Chonos Ultra Down Jacket
Heli Ghost Limited Edition
Dust streamlined technology and design



TEST

HOKA ONE ONE KAILUA TRAIL

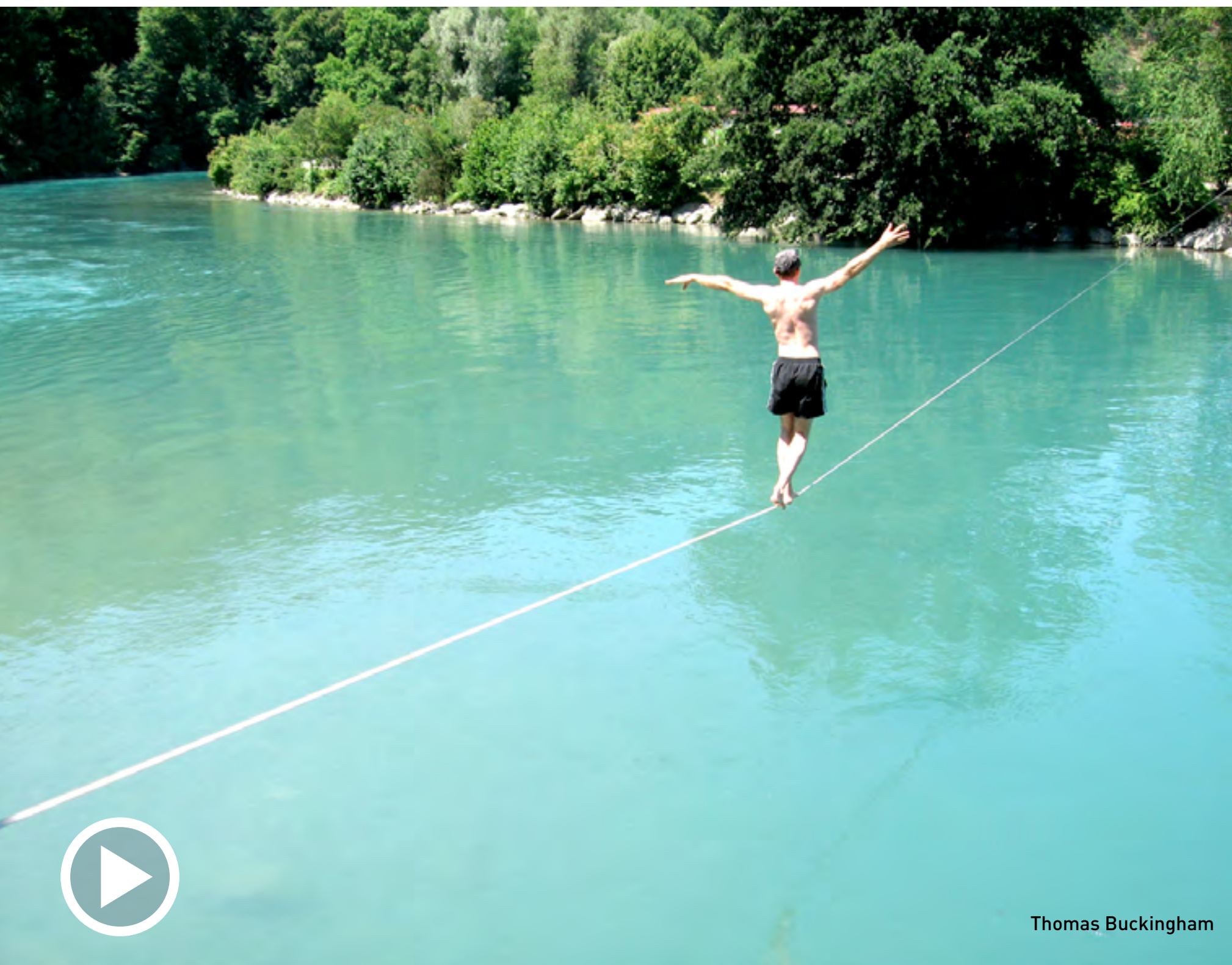


REPORTAGES

The Wizz Air Skopje Marathon, Macedonia
Adventure on the Himalayas
Little nomads
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Bike 2 Reality
Dicing with the death zone



BERNHARD WITZ



Thomas Buckingham

Bernhard Witz is considered to be one of the best highliners in the world today. Among his achievements are the highest highlines in the world, at 1,500 meters in Troll Wall, Norway, and the highest solo highline, with a 1,000 meters drop on the north face of Mount Eiger in Switzerland.

What led you to take up slacklining?

I've loved climbing and balancing on obstacles like chains, railings and fences since when I was a child. When slacklining started to be known among climbers it was obvious that I had to have a go at it.

How was your first contact with this sport?

A friend of mine, who was

a climber, bought some 25mm-wide webbing and a ratchet in the construction market. At that time slackline sets were not sold in shops. The webbing was very soft and so we could not tense it much. My first experience on a wobbly slackline was rather sobering. On that first session all I did was stand on the webbing and I did not make a single step. In

the beginning I didn't feel so much fascinated by this new sport. But the more I progressed, the more I liked it and the more I got involved in the various slacklining methods.

What are the origins of slacklining?

It all started in California's Yosemite Valley, the mecca for free climbers. At that time, the best climbers in the world gathered in

Camp 4, a campsite for all climbers. On that campsite there was a training area with a big chain. On days of bad weather, climbers went on it to train their balance skills. Adam Grosowski was a young climber who stayed in Camp 4 and tried to walk on the well-known chain but did not succeed. He went back home, got hold of a few meters of tubular webbing and tied them up around

two trees in his garden. At that time, the 25mm-wide tubular webbing was used for climbing slings. Together with his friend Jeff Ellington they learned how to walk on different tubular webbings. Some years later, in 1983, they went back to Camp 4 and showed other climbers their "slackline" skills. Elite climbers such as like John Bachar and Wolfgang Güllich attempted walking





Alex Widler

on it too, but they were not very good at it. Young climbers, Scott Balcolm and Chris Carpenter, also had a go and they made quick progress. In autumn 1983, Scott and Chris rigged their first highline under a bridge near Los Angeles. In fact, that was a test for a foolhardy project: Scott wanted to walk a highline over the Lost Arrow Spire, a very high and impressive rock needle behind Camp 4 close to Yosemite Falls. In

1985, Scott made his first walk on that legendary highline. Other climbers such as Chongo continued slacklining in Camp 4 but, even 10 years later, only very few climbers, who had stayed in Yosemite before, knew what a slackline was and, in 1995, there were only 3 active highliners in the world. It was not until 10 years later that Austrian climber and photographer Heinz Zak organized the first slackline festival in Europe. Then, the first

slackline community was created and it was mainly formed by climbers from Austria, Germany and Switzerland. It was then that I first discovered slacklining and met many other active slackliners. Some of them are still active in the highline community.

How many methods are there? Which one do you prefer?

The most popular slacklining methods are

tricklines/jumplines, longlines and highlines. Tricklining is particularly popular among young slackliners. Slackliners practicing on a jump line or on a beginner line which can often be seen in parks. Longlining involves walking on a rather long slackline, while a highline is a high slackline, which requires special safety measures. There is more to rigging a longline or a highline than extensive

practice and knowledge. Some other less known slacklining methods are rodeolines, waterlines and midlines, each one needing different requirements. Rodeolines, for example are slacklines on a tension-free slack rope. Waterlining is probably the most challenging slackline method (especially when performed over fast flowing rivers) because reference to the ground can be easily lost.

I have always been felt that slacklining over obstacles is fascinating. I love being at heights, this is why highlining is my favourite slackline method. I also enjoy performing midlines, longlines and waterlines. Midlines are slacklines performed some meters above the ground, where jumping off is too risky and yet, securing yourself with a leash, as on a highline, is not possible.



What steps did you follow to change from one method to another?

To begin with, one should always try out walking on a low, short beginner line. Once one can safely walk on a standard slackline in the park, it is time to move on to more challenging methods, such as longlining. The risk of suffering injuries is much higher when performing longlines. Therefore, it is important to learn how to rig a longline safely using

the right equipment. To avoid injuries on a longline one should know how to jump off in a controlled way. When waterlining and highlining, it is very helpful to do a sit start (called chongo mount) on the slackline and to grab the rope in case of fall. Longlines, and especially waterlines, are a very good training for performing highlining.

What kind of webbing do you usually use?

I always use 25mm-wide webbing. When performing medium-length highlines, I prefer stretchy threaded tubular webbing. For long highlines, I prefer lightweight, flat webbings. Most of my slackline webbing is manufactured by Landcruising, a German slackline company. They are known to be the best longline and highline webbing producers in the market.





Sebastian Egger

When is someone ready to do their first highline and longline?

When trying on slacklining, people usually start on a short distance slackline and, when that becomes too boring, they try it on longer or higher slacklines. Following this approach, one can slowly move on to more difficult slacklines. In psychology, this behaviour is called 'flow' and people use it when pursuing their own limits. Unless feeling down or overwhelmed, anyone can make progress. Climbers who are not mentally strong enough,

willing to complete a highline, ought to walk three times the distance of the highline on a longline in the park beforehand.

Tell us how you felt the first time you completed a highline.

It was a huge relief. You fight for every step and you feel extremely insecure. At height, by instinct, your body is reluctant to function normally. After completing my first highline, I experienced an overwhelming feeling of relief.

Do you always use some kind of safety device? Which one?

I usually use a swami when I walk on a highline. It is a piece of webbing which you tie around your waist. The swami allows you to move more freely on the highline because the leash (the security rope) is knotted at the back and leg loops are not needed, as it is the case when having a harness on. On the other hand, it's not advisable to have a leash fall with a swami on because one can get seriously injured. Therefore, I use a harness

in longer and more difficult highlines, especially if I'm not sure to be able to grab the rope every time I lose balance. I feel absolute freedom on a highline when I do a free solo, that is, with no safety devices.

How did you feel the first time you did a highline without a harness? Were you scared? Does one feel nervous and under a lot of pressure?

Sure I was scared. I am a mentally strong person, especially in difficult situations, and so I knew I was well prepared for my first free solo on a highline. I had no pressure from other people because I hadn't told anyone I was going to do it. Still, I got nervous because I hadn't experienced being on a highline without a leash and I didn't know what it would feel like. Although I had walked a highline with the swami on many occasions and had tried to imagine what it could be like, it was simply not the same. What makes free solo highlining so difficult is the fact that your mind is not in control. You must trust your body because it is the body that stores the right movements to keep balance. So, the calmer and the more relaxed you are, the safer you will be. You need to make your mind believe that you are walking on a slackline on the ground. Fear will prevent you from moving as usual and will surely cause a fall. Therefore, free solo highlining is, more than anything else, a mental challenge.

What goes through your mind when performing a complicated slackline?

Nothing. To master demanding slacklines you must reach a state of consciousness in which only 'here and now' matters. It's somewhat similar to meditating. Your focus should be on a fixed point at the end of the line and all you should think about is to make the next step. If you start to think about where you are, what you are doing, about your everyday problems, about how far the end of the line is or that you might fall, then you will fall.





