

HOW TO RUN YOUR FIRST ULTRAMARATHON

The ultimate guide to prepare
yourself mentally and physically



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1

WHAT IS AN ULTRAMARATHON?

Let's start by understanding what an ultramarathon is in the first place. When people hear that you want to run an ultramarathon they think of some crazy distances. But an ultramarathon can be any distance that's more than 42.195 kilometers. That's barely 8km over the marathon distance.

So essentially, if you run a 50km race, you are officially an ultramarathon runner.

Ultramarathon distances typically start at 50km, and then they go up to 100km, 150km, 200km etc.

The standard in Ultra Trail races is 100 miles / 160 km. This is how it started in the US on Western States Endurance Race (WSER) in 1977 - the first known 100-mile trail running race.

There is one more ultramarathon race type that is called 'stage races' or 'multi-day races'. This means that during races there are certain prescribed distances or 'stages' that the athlete must run every day. It might be a 50km run on day 1 and 50 km on day 2 and 60 km on day 3.

At UTVV Slovenia we currently have 3 ultra distances: Emperor, which is 160 km, Centurion, is around 100 km, and Gladiator at 60km. We also have shorter distances, like Legionar at 30km, Asterix at 15 km, Castra City Run at 10km, and Obelix Hike & Wine which is a non-competitive, hiking event.

But these types of shorter distance races change every year. Our main three ultra's have similar distances as every year we change the route based on circumstances, conditions, permission to use private land and other aspects.

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Some races have only multi-day races or only one race with one distance. It all depends on the event organizer.

To complete an ultra running race you need to finish your run in a specific time frame. These are called cut off times. Each organizer gives a cut off time of when you need to cross each checkpoint and by what time you need to cross the finish line.

Runners that want to challenge themselves and take on an ultra challenge are thinking about the pace they should run and if they will make the cut off times. We will talk about pacing strategies in the next chapters, but for the time being let's focus on checkpoints.

Usually event organizers give plenty of time for runners to finish the event. Checkpoints are designed to help each runner fuel and refresh during their race. They are an important component of each race as they help runners mentally and physically. A checkpoint is a specific point part way through a racing course where the runner's subtotal time is recorded.

There, you can find water refills, energy drinks, food, support from volunteers and in some cases, medical assistance. This gives the runner a boost as they can see that they are closer to the finish line every time.

Throughout the whole race, a runner might have many checkpoints, depending on the distance. The standard in trail running is CheckPoint (CP) per 10 km.

The last thing to remember about ultramarathon races is that there are different types of ultras out there: there are ultra trails and ultra-marathons. Ultra trails are races that you run on trails with significant elevation, and ultra-marathons are normally flat races.

Each race has next to the distance of the race elevation. Elevation is the change in vertical height (change in altitude) over the course of the race, measured in meters or feet.

For example, our longest race is the 160 km Emperor with 6,400 meters of elevation and a 46 hours time limit. On the other hand the 3rd longest race called Gladiator has 59 km with 2,400 meters of elevation and 18 hours of time limit. This means that Emperor has nearly three times the elevation of Gladiator. When you look at the race, the second thing to look for after the distance