

Adventure Racing – Just Because the Pavement Stops Doesn't Mean You Have to...

Are you tired of running down the same footpaths and cycling the same roads, then how about giving adventure racing a go – it's not as hard as you think!

Adventures races are often referred to as 'off-road triathlons' and involve a range of sports conducted in off-road and often spectacular wilderness settings. You'll find yourself running along rain forest trails, across beaches and over rounded river rocks. Swap the road bike for a fat tyre version, as adventure races often include mountain biking through swooping bush tracks that slalom through the trees and along fun fire roads and 4WD tracks – it'll leave you grinning for sure. Add in swimming, kayaking or abseiling and you're starting to get the picture.

Adventure races are a great meeting point for a range of different athletes with no dominant group ruling the roost. This is a good thing for the beginner. You'll find triathletes who step away from the road and give them a go, often finding they're hooked and struggle to go back to their sport of origin. Surf Club members and Surf Ironmen are often seen giving it a crack as they're usually strong paddlers and swimmers, and not bad at running on sand either. You'll also find football players who find their nimbleness helps them 'dance' over the technical run courses, rugby players whose brute strength helps them muscle their way around, or cyclists who put their abilities to good use on the fat tyres.

Adventure races come in all shapes and sizes and are achievable by just about any athlete. Events at the more hard core end of the spectrum like The Eco Challenge or Raid Gauloises continue non stop for up to 10 days with teams selecting when they want to sleep, eat, change, wash and race their way around the course. These harder races also see competitors navigating with maps and compasses and often 'bush bashing' through the terrain for long periods. That kind of participation is a long way down the track for most; however you'd be surprised how many participants strive for that goal.

The bottom line is that adventure races are mostly centred on having fun, an adventure in the bush and visiting some spectacular places. Participants are generally pretty light hearted and friendly, without overly competitive attitudes. Sure people want to win but it's seldom at the expense of being part of an uplifting environment. Competitors are drawn to the events for the adventures they provide, the spectacular places they can visit and the camaraderie of those who do it.



So how do you get started?

The ideal way to get into adventure racing for the first time would be to get a team of mates together and enter one of the common relay events held around the country – like the International Adventure Race Series events held in the Gold Coast QLD, Augusta WA, Lorne VIC and Forster NSW. These events allow you to do it in a relay team with a bunch of friends, so one of you does the swim leg, another the paddle, and another the run while you pick out the mountain bike. This way you can get a taste for how it works and what is involved in the team atmosphere of doing it with your mates.

Once you identify what discipline you are best suited you can then tailor your training to the exact time and distance.

The following year you can work your way up and do 2 legs with another mate, and the year after that give the whole thing a try – pretty soon you're an adventure racer. Throw the Navman away and get out into the park with a map and compass and you'll soon pick up a few navigation skills.

Furthermore, you'll find your interest in training is turned up a notch because all of a sudden getting out there and doing it leads you to some really magical places. Gone are the days of running around the park, or along the footpath, now your race specific training sees you running past waterfalls and along wilderness trails in landscapes you normally only see in magazines. Australia is an amazing place to live. We have an incredibly diverse environment so why spend your time in a gym when you can be out in the awesome outdoors!

So when the pavement stops on your next run, or you're turned around on your road bike because the road turns to dirt – keep going, there are plenty of adventures ahead.

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For more info on how to get involved in adventure racing go to www.rapidascent.com.au