Fabian Wyss

How can one attain a good balance?

Mainly, by practicing a lot. One can get some practice anywhere. If there is a railing by the path on the way home from work, walk on it. If there are bollards near your bus stop, stand on them on one foot while waiting for the bus. On the bus, try not to hold on to and keep your balance instead. Experience tells me people will think that you are crazy because only children do such things. Let me tell you, if you take yourself too seriously and if you think that those are childish things to do, you will never become a really good slackliner.

Are you superstitious? Which foot do you step onto the rope first? Why?

I'm not superstitious, but I do my rituals whenever I walk a highline. This helps me to feel comfortable faster. I usually start doing a chongo mount (sit start).

What have been your greatest achievements in highline and longline?

My greatest achievement has been to become the first free solo highliner in Europe and to complete my first free solo highline over the north face of Mount Eiger, which is the highest free solo highline in the world to date. Since I did it in 2009, no

one has ever attempted that same highline yet. Another achievement worth mentioning is a highline over Angel Falls, the highest waterfall in the world, especially because it was very challenging to get there.

What do you think of the evolution and growth of slackline?

Slacklining has become more and more popular and it seems it will continue to be so in the near future. Skilfulness in slackline performance has evolved a great deal over the last few years. When I started slacklining it was hardly imaginable



Johannes Olszewski

that someone would walk a 100m longline. Today, 100m+ longlines are being performed in my town every week. Slacklining has progressed a lot because it is a fairly young sport. Current trickline competitions, for example, are totally different to those of ten years ago. Nowadays, not only static tricks are being shown, but also dynamic ones, such as combos, which prove to be much more spectacular than those we used to do. Young slackliners are learning much faster than we used to when we first started slacklining because the conditions they have are far better. Slacklining is currently losing its status as a trend sport. More and more slackline associations and federations are arising. Also, while some alpine clubs

are still a bit reluctant to it, many others are becoming interested in slacklining. Something similar occurred when climbing sports first started.

Do you combine your passion for this sport with the practice of other sports? Which ones and why?

Highlining allows me to combine my passion for mountaineering with my passion for slacklining. For me, they are the perfect combination because a great part of highlining is getting to the spot and fixing the rope around the rocks. There, I can rely on my experience as a mountaineer and as a skilled rope access climber.

Alex Widler

Can the weather affect longline practice?

Yes if you forget to attach any wind-dampening device onto your longline and the weather turns very windy, it will throw you off. In cold weather in winter you will surely have problems to walk a longline barefoot. Fog can also be a problem, as it may cause you to lose orientation if everything is wobbling around you.

Would you dare to do a highline blindfolded? Have you ever tried it?

I have, and it is very challenging but at the same

time really scary. In case of losing your balance you can't see the line and so it is impossible to grab the rope and you can easily get injured.

Can you hop and or flip on the rope?

I can jump on the line, but I have never tried to do a back flip or a front flip.

Have you ever practiced waterline?

We often practice waterlining over the river in Bern, especially in summer. In cold weather we wear wetsuits or we fix the

rope high enough to avoid physical contact with the water in case of having to grab the rope in a fall.

In which method is swinging greater?

Surfer lines have greater stretch. If you are really skilled, you can also surf on a rodeoline or a very long longline or highline.

What are your future projects?

My dream is to walk on highlines in the most beautiful places on the planet, where no one has ever performed before.

WOMEN: SPORT AND THEIR LIFE STAGES



Physical activity, training and nutrition are well known to be fundamental to lead a wholesome and healthy life. But what, when and how? It all depends. In the case of women, much of it depends on the life stage they are in.

But there is more to us than just a body. To quote Isaac Asimov, the brain is the universe's most complex work because it has infinite possibilities.

We must understand that if our body is being taken care of, so should our brain, so that

it stays young and in shape. This care will enhance our mood and intellectual abilities and will prevent aging in a more vulnerable way.

Throughout their lives, women go through different life stages. Looking after themselves is essential to adapt in the best possible way to the physiological changes that will come ahead. Each woman has specific needs and knowing how to face them, both physically and mentally, is fundamental.



**From 30 to 40 years**

It is a time of changes and commitment, and decisions are not always easy. Many women decide to get pregnant at this time. First of all, it is foremost to listen to what the body and mind are telling us and to adapt our training to this phase in time.

Pregnancy often means a break in training sessions. However science is increasingly supporting the belief that training during pregnancy is beneficial and how to train will depend on the woman's sporting background and on the week of pregnancy. It also upholds that doing activities to improve fitness will help not to gain extra weight than the normal gain during the nine months of pregnancy.

In addition, this will help during labour. It is in postpartum months when some women decide to resume training sessions and it is precisely then when specific training will be needed, as many biomechanical and anatomical changes remain after delivery. Our attention should be focused on the lumbar-abdominal area and the pelvic floor.

With the arrival of a baby, besides looking after herself, the woman will wish to share. It is natural that mothers want to do activities with their little ones such as long walks in the mountain, sessions to familiarize their babies with water or postpartum exercise classes. As babies grow they may accompany mums on their bike seat or in the pram.

As far as food is concerned and within the framework of a balanced diet, special attention should be paid to two key nutrients: iron and calcium.

Iron deficiency anaemia or iron deficiency is a very common condition in women of childbearing age. Menstruation losses are significant and diets are often insufficient. Iron deficiency can cause fatigue and may reduce sports performance. Red meat, seafood, eggs and cockles should be included in our diet as they are a source of iron. Eggs will prove more “beneficial” and be better absorbed when consumed along with foods

rich in vitamin C such as citrus fruits, kiwi or red pepper.

The calcium in the bones increases up to approximately the age of 30. After this age, bone calcium concentration decreases. This maximum accumulation of calcium in the bones, called peak bone mass, will determine osteoporosis development in the future, a paramount issue for those who practice sports. Therefore, calcium is essential at this age. Dairy products (milk, cheese or yogurt) are the main source of calcium. Three daily rations are recommended. Bony fish, pulses or nuts are also important calcium sources.



From 40 to 50 years

At the age of 40 we become “jugglers of time”. We try to be many things at once: mothers, daughters, good professionals, friends, athletes... It is essential to balance these “roles”. To be able to do what we feel we want to do and not what others expect us to do, it is important that we respect ourselves by nourishing our body (we live in it and spend most of our time in it) and our soul (building up a nice attitude to ourselves. Never do to yourself what you would not do to others!

Find activities you enjoy doing and help you keep fit and healthy. Cardiovascular exercises such as walking, running, dancing

or swimming, among others, help control weight, glucose levels, blood pressure or cholesterol, for example. But do not forget to include exercises for muscle toning.

Moreover, as the children grow, we begin to share activities such as biking, playing tennis or water activities where there is always something new to discover. It is an ideal stage to learn a new sport or to take part in organized sporty family events. The intensity and frequency of activities will increase as our children grow older.

As for food, we must not forget that balance remains fundamental. We must eat a bit of everything, especially considering a balanced





consumption. Depending on the sport, the intake should be adapted to the needs of the sport and our age.

From 50 to 60 years

Again, a time of changes. Menopause causes constant emotional changes (loneliness, sadness for no apparent reason...) but they must be welcomed naturally. It's a great time to be born again! How? By establishing healthy habits, trying out new things, valuing

the experiences and memories lived not as longings but as teachers of life.

Such "mental" hormonal imbalance caused by menopause also affects the body. As far as exercise is concerned, strength training becomes very important as it starts to decay and also weight loss becomes more difficult. Combining activities is essential to keep in good shape.

At this stage children can be your mates in the gym, in a stage race or in a team race. Why not share emotions and feelings?

In this decade the dreaded menopause can bring on weight problems. Changes in body fat distribution, at greater or lesser extent, are common. Sport is essential to “trick” such “devastating” effects, and so is food.

Obviously, each case is different but here are some basic guidelines that can help:

1. Reduce energetic foods. Reduce frequency and the quantity consumed.
2. Distribute and split intake throughout the day: eat a little and do not go for many hours without eating.
3. Reduce contributing factors that increase anxiety and stress and which induce the intake of superfluous food and snacks.
4. And, of course, do some physical exercise. This should be appropriate to the individual and monitored, but it is fundamental.

Over 60

We are wise! It is a stage in which to value the past, to live the present and to project into the future.

Sport becomes a great ally to improve the feeling of well being and mental health. There are many activities to choose from: walking, going to the gym, doing yoga, going swimming... Physical activity will safeguard our memory and will slow deterioration. Set yourself challenges and dreams! Never stop dreaming!



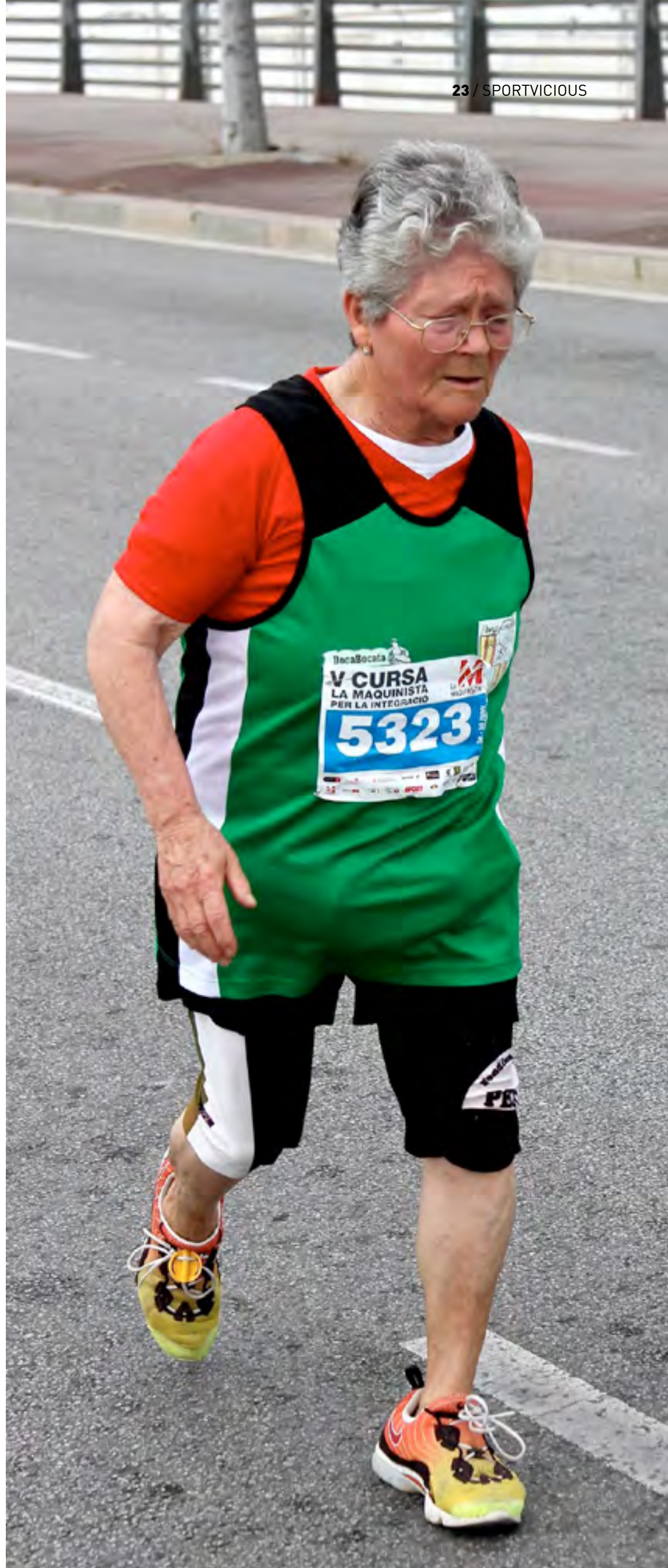
At this age, many women become grandmothers and live a new stage. Grandchildren will require them to always be fit. If we share sports activities with them from a very early age, we will become their best example. Encourage them to walk, to take up a sport, to share hours in the pool or to enter a competition that will add an extra motivational plus so that they can live a thousand and one experiences.

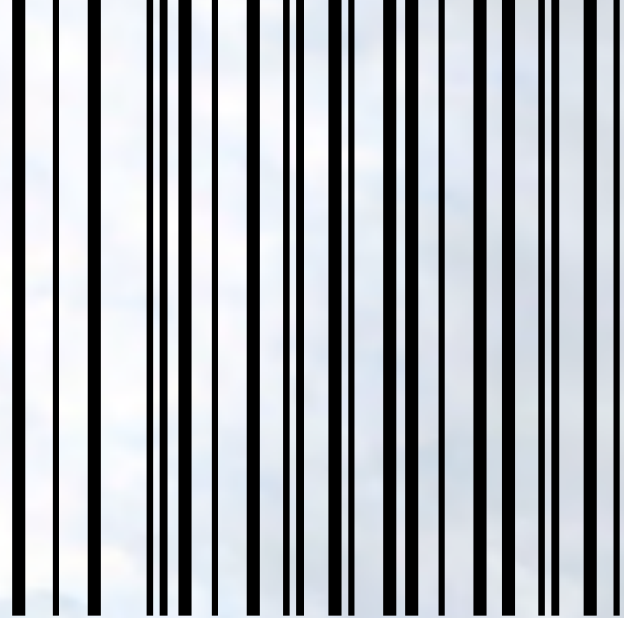
At this stage it is important to ensure adequate protein intake in order to minimize the loss of physiological muscle mass. Therefore, do not miss the intake of meat, fish, eggs and pulses in the diet. Also keep calcium in mind, as it is vital in preventing fractures and osteoporosis. Fruits and vegetables are essential sources of antioxidants at this stage. A minimum of five rations a day should be part of our regular diet.

And attention to the risk of dehydration! The feeling of thirst decreases with age, but we need equal or greater amounts of water to ensure adequate hydration. Do not forget that our body is mostly water!

Further information at the 1st BCN Dona i Esport Forum to be held in Barcelona on March 21, 2015.

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IN BLOWS THE COLD, IN COME THE DMT NIX

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Reinforcement in Italian synthetic anti-allergenic material. Padding realized with foam in PU/open cells of 8mm.



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ThermoDrytex Plus fabric. Flat-lock stitching. Reflective S logo. Colored insert with piping. Mesh bib straps with lie-flat trim. YKK® camlock zippers with reflective piping. BodyFit Pro seat pad.

Sizes: XS-3XL. Weight: 295 g.

HEAD REVOLUTIONIZES WOMEN'S SKIS

The new Joy collection has been designed to offer lighter skis and with greater manoeuvrability and balance, thanks to the use of Graphene, the lightest and most resistant material currently used in the industry.

By combining several layers of GRAPHENE™, each layer only one-atom thick, flexible skis are achieved that react intuitively even at the smallest stimuli.

Depending on ski model, type of skier and snow conditions expected, the weight characteristics and flex distribution can be adjusted to optimize the skiing experience.

The Women's Camber in these skis has a lower profile, which makes turning easier and helps improving performance. Grip and control in any situation becomes easier in any conditions, whatever movement is made.



CHONOS ULTRA DOWN JACKET



Built for high altitude and extreme cold conditions, the Chonos Ultra Down Jacket combines high quality goose down and a unique PERTEX® Quantum Y Yarn outer shell fabric to create a supremely warm, lightweight and packable weather resistant boxwall jacket. The Chonos Ultra Down Jacket has minimalist weight saving features including a tailored 'active mountain' fit that prevents the hem raising whilst reaching high, a fully adjustable helmet compatible hood that can be easily stowed away, two deep A-line hand-warmer pockets and its own waterproof dry bag.

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Insulation: 250g (M) of min 90/10 goose down at 800+ fill (USA)

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Zips: YKK reverse coil

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Electric blue/Electric blue lining/Laser green zips

Aurora green/Shadow lining/Antarctic blue zips

HELI GHOST LIMITED EDITION FROM PEAK PERFORMANCE

Heli Ghost was born out of the Peak Performance Heli Alpine Collection, which includes some of the most technically advanced ski outfits in the market. Heli Alpine skiwear is developed together with Peak Performance team of free skiers and 500 outfits will be released for sale at selected Peak Performance stores and retailers.

The Heli Ghost Jacket is an all black ski jacket made of three-layer GoreTex® Pro which maintains a comfortable microclimate on the inside and protection from the cold and wet on the outside. The fabric is engineered to be extremely durable and lightweight. Features such as the generous hood, ventilation zips and strategically-placed pockets ensure superior comfort on the slopes.

The Heli Ghost Pants are also all black and made of the same fabric as the Heli Ghost Jacket. Features such as reinforced legs, long side zips, snow gaiters, adjustable waist and large pockets allow you to move easily over the mountain and its certainly pants for those who are not afraid to break their limits.



DUST-STREAMLINED TECHNOLOGY AND DESIGN



Dust is designed for mountain biking and outdoor racing enthusiasts. No adjustment necessary with an instant snug fit! Perfect and imperceptible hold on the face with Grip Nose and Grip Tech temples. The slim and flexible frame can be slipped comfortably under a hat or helmet.

The wide field of vision is combined with excellent venting thanks to the technical size of the suspended lenses.

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HOKA ONE ONE KAILUA TRAIL: SAFETY AT ALL RISK



If there is one brand that has burst into the world of running and especially of trail running in recent seasons, it is Hoka One One, founded by Nicolas Mermoud and Jean-Luc Diard only five years ago.

Since their start, the brand opted for “oversize” footwear, characterized by rather voluminous midsoles to provide the highest degree of cushioning and running comfort possible. The closest thing to flying; hence the logo which emulates a flying bird.

The brand’s catalogue has been growing since their activity first started and today it incorporates models which also offer unquestionable benefits on asphalt. However, there are two models that surely have already become objects of worship: Rapa Nui and Mafate.

The purpose of this test is to try out the first model called Kailua because it is the female version of the Rapa Nui one. In turn, within the Hoka One One Kailua there is the Tarmac version (asphalt) and the Trail one, which is the one we exposed to rigorous examination.



What are the main features of the Kailua Trail? Obviously, the first thing that stands out is its high-profile midsole of 26,5 mm below the metatarsal and 31,5 mm under the heel, resulting in an effective drop of only 5

mm. Do not forget that a high profile does not necessarily mean a high drop and the Kailua Trail clearly proves so.

What do the “oversize” profile and the low drop result in? Quite simply in what the brand itself advertises: a running comfort difficult to equate as well as a high degree of protection to our fascia muscle. This can be felt from the very first moment and the truth is that not feeling the harshness of impacts and not worrying about nailing sharp stones on the metatarsals is a great relief.



However, there is more to the Kailua than this. Their rocker, middle and reception angle of heel crash offers a profile designed to provide a rocking motion that facilitates stride and the whole phase in contact with the ground occurs as smoothly as possible. This is especially noticeable when running through low-altitude areas without technical difficulty and especially on asphalt. In this sense, we liked how easy it was to run fast with them on. This is why on a few occasions we even chose them to complete our usual routines on asphalt (although Hoka One One has a specific Kailua model to do so). The ease to go fast with them on, thanks to their midsole design and their amazing 280 grams in size 8,5 W USA, makes them very easily enjoyable for running.



But back to the world of trail, is their stability compatible with the midsole height? This aspect requires the deepest analysis. It is legitimate to believe that it is not possible for a shoe of this kind to be stable. In this regard, let us firstly explain the different devices the Hoka One One has incorporated in this model to provide it with the necessary stability and then discuss their effectiveness.



First, and perhaps the foremost important detail to take into account, is that our foot really does not rest on the midsole that is shown externally. Instead, the foot dips in it

about 1 cm in the heel area and somewhat less in the front. This way the foot fits in, wrapped in a “bed” which firmly grips it from both sides. Hoka One One Foot calls this Active Foot Frame, which, besides increasing stability significantly, easily adapts to different feet morphologies. Our experience was as follows: despite not feeling the expected instability, during our first running sessions we did not feel fully confident and thought that at some point we might be surprised by an unexpected sprained ankle. Admittedly, our adaptation was slow. Although we could feel the midsole wrapping our feet and such feeling kept increasing, especially when the foot stepped onto the ground conferring us additional stability. During the first outings we did not dare venturing on more technical terrain than forest tracks and some rather easy trail paths, where we would run with extreme caution.



As for the sole grip, there is nothing to be said. They do not offer exceptional grip or traction, but neither their compound nor their 4mm bidirectional lugs (the front ones located to provide maximum traction and the rear ones placed counter clockwise to increase grip, especially on descents) are to be underestimated. They simply perform



their function. We also found the lugs' lifespan was not very high, as they wore out earlier than we expected. Let's see if sole performance and durability increases next season when a new compound developed by the brand Vibram is added to the sole.

As for the upper, the outside of the Kailua Trail is mostly covered by a highly breathable mesh with no seams which is rather fine, and so it offers fairly rapid drying and water evacuation. This mesh is reinforced on both sides by very thin flexible plastic strips that provide additional reinforcement to the structure, which we assessed to be fundamental. The reason why we assessed

this is because the Kailua are "H" shaped and so they are quite wide at the midfoot. This helps to further increase stability but, no doubt, requires that instep subsection by the upper be firmer. In this aspect, the Kailua meets the terms, but they could do with a little more reinforcement in the upper of this area and thereby gain extra foot support inside the shoe after accumulating kilometres on highly steep descents.

On the other hand, the protection on the toe area is very effective. It fulfils its function amply with no major prominences. The fact that the Kailua has a raised midsole profile and a very pronounced rocker plays in their



favour, since, in the event of contact with a stone, such contact is more likely to be made with the midsole toe part, whereby the integrity of our fingers is guaranteed.

The heel is a very important area in these running shoes. Hoka One One has designed a semi-rigid structure covered in a generous and nice to touch padding on the inside for their Kailua. The fitting proves very successful thanks to its perfect harmony with the aforementioned Active Foot Frame. Not even in the first kilometres will annoying looseness be felt. The only thing that can be a bit annoying is the height of such structure in the middle section (just below the ankle). In that area we felt it somewhat high and, until the shoe was not somewhat tamed or run in, we felt there was too much friction between the structure in the heel area and the lower part of our ankles, both on the outside and on the inside.



be said to be “of consumer taste”. The series models are equipped with a quick lacing system, which may well not appeal to everyone, about which we have nothing to object to. It is easily done and any lace excess can be tied up using the two transverse strips that attach both ends of the upper in the middle. This will prevent the laces from moving freely and getting snagged on branches.



The running shoes are also provided with a set of substantially thicker conventional laces that can be put in at any time and hence use can be made of the very last holes on the upper, which will, in turn, increase foot support on instep top substantially, which will prove, in fact, quite useful.



As for the shoe tongue, it is mostly made of synthetic leather and is extremely thin, as it is customary in Hoka One One models. It satisfied us completely. We believe this model does not lack anything else to achieve its goal. The laces (not even the fast tied ones) never nailed on our forefoot and they proved to be highly resistant and tough when being wriggled and squirmed, which is something always very uncomfortable. Moreover, although not being sewn to the upper side, it will be difficult, for dust or small stones to get inside it, since the upper itself wraps much of the shoe tongue when the laces are tightened.

Finally, it is worth mentioning that the Kailua Trail has a 2 mm thick antibacterial and highly breathable insole manufactured by the prestigious company Ortholite. No objection to this feature. On the contrary, it is thanks to the roomy form of this Hoka One One model, that such insoles may be easily substituted for corrective insoles without further incidences.

Once their features are described, what user experience can one expect? Well, the truth is that the Kailua Trail are running shoes whose comfort is evident from the start and further training sessions would be required to check how far they can go. To begin with, running on more technical areas with them on seemed too risky. Over time, however, we got used to their stability, and so we tried them on areas of technical difficulty that we initially valued as unthinkable. The following video is a clear example of this. A training session along a short stretch of the well known GR-11 that crosses the Pyrenees from east to west, where we could enjoy the easy rolling and protection of the Kailua along wide and grass tracks filled up with small stones in the initial kilometres, but swiftly progressing into single-tracks





of damp earth seasoned with roots and medium size rocks leading to Malniu shelter. Finally, during the demanding approach to Puigpedrós, due to its tough steep ascent and equally steep descent, we reaffirmed our belief that adapting to the “oversize” midsole of the Kailua had been a success. Complete fluency and absence of ankle sprains on a terrain where the guard mustn't be lowered.

With all the above we mean to say that the Hoka One One Kailua Trail is a running shoe model to be enjoyed from the very beginning.

Our joints will remain flawless when used on soft trail on unlimited distances. Gradually, our own adaptation to the model and the constant awareness that they are much more stable than we thought at the start will increase our trust in them and, almost without realizing it, we will use them on increasingly more technical challenges. In any case, we truly believe the Kailua Trail is a model that fits “like a glove” to tackle challenges in ultra distance of medium/low technical difficulty.

Mesi Arcos



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RUNNING AROUND THE WIZZ AIR SKOPJE MARATHON, MACEDONIA



Macedonia, also known as the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (which is its official name) is a small country unknown to most runners and a great find for anyone who has the opportunity to pay a visit to it. Located in the mountainous Balkans, the country has large forest tracts and natural beauty spots, especially Lake Ohrid and some nearby peaks of over 3,000 meters. Contrasts are also evident in the country's infrastructures, which date back to its Soviet past, when they were built with a poor sense of beauty and some were also destroyed by earthquakes that the country has suffered throughout its history.

Its capital city, Skopje, is undoubtedly the most populated city in the country with 700,000 inhabitants. The International Marathon, a popular, commercial and festive race takes place there every year in the month of May. Participation is neither massive nor expensive; unlike other similar events. Taking part in the marathon costs a maximum of 18 € (13 € if you sign up beforehand) and participants are given a €20 voucher to be used to fly with Wizz Air, the event's main sponsor.

The route is completely flat and there are hardly any bends, just a couple of 180° turns at both ends of the circuit. It's a



A popular, commercial and festive race

half-marathon circuit which is toured twice for runners participating in the long distance race; there are also half-marathon races and 5-kilometres races. However, it must be said that all that glitters is not gold. The asphalt of the Macedonian capital is of poor quality and running on it for 42 kilometres can pay its toll. When running in groups, it is important to mind where the feet step, because every so often there are some cobbled stretches or the odd hole which can appear all of a sudden.

Besides, there's the weather. Skopje is an inland city and May is very close to the summer months. It is not surprising that temperatures reach 30°C (or are even higher) on sunny days. This is why there are checkpoints providing liquid every two or three kilometres as well as some fruit and energy bars.

As for the location, the circuit has been devised to show the beauty of the capital. The start and the finish are both in the heart of the city, close to the house-museum of Mother Teresa of Calcutta (of Albanian nationality but born in Skopje as this part of the world has changed borders many times). Opposite is Macedonia Square, a huge esplanade surrounded by shops and close to all embassies, with a giant statue of conqueror Alexander the Great on a horse. Beyond, the race runs along residential areas of modest beauty, where occasional neighbour fans will





cheer you on from the doorsteps of their houses and even offer you some food and drink.

The enormous effort that organizers are making to turn it into a reference marathon is also worth mentioning. For example, Wilson Kipsang (at that time current world record marathon holder) was invited as host in the 2014 edition. The well-known runner accepted the offer and was seen and photographed everywhere during the days he spent in the Macedonian capital.

However, one thing is the marathon circuit and another is the city's own attractiveness. Bisected by the River Vardar, Skopje has numerous bridges of great beauty, which

have some sort of bike lanes or walkways ideal for running or walking on for various kilometres, which link the two riverbanks. In this sense, it resembles some other European cities with similar characteristics, such as Belgrade, Budapest or Prague, relatively speaking, of course. Other city sights include a fortress from the Middle Ages (though it has some older traces) and the Ottoman neighbourhood which is characterized by its steep and narrow streets crossing old stone houses about to collapse. It is not surprising that most souvenir shops are located in this bucolic area and that restaurant owners repeatedly ask you to go in to try their culinary delights.

Should you have more time to spare, it is worth climbing up to the Millennium Cross, a 66 metre high metal cross which crowns mountain Vodno, just outside Skopje. From this hill you can see the entire city and land that extends far beyond.

In short, an ideal excuse to visit this Balkan country and to get lost in its subtle beauty. Needless to say that English is not widespread among the population and they write using the Cyrillic alphabet, which will surely turn the trip into an adventure if travelling on your own. Should May not be a good month to run the marathon in

Skopje, an alternative -perhaps more interesting- is to travel to the country in September and visit the World Heritage city of Ohrid, in the southwest, near Albania. The Ohrid Marathon -so called because it is only 30 kilometres in length- is held every September 8th (independence day) in this city bathed by the lake with the same name. Its circuit beautifully meanders along the lakeside, from the border with Albania to the centre of the city of Ohrid.

Marc Roig

Photographs of Skopje Marathon



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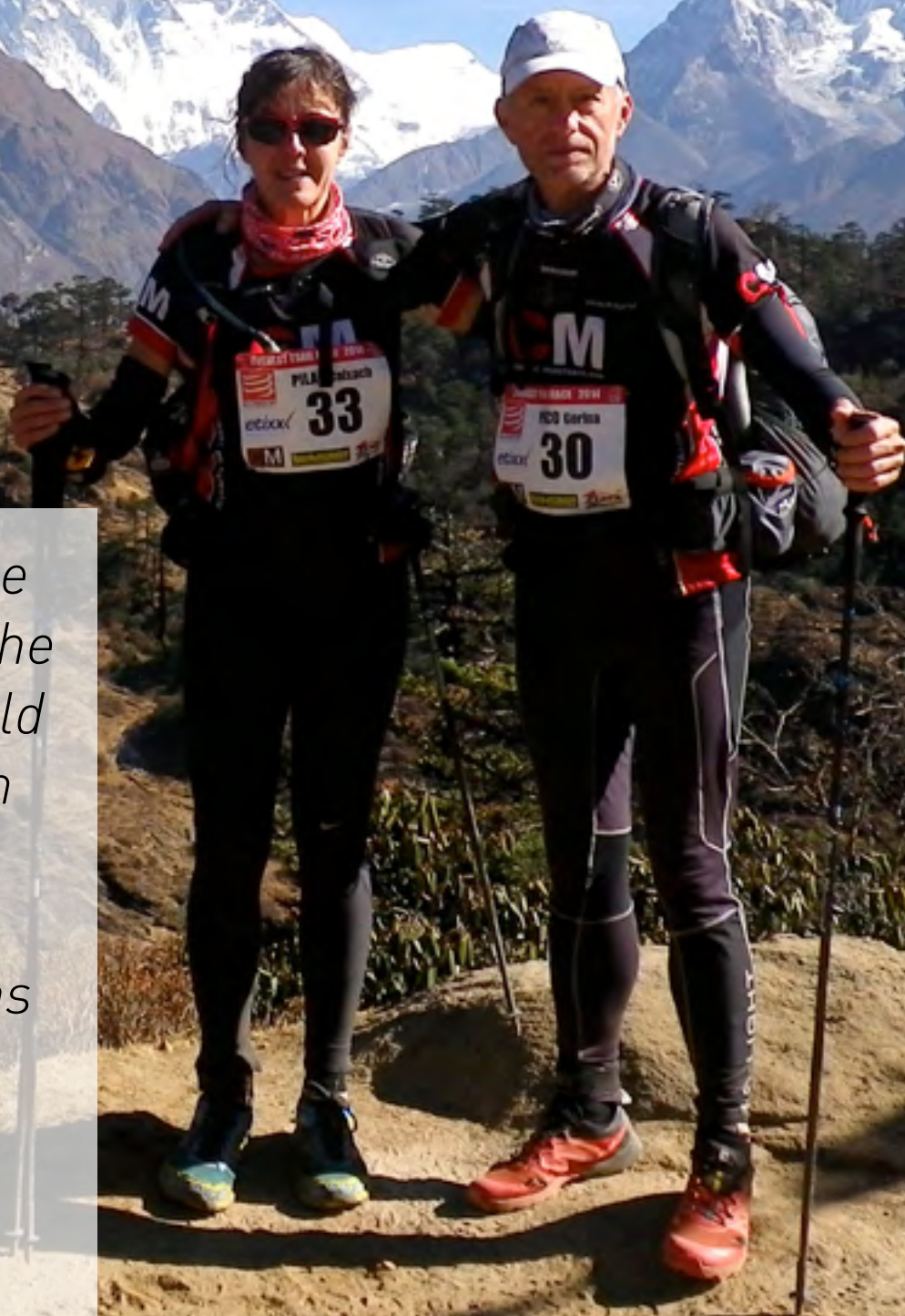
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ADVENTURE ON THE HIMALAYAS

When Paco was offered the possibility to take part in the Everest Trail Race, he could not imagine it would mean a great deal more than a sporting competition. He and Pilar Caixach, who was a veteran in ultra-racing and with whom he had run in many other races, decided to face this new challenge together.



A priori, the details and profile available for the race, although substantial, seemed achievable, especially as it was to be run in 6 stages. However, the reality proved to be very different. The ETR was one of the toughest races I have ever participated in because, as they say, the devil is in the details.

Running the ETR meant 12 days of travelling across the world; timetable changes; living in a very poor country with the consequent deficient hygienic conditions; an intense relationship with other runners and staff from the organization; exposure to heights of more than 4,000 meters; gazing breathtaking sceneries; exhausting days; cold, heat and

dust; fortunately, not much blood; suffering respiratory and muscle problems; seeing loaded unrecognized animals, isolation from the civilized world and, in short, anything that means living a real adventure.

And, if nearly all runners managed to complete the race and all participants had an unforgettable experience, it was because organizers had made a huge and first class logistical, organizational and human effort. Ensuring appropriate hygienic conditions, giving advice on basic rules of conduct, resolving permits with the authorities, setting up camps in remote locations only accessible on foot or by helicopter, carrying food and water supplies to unexpected



**The people of Jiri Bazar
welcomed the runners**



The height started to have an effect on us, we found it difficult to encompass breathing with pace

places, monitoring the runners' health and always giving them support so that they could overcome any drawbacks, big or small, they might come across, and by anticipating any eventualities that may inevitably arise in a country such as Nepal and, finally, by becoming a greater part of a team together with the runners than a distant organizational team.

The adventure began in Barcelona on November 9th. At 8:30 all of us were at the airport to catch a flight to Kathmandu, capital of Nepal, with a stopover in Istanbul.

After spending a few days in the capital, we got onto some vans and headed off to Jiri Bazar, the town where the race would start. It was a journey some 8 hours long, along narrow, winding roads, which climbs up to a ridge 2,500 m high, from where lovely views over the Annapurna massif could be enjoyed.

In the distance, at the bottom of a valley, we glimpsed the village of Jiri and the camp. The yellow tents lined up on a meadow while the dining tents gave off a touch of red to the scene. We were finally at the start, the day after would be D Day.

At 6.00 am a Sherpa brought us some hot tea and we began what would become our daily routine: having breakfast, picking up some water, gels and bars, packing and getting dressed for the stage. The village children, the band and some politicians gathered around the start and enlivened it with a speech and some live music. After the unavoidable briefing with the latest details, the start signal was given.

It was an introductory stage, with two climbs of 600 and 900 m, which were a first contact with the terrain. We quickly learned that the climbs were "very steep", the descents technical and the rivers had to be crossed

over by hanging bridges. We ran past our first mountain pass called Deurali Pass, at a height of 2,715 meters, nearly at the end of the stage. Organizers drew on arrival times to separate participants into two groups, on longer stages, the last ten would start an hour before the rest to avoid having to run during the night.

On arrival, it was back to camp routine: a shower, a quick change of clothes, sorting out tents, having something to eat, waiting for dinner time and getting ready for the queen stage of the following day: nearly 3,500 meters of climbing that would lead us to Pikey Peak, at 4,068 meters of height.

So the following day we started off with energy but, unfortunately, Pilar's backpack accidentally opened and she lost her anorak and waterproof pants. Not only did we waste time going back to try to find the material, but also we suffered the consequences throughout the rest of the race when it would turn cold.

The route began with a long climb, most of it on a stone staircase. After 1,500 meters of ascent, we reached the pretty village of Gompa, located at a height of 3,000 meters. We carried on for some 2 km on flat terrain or smooth slopes and then, again, it was time to climb up some 1,200 meters of altitude difference that would lead us to





Pikey Peak. Just there our problems began... The height started to have an effect on us, we found it difficult to encompass breathing with pace and one of the runners even fainted and nearly lost consciousness, but fortunately he came round with no further consequences. As we were climbing up, temperatures were going down and the wind was whipping us mercilessly. Amidst this desolate place, a Nepali family was collecting dry leaves from a bush and chatting animatedly.

We finally reached the peak and the people at the checkpoint sheltered us from the wind and took care of us with hot soup, food and water. A technical descent and a 200m ascent led us to the camp located at 3,600 meters high on a hill with great views of the massive peaks in the Himalayas. We were facing a cold night ahead, with temperatures below zero, and mild symptoms of altitude sickness, headache, insomnia and, in my case, intestinal discomfort.

The stage on the following day had two technical descents which added up some 4,100 meters and some noteworthy slopes, especially the final climb up to Kharikola (600 m), which accumulated some 2,500 meters altogether.

We began our descent through the woods and carried on running across a beautiful valley that led us to the village and monastery of Jumbesi. We climbed up again flanking up the mountain as far as Ringmu, and there, descended all the way to a mighty river, which we had to cross over across an omnipresent hanging bridge. After that came a steep climb and, then, a long technical descent over 1,600 m long, full of stairs and, to make it more interesting, filled with mud, animal droppings and water. We crossed the village of Nunthala, where a group of children, suitably trained by Albert Vilana, cheered us on arrival.

Finally, we crossed another river and began the steep climb which ended on a stair shaped slope, to reach the Kharikola



All participants had an unforgettable experience

monastery, where the camp was. What an impressive arrival that was! Pilar was suffering from pharyngitis, mucus and she seemed to be developing a respiratory disorder. Wet weather prevented our clothes from drying, and we foresaw that the coming stage would be a tough one. In theory, that one was meant to be a recovery stage, being shorter yet with significant +2,500 m and -2,000 m added altitude difference. The route was getting closer to and finally merged with the most touristic areas, and so the traffic of porters, animals and trekkers increased on the way to Everest Base Camp.

Pilar was still suffering from her respiratory disorder in the morning. We hardly managed to get to the first checkpoint at Kari La Pass at 3,148 m. Fortunately, the race doctor was there and he helped her to be

able to continue. We carried on running up and down gently at an altitude of 2,800 m. Unfortunately, we could not enjoy the beauty of the landscape because of the cloudy sky.

After ascending and descending some 500m and crossing over another hanging bridge, we finally reached the finish in Phadking. That night we stayed in a Lodge as a reward to our efforts.

Runners began to feel worn down by the kilometres, the altitude and the cold. Their faces during the briefing for the following stage spoke volumes; it looked as if we were not the same people who had started, and the coming stage would be tough. It wasn't a very lengthy one, only 20 km long, and the +2,200 and -1,000 m slopes didn't look too deadly, but the finish was at 3,860 m of height in Tyangboche after a tough climb. That one is a meaningful stage for

all mountaineers. The names of Namche Bazar, Tyangboche or Khamjung remind us of the first ascent to Mount Everest. In fact, Tyangboche was the first acclimatization base camp ever and it is located at the bottommost part of Nuptse, Everest, Ama Dablam and Lothse.

We would run separately on that stage and I set myself the goal to overcome Yangdi Lama Sherpa, the Nepalese girl who came finally 3rd in the women's rankings. I kept a fast pace until reaching Hillary Bridge, where a tough climb up to Namche began. It was very steep but the ground was fine. After some endless time, the capital of the Sherpas suddenly showed up suspended in the mountains at the turning of a bend.

I ran past Namche and carried on along a false plain with ups and downs where I did my best not to lose any time, as the steep descent to Phunki Tenka lay ahead. On that spot, a military checkpoint showed us the path up to Thyangboche. It did not seem a difficult climb but, after 115 km of racing on significant slopes and at some 3,300 and 3,800 m of height, we were exhausted. To make things worse, we had to keep overtaking porters, tourists and yaks, but I finally reached the finish having achieved my goal.

Many emotions were unleashed in Thyangboche. That was the star moment of the race. The welcoming by the



race organizers and peers was simply extraordinary. On top of that, it was sunny, the cold weather was a gift to us and mythical Himalayan peaks surrounded us. Yangdi and Pilar arrived shortly afterwards, after a titanic effort against height sickness and bronchitis. The following morning would be a procedural stage to get to Lukla and catch the plane.

The last race day began very cold and with a clear sky. During breakfast we caught sight of the first rays of sunlight lighting the peaks of the Everest and the Lhotse. Once ready, we started running downhill along the same path we had climbed up the day before and then we turned towards Khumjung, climbing up some 500-600 m. Close to Khumjung, we came across a rather large and tidy village with a large school. It was break time and so the children decided to run with us in great joy. We climbed up a hill and descended as far as Namche where we got onto the same path of the last two stages to get to Cheplung. There, an uphill road led us to the arrival in Lukla, where we were welcomed by other athletes, the organizers and some tourists.

The following day, some air traffic difficulties arose in Kathmandu and we were left waiting for long hours in the frosty Lukla airport. In the end, almost all of us were allowed to board the plane and the rest got on the first flight early the following morning. After getting some rest, we enjoyed a free day to do some shopping, to recover and to get ready for the farewell dinner and the prize ceremony, which counted on the presence of politicians and the surprise appearance of Ferran Latorre.

Those were 12 unforgettable days to be remembered for the good laughs, the companionship, the effort, the fatigue, and the astonishing landscapes and for being surrounded by kind and humble people.

Francisco Gorina



LITTLE NOMADS

Beti and Joan have been an adventurous couple all of their lives. When they became parents they decided not to give up their hobby, but to share it with their two daughters, Ares and Maiana, cycling around the world for seven months.



We like adventure, discovering new places, cultures, customs, different life conditions, speaking with people, listening, watching...

Travelling is a way to broaden the mind, the spirit, the five senses and every pore in your body. Travelling makes you feel alive, helps you to break with routine, to improvise, to adapt to any situation, to treasure what you have and to put things in perspective. It forces you to be flexible and tolerant.

Having children has never been an obstacle in doing what we enjoy most and from the moment ours were born, adventures have

become fun, bursts of laughter and a good way to educate and instil values, passion, learning and strength in a natural way.

Since the age of two months, they have been surrounded by mountains, tents, backpacks, wheels, sun, rain, wind and snow. When children grow up like that, they adapt to anything. We soon discovered the bicycle was the ideal means to combine it all. In these early years, local greenways and European bike lanes have been a testing ground to test materials, to get rid of excess weight and to get the minimum of luggage for our big goal: South America.



Travelling is a way to broaden the mind, the spirit, the five senses and every pore in your body

We are not crazy or perhaps we were before. In 2005 we set off on two wheels towards Asia and spent nine months on the road. So the idea of pedalling across Latin America along with the girls had always been within our consciousness. All we had to do was to wait for the right moment.

Seven months of pedalling across the wildest corners of Chile, Argentina, Bolivia, Peru and Ecuador with two girls, aged three and six, was a great challenge.

We experienced the cold, the heat, fear, euphoria, doubt, joy, discomfort... good and bad moments. This way of travelling is not always synonymous with relaxation. It often involves a major effort. There is tiredness, improvisation, unforeseen weather, different food, lack of hygiene and comfort, undesirable traffic... but nothing compares to the feeling of freedom, peacefulness and improvisation that one gains when in contact with nature, with different cultures and





lifestyles, with slow and minimalist ways of living, which awaken the courage, curiosity and innate creativity we all have within.

There were some priceless moments. Watching Maiana singing and running around Salar de Uyuni like the heroine from her favourite film; being with Ares in her challenge to cross a 4,750m-high mountain pass after rejecting the help of the muleteer; feeling the complicity and powerful bond that was growing between them... I recall one freezing night in the tent when Ares got up with fine white frosty hair and Maiana said in laughter: "You look like Frozen Ana." Travelling alone is exciting. Travelling with

your partner is intense. Travelling with your family is magical.

Patagonia, the Pampas in Argentina, reaching Chile through the Laguna del Desierto, the Carretera Austral, the Seven Lakes Route, the Lanin volcano, Villarica National Park, Quebrada Humahuaca, the Bolivian Altiplano, the Salar de Uyuni, the lake Titicaca, Cusco, the Machu Picchu, Huaraz, the Santa Cruz trekking, the Galapagos... we simply cannot answer the incessant question of what place we liked the most. They are all unusual landscapes that will remain forever engraved in our



**Travelling with your partner is intense.
Travelling with your family is magical**

minds. To us, the contact with people, their warmth, their help, their welcoming in times of need is what will remain... and also realizing that there are still people with a huge heart and great commitment to society.

One of the most common first questions people ask us (both during and after the trip) is: how many kilometres do you cycle a day? The answer always disappoints everyone. Even when it is something crazy like 150 km a day! Non-cyclists will believe it is too little and sport fans will think that an average of 40 km per day is not enough. We do not count the kilometres but the amount of hours the girls can bear on the bike. One mustn't be ambitious either with the route or with the kilometres. We must change our way of

thinking: the goal is that they enjoy it. This is what we must achieve day after day.

Another frequent question has to do with schooling. All parents suffer when it comes to skipping school. But travelling is the greatest of all schools.

Over there we have learnt that migratory birds can fly for 72 hours straight at a speed of 80 km/h up to 8,000 meters high, covering distances up to 32,000 km! (having more autonomy than an Airbus A-330).

That penguins mate for life and seek the same nests they used in previous years.

That the wind blows 24 hours a day in Patagonia, with gusts over 80 km/h that

forces one to drag the bike to avoid falling.

That the River Futaleufu is considered to be among the best five for wildwater kayakers.

That mountains can have more than 14 colours.

The condors can live up to 85 years and are one of the largest birds in the world, revered by the indigenous people of South America who consider it to be the spirit of the Andes and a sacred link between God and man.

That the Incas made human offerings to Pachamama and child mummies are still preserved in the highest peaks of the Andes.

That the compass deflects 15° in the Salar de Uyuni and a good stone is needed to anchor the pegs of the tent into the salt crust.

That llamas and alpacas spit when startled. And a thousand other things that would take me far too long to explain...

Coming back has not been easy. We have changed, but the environment we left behind one year ago remains the same. The same people, the same mentality, the same job, the same routines, the same concerns, the same complaints... but our minds have returned much more open and flexible. We hope to be back on the road soon, to the fragile life of the little nomads.

Beti y Joan

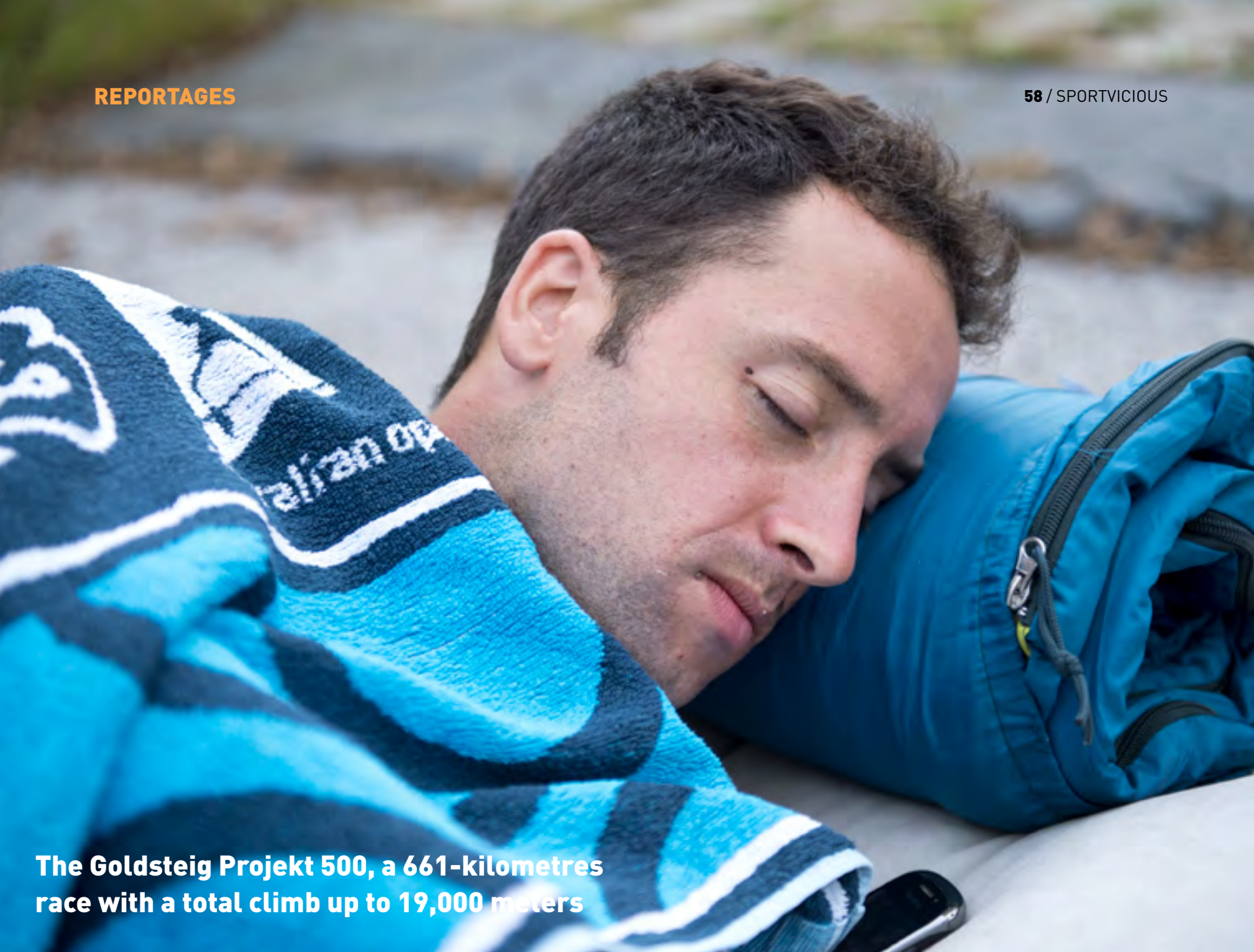


GOLDSTEIG PROJEKT 500

THE LONGEST ULTRA TRAIL IN EUROPE

Joel Jaile and his soul mate Eugeni Roselló, took part in the first edition of the Goldsteig Projekt 500, a 661-kilometres race with a total climb up to 18,160 meters, considered to be the longest ultra trail in Europe.





The Goldsteig Projekt 500, a 661-kilometres race with a total climb up to 19,000 meters

I spent the whole of Friday travelling: trains, planes and more trains to get to the hotel at night and there I met up with my friend Eugeni and his teammates: Xavi, Claudio and Joan. We had a beer, prepared everything and went off to bed. I slept like a child. The next morning, we arranged all the material, prepared the three bags for the checkpoints and headed off for the start.

After many months of waiting, the greatest event of the year, the big challenge: Goldsteig Projekt 500, 661 kilometres with 19,000 meters of climb, had arrived. Eugeni and I had previously completed the Spine Race, one of the toughest of all races, mainly because of the extreme weather. This race would be different but we would have to run 230 kilometres more. Eugeni and I set off in the leading group. All the athletes in this race are top ones. There were only 50

of us, but all with a scary sporting career. It is a prerequisite for taking part in this race, which is accessed only by invitation.

We pressed the accelerator, were running at a good pace and had Jin Cao always close by. At km 35 we reached the first village and encountered the assistance team. We refilled the water bottles and sent the okay message. It is mandatory to send such messages at each one of the 11 checkpoints.

The stretch to the next checkpoint was pretty flat, always on track or some steep slopes. Rubbing started. First mistake: I hadn't put any Vaseline on. It took us some 30 minutes to find the checkpoint, such time that Jin Chao used to catch up with us. The second big mistake on my part: I was using the insoles I had just started wearing only two months before. There, I swapped my



La Sportiva running shoes for a Hoka pair. I would not change shoes again for the whole length of the race. Would they endure 600 km non-stop?

Jin ran off. He is very fast on flat terrains. He had won many flat surface races and has remarkable 24-hour records on track. After a few hours we caught up with him and, as the cold Bavarian night approached, we kept going past each other. Once again, we met the assistance team and slept for 40 minutes, during which time Jin ran further ahead from us. Although, once rested, we increasingly cut off minutes and, finally, overtook him.

From there to km 200, the rubbing, my foot and my knee made me suffer a little. I had to overcome the pain and begin to deceive the

mind. Luckily, being with Eugeni helped a great deal.

We put the forehead lights back on. We were at km 200. Yet again, we lost 20 minutes looking for the checkpoint. Checkpoints were not well marked on my GPS. We went to a hotel, had a shower and Joan (a good massage therapist and great motivator, the same as Claudio and Xavi) was massaging us when Jin arrived, 10 minutes later.

After 2 hours of sleep and a full belly, we made our attack on the night. The most mountaineering and technical stretch of the race lay ahead. We faced it with less pain in our legs but still a bit in our feet. We felt comfortable as there were lengthy climbs on tracks at the beginning and gradually the terrain turned much more technical and leg

breaking. We loved it and we started to place ourselves increasingly further away from Jin, a German and a Finnish runner, who were the three closest to us. We were facing the night in good shape but I fell down. I tripped over a wet branch and fell down hitting my bottom onto a stone. I was on the ground for one minute in great pain. How painful!

The day came. Some ten leg-breaking steep slopes lay ahead. The difficulty of that stretch was highly surprising. At this point, the race puts everyone in their place. We reached the checkpoint thirsty and hungry; it had been a very hot day. We rested for about 40 minutes well fed and massaged.

The following stretch was some 70 km long. I started running with my legs feeling as stiff as two sticks, but they gradually got back into shape and got trotting at a good pace. There were beautiful forests and villages along that stretch. At some stage, we came across some horses and, as we moved on, many more appeared. Suddenly, we saw them coming after us, so Eugeni and I darted away. Night came. Eugeni had lost his GPS so we had to go back to try and find it. It was an area with high grass. We stopped to sleep for another couple of hours; I stayed inside the tent; it was cold but I didn't feel tired, so we got back on our feet. There was a steep climb and a technical descent. Some parts of the route reminded us of Chariots of Fire.



Eugeni was going at a fast pace and I had to accelerate to keep up with him

We were forced to hop from rock to rock ... and we just loved it! Once down, there was no choice but to run and run. We had two sandwiches, nougats, some sweets and some dehydrated fruit that tasted like glory and some nuts. Upon meeting the assistance team, we wolfed down a bowl of mashed potato and some pasta or rice. The truth is that we were very lucky with the assistance team. Nothing would have been the same without them. We were very well looked after. We arrived to daylight. Eugeni had a 30-minute nap but, as had happened before, I wasn't tired. I relaxed for a while and Xavi came up with croissants from the bakery, which tasted like the best dish in the world.

The following stretch up to km 430 went along fairly flat terrain, and we ran along it under the rain. Eugeni was going at a fast pace and I had to accelerate to keep up with him. I must admit I needed to be pulled along, otherwise I have a natural tendency to slow down or get dragged behind, as it sometimes happened at checkpoints. On that occasion, we only got lost a couple of times; we struggled to find the checkpoints. We reached the hotel and were received with open arms; we had run really fast. They did not have hot food. Too bad! We had some sleep and a good old friend of Michael (also in the organizational team) ordered a delightful pizza for us. At that hotel we made





Eugeni had to abandon. That was a real setback

the longest stop. Anti-inflammatories had caused Eugeni's ankles and feet to swell. The German runner and Jin arrived at the hotel. Eugeni is a tough warrior and so we decided to set off for the following stage at night. We had three checkpoints ahead but after 10 km Eugeni felt he was not able to carry on. He fought like a real champion. We called the assistance team to come and collect him. That was a real setback; How heart-breaking that moment was... I felt alone that night. Eugeni and I had run 450 km in over 100 hours together, helping each other. That had been quite something. After jogging some further 10 km in the endless night, I stopped running and I asked myself if carrying on was really worth it. I felt sad. Eugeni, Xavi, Joan, Claudio and all the folks back home came to mind. I grabbed my phone, gritted my teeth, I screamed and got back on my feet again. I had to make it! For their sake! Dawn came as I was running

up a long climb at 1,000 meters. At the top, there was a massive aerial and I saw some beautiful trunks with animal shapes. Off I went for the long descent. My injury hurt a little but I trotted at my own pace. At the bottom of the descent I was greatly surprised to see the whole assistance team, who took me to the following checkpoint. What a lovely surprise!

I reached km 500 and celebrated it with an enormous glass of beer. I said farewell to my friends, who did so much for me that I cannot even describe it, and I faced my way to the final checkpoint loaded with food.

Psychologically speaking, that stretch was the hardest and exhaustion paid its toll. There were a lot of steep slopes and I could not manage to find my way because of the fog. I ran out of water and luckily reached a village where I came into a bar to hydrate. I ran along; the night was long; it was cold.

I had nearly fallen asleep so many times that, at about 4 am, I decided to stop and bivouac.

My watch showed 5km more than what I had been told and I hadn't saved some of my food because I had been starving. The following stretches were up and down and I had the feeling of going round in circles. But that was only an impression as my track showed I was running well and straight on. It was finally daytime, I zigzagged, felt dizzy and drank some water from a river. An apple orchard came into view and that was my salvation. I ate three green apples, which were as hard as a shoe sole, and carried on until I reached a village. My friend Michael had left paper signals all the way to a door that read: "Joel, it's open." Jin and himself were sleeping inside. I wondered how Jin could have overtaken me... While sleeping? I doubted it. I was some 2-3 hours ahead of him and he would have said something to me... When he woke up told me he had had problems with blisters and had not been able to go on. What a shame! We are good friends and I would have liked to complete the race alongside him. I slept for three and a half hours and had an Olympic breakfast to face the last stretch. Only 100 kilometres ahead! I was going to make it! I was a long way ahead of the German and the Finn.

I grabbed all the food I had left, about 5 or 6 kilos, ran some 20 km and one of my poles broke. I felt tremendously comfortable without them. My arms had become heavy and weary... anyway... I carried on. The day went by rather quickly and the long holy night drew in. I felt highly motivated because I knew it was the very last night. Suddenly, I realised I had gone off road by 1,5 km. I cursed myself, called Michael and shot back on the right track. Motivation and having a clear mind were the keys to my success, as I had spent half a year injured and had not been feeling 100%. It was 3 am; there was thick fog; I found it really hard





to concentrate and move forward. I stopped and bivouacked for two hours. The stop did wonders to me but I felt I wasn't able to go on; I was a marathon away from the goal and continued trotting at a slow pace. The end was near; I felt sad; I felt sensitive; I wanted to cry and laugh at the same time. I kept looking at my mobile but did not reply once. I felt amazed by everything I could read. I would like to thank everyone for their encouragement; you have no idea how helpful it was.

I managed to get to where my track signalled it was the end, but to my surprise, there was nothing. I called Michael and he told

me there were still 3 km left. A Norwegian friend of Jin's, who had retired at km 430, was by my side. Upon crossing the finishing line I saw my sister Gala, Say and Meritxell. What a pleasant surprise! I hadn't expected to see them!

A stunning victory; 170 hours of adventure that I will never forget.

Joel Jaile
Photographs of Claudio Chaves

BIKE 2 REALITY, A NEW WAY TO DISCOVER THE WORLD



Alba and Ricard love travelling and sports. They have spent many years touring different countries in Europe, Africa, Asia, Oceania and the Americas. They have cycled together in Iceland, South Africa, Bolivia and Central Asia.



As far as sports are concerned, they have practiced various disciplines from climbing to swimming, and both have competed nationally and internationally in triathlon, duathlon, mountain biking, cycling, foot races, etc. This passion has also allowed them to see the world and make good friends. They are also interested in photography, reading and creative writing. This is how Alba and Ricard's dream, Bike 2 Reality, came to be.

Our project is based on a very simple premise: touring the world on two wheels, being fully independent in every way. We are currently travelling through South America visiting different countries. Some time ago we had a great dream: to make our legs

move. This is an experience not only for us to live; we would like all of you to be part of it, too. It is a live project, a dream we are making true.

Our name Bike 2 Reality is a combination of various aspects. We are "Riding to reality" but, what reality are we really talking about? To a reality that is very different from ours? Or to our own reality, which we are losing as days go by? Surely, our cycling will unveil the answer to that.

And... why number 2? There are 2 of us. This is a joint adventure, a project to be shared. We like cycling, we also love travelling ... And so, we believe today is the best possible time to bring our two great passions

together and to see what lies ahead. We do not know what our exact route is going to be, or how long we are going to be away, but we do know that this tour is giving us physical and emotional adventures for a lifetime.

Our journey started in the centre of Santiago de Chile on October 4th and we have pedalled some 2,700 kilometres since then. From there, the journey has carried on on the road, one pedal stroke after another, slowly and trying to savour anything that comes up: landscapes, people and different cultures that we won't easily forget.

From Chile, we crossed the great Andes Mountain Range for the first time to get to Argentina via Los Libertadores mountain pass, at over 3,000 m of height. This is a fairly busy route with a great deal of loaded trucks. From there, we headed south along the legendary "Route 40", a road linking the north and south of Argentina. Those were many kilometres of endless roads amid the arid and dusty pampa prairies with a loyal friend by our side: the wind.

Further south, the abundant vegetation and water in the region of the lakes were a gift to our eyes. Yet, the price we had to pay were



**Bike 2 Reality, touring
the world on two wheels**

rain storms and blizzards that forced us to stop and wait for the sun to shine again.

We crossed the border again to find ourselves on Chile's Carretera Austral (Southern Highway), a 1,300-kilometres long road along the Pacific that would take us to the gates of Tierra del Fuego.

If all goes as scheduled, once at the northernmost point, we will get on a ferry to take us up north through the fjords and we will ride as far as Puerto Montt and Chiloé Island. We will continue northwards through the valleys in central Chile and will cross the Andes to get back into Argentina.

"Route 40" will take us close to Bolivia and its great salt lakes. We will travel through

the Bolivian highlands to find Lake Titicaca next to Peru. And we will cycle through the Andes, the mountain range crossing the central part of Peru, via Cuzco and Huaraz.

A little north of Ecuador there will be volcanoes and steep slopes for us to overcome. Finally, past the Andes, if our strength allows us to do so, we will cycle towards Colombia.

Our route is variable, constantly changing. It is part of a project, but if you feel like following us, here is our blog: [Bike2Reality](#). Whenever we get to some place with free wifi connection, we always try to update it, and so we feel a bit more in touch.





Here is a brief account of the last days we spent pedalling from Bariloche (Argentina) to Carretera Austral (Chile):

From Bariloche we continued southwards. Today the sun was shining and the scenery was beautiful and full of contrasts. There was hardly any wind and there weren't many cars, either. It seemed to us we had changed place, country and road overnight. We knew we had to be on the alert, but we decided to enjoy it to the full. It was Sunday and, as it so happens when the weather is good, the Argentinians got together by the

shores of lakes to prepare barbecues with friends and family, and, incidentally, tried their best to make an omelette, if they were lucky enough. The occasional smell of meat also led us to imagine we were eating it. It was probably the effect of tiredness, hunger or simply an association of odours to certain moments of life.

Thus, we carried on pedalling day after every, until we reached Baggins, a place with a microclimate that favoured the cultivation of "fine fruits" (strawberries, raspberries, cherries...); an explosion of flowers and

greenery just a few kilometres from the brown and dry steppe. There, we celebrated Ricard's birthday the 'Patagonia style' with a good steak and some delicious Mendoza wine. That was our moment. One should never miss an opportunity to celebrate moments in life.

So, with the sun smiling at us and a full belly, we headed off to Alerces National Park. Upon reaching the town of Cholila, just at its gateway, we received the warmest welcome. Father Adam, a Polish priest, opened the doors of his parish to us and shared everything he had with us. Another example

of genuine generosity and hospitality that would go straight into our hearts. Some people simply have an impact on you and their remembrance comes back to you days after along the route.

The vegetation in the park was dense. Still, we could catch sight of some lakes, the river and, in the distance, the top of a glacier among the clouds. We pedalled through bucolic landscapes and through such intense green vegetation I simply can't find the right words to describe it —which was clear sign that we were approaching the Carretera Austral, which they say no one can



**We celebrated Ricard's birthday.
That was our moment**

pass across without rain—, and, almost without realizing it, we reached the border with Chile.

It was a rather quiet border; the due security control was fast but the contents of our saddlebags had to be checked, as customary. We knew that fruits, vegetables, cheese or any other fresh foods were banned, but we couldn't let the honey from the Argentinian Patagonia be dumped on the road. So, hidden at the bottom of a saddlebag and just scarcely fingered by a Chilean policeman, it managed to happily cross over to Chile.

After a few more quiet and solitary kilometres with stretches filled with river pebbles tough to pedal on, we reached Villa Santa Lucia in the Carretera Austral. The following day was a gorgeous spring day. Still marvelled, we decided to take advantage of the day and started pedalling. The trees, the shrubs and the plants were telling us that the sun was merely passing through. Such exuberant nature could not possibly be the result of a blue sky.

Within hours, it started to rain. The few raindrops soon became a rainstorm. While we were sheltering, a scared “pudu”—the world's smallest deer—approached us. We didn't dare make a move, so as not to scare off that fragile animal, one more gift from Mother Nature to our eyes. After a very grey day, we finally reached the sea in Puyuhuapi.”

Alba Xandri y Ricard Calmet



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The tablet screen shows the following information:

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- + 20 años cotizados
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- A horizontal progress bar below the text.
- Four small square images: a boat, a golf ball on a green, a beach with a building, and a waterfall.
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DICING WITH THE DEATH ZONE

German ultra athlete Guido Kunze set a new altitude record by bike: He pedaled up to 6,233 meters on the slopes of Chilean volcano Ojos del Salado. This record was not only an outstanding athletic achievement; it was also an extraordinary outdoor adventure.





It took Guido Kunze 350 km, almost 7,000 cumulated meters of height gain, from Bahía Inglesa on the Pacific Coast, in Chile's Atacama Region to reach an elevation of 6,233 meters (18,998 feet) above sea level in the northwest slope of Chile's tallest mountain, the tallest volcano in the world, Nevado Ojos del Salado. As others before, Kunze had chosen this peak to take his bike higher than anybody else because the peak rises above one of the Earth's driest regions, the Atacama Desert. At low local precipitation levels, it doesn't carry ice or snow for most of the time almost to the very summit, another 700 m (2,100 ft) higher.

Guido Kunze has this to say in short about his challenge, 'you know, that was a real something.'

It hadn't been his first ultra-challenge on the bike or in his running shoes, but wind, cold, and oxygen levels of about half of what is common at sea level took so heavy a toll on his body that even his mental focus on reaching his goal was almost failing him. "Just hearing the wind blow," says Kunze, "nags at your nerves after some time up there. All the good preparation helps tremendously, but doesn't stand a comparison to when you're really battling it



Wind and low oxygen levels were most of the problem

out with nature.” The two worst problems I faced were the wind and the low oxygen levels.

Wind it was—along with low oxygen levels—that was most of the problem. “At wind speeds of 90 to 100 km, you don’t stand a chance of cycling your bike naturally. And with the sun burning down in the desert, you can’t remain in the lee of the car for long. Whenever I did, I started sweating almost immediately in my winter bike dress made for 5 degrees rather than 25,” the athlete explains. The lowest temperature on the gauge during the project was -6 degrees centigrade, plus wind chill a perceived -23 degrees centigrade.

Four days earlier, it was hardly imaginable that on Friday, October 17th, Kunze would be more exhausted than possibly ever before in his ultra-challenges. Chile’s tourism agency Sernatur and the competent police force had not only organized a memorable kick-off on the Pacific Coast, but also escorted the rider to and through Copiapó. Cycling was rather too easy than too hard, the weather was a trifle too hot rather than too cold. Past la Puerta, already beyond km 150 into the project and at about 1,600 m of elevation, things began to be tricky. The visual monotony of the Atacama Desert had made Kunze watch his Garmin bike computer and his front tire rather than the landscape. And had taken some toll on motivation and

resolve. Therefore, he and his team decided to climb up the Río Lama canyon rather than the shorter and somewhat easier main road toward Laguna Santa Rosa. This was meant to give some visual variety by the sheer faces of the canyon that the team had come to appreciate earlier during the acclimatization camp. The most fascinating portions of landscape were cycled in the dead of night, though. A first unpleasant hiccup.

Another 80 km later, in the pan in which Laguna Verde is located, at some 4,300 m of elevation, the Ojos del Salado trail branches off from the main road to Argentina, and wind, chill, and low oxygen were beginning to make themselves felt. Again, as during acclimatization, the equipment of outdoor supplier Primus was a good thing for the athlete, his support team, and the photo and TV crew reeling in the project, who had to make do literally in the middle of nowhere. Kunze had ridden some 27 hours on his bike, excluding breaks, and the third night into the project drew in. All that was to come was to be closer and closer to the “death zone” with very low oxygen levels. That night, therefore, should be a little longer, as the next night would see them at or above 6,000 meters.

Come Friday sunrise, Kunze sat on his bike for what was to be the last stretch of his challenge. The motor vehicles were struggling again, as during acclimatization, with the gravel, sand, and boulders that made up the ground in the area. Yet the mountain bike just rolled on, even when there was no longer any trail. “Ghost has made the right choices in all respects,”



Kunze praises the bike his supplier developed for this project from scratch. "Frame, components, add-ons, wheelset..., everything did what it should to make my life just that little bit easier. If it wasn't for the bike, I may not have made it." However, even flattening the flat tires to 0.3 bar around 5,500 – 5,800 meters of elevation did not help ride through a few pans of ash-like sand so fine the tires would simply refuse to grip. This turned Kunze into a temporary

pedestrian against his will. In the same area he started to use the riding tactics developed during acclimatization: go full blast as long as the low levels of oxygen would take him, take a break and go full blast again to where his lungs gave out once again.

"I was amazed at how fast I recovered every time I just had been blue in the face," he describes his feelings atop the mountain. However, past 5,900 or 6,000 meters the bit he was able to cycle before stepping down



**If it wasn't for the bike,
I may not have made it**



and taking a break again got shorter and shorter because of problems of oxygen supply, and the ground got trickier and trickier, in places offering almost no grip for the tires and being sloped by 40, 50 or even more degrees. “More often than I had expected, I simply could not ride the bike on that loose stuff on the steep slope. There were places where I had to walk a couple of meters carrying my bike up the hill. But,” Kunze adds, “that wasn’t because of the altitude. On that kind of ground with that kind of steepness, I wouldn’t have been able to ride at 500 meters of elevation either.”

When dusk was drawing in on that Friday, 17th of October, a large field of fresh snow at around 6300 - 6400 meters above sea level came into view. This snow was bound to stop the project, as it would have been impossible to ride on through the snow on loose gravel and through boulders. Guido Kunze was down to almost no energy left, not least because weight loss during acclimatization had been more than expected. Mental energy, too, had taken a heavy blow in the battle against the constant strong winds. Setting up a bivouac at 6,200 m or going down to the highest structure at 5,800 m



and back up the next morning was the alternative. The reward would have been another hour or so of riding for another 150 meters of height gain before the snowfield would have put a stop to the attempt.

“I was so focused on going on if at all possible that I didn’t feel things were getting dangerous,” Kunze recalls. “I was going into serious hypothermia without noticing, and in hindsight the decision to call it a day was exactly the right one.” This decision was taken at 6:02 p.m. local time, October 17, 2014. The Garmin bike computers showed 37 hrs 11 min 12 sec of travel, 342,77 km of distance since Bahía Inglesa and, with an

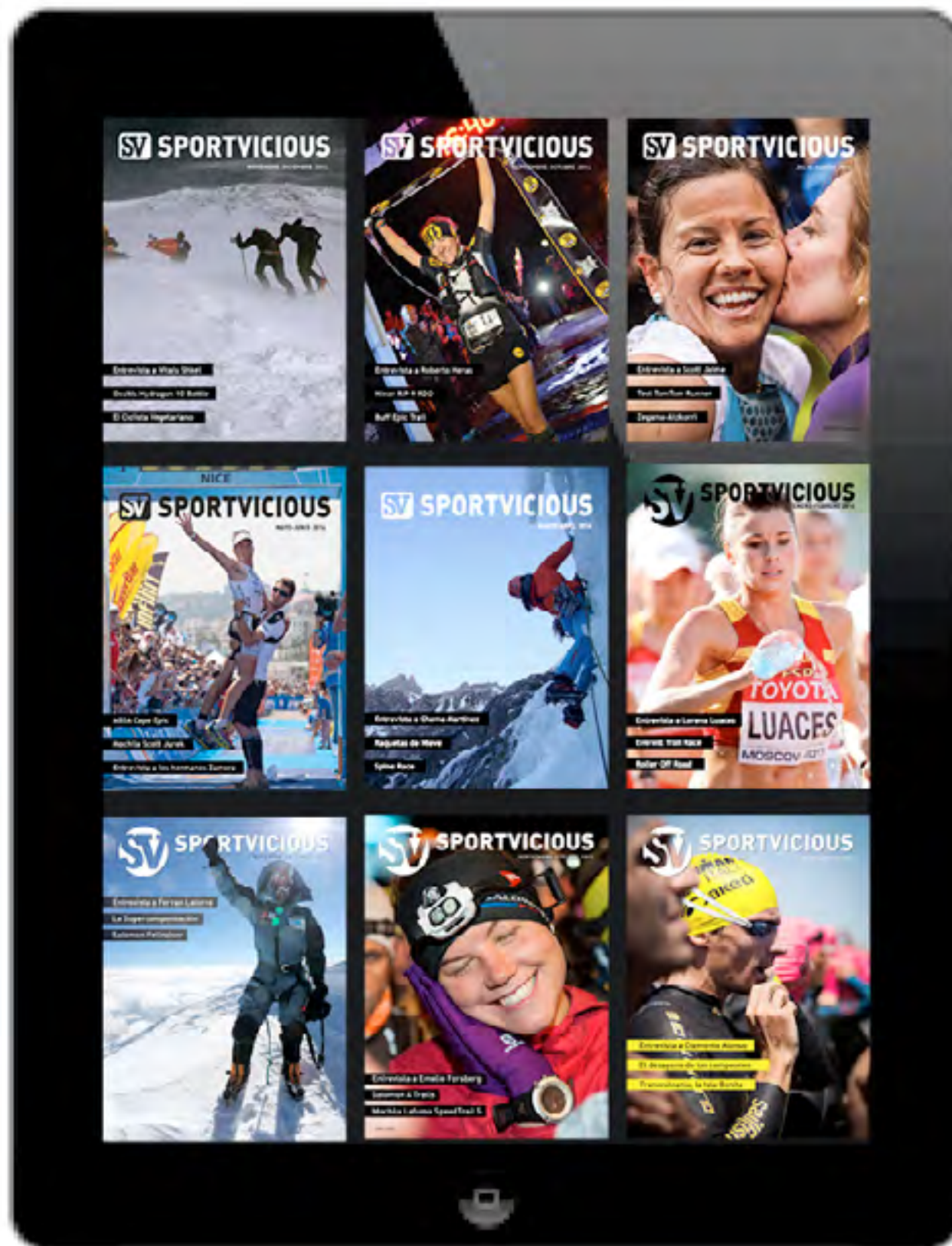
accuracy of ± 3 meter, 6,233 meters (18,998 feet) above sea level. The GPS coordinates registered a position at 6,232 meters (18,995 feet).

The main goal, therefore, going beyond another German’s, André Hauschke’s, mark of 6,085 meters (18,547 feet), in April 2010, on that same mountain was achieved.

Guido Kunze

Photographs of Christian Habel

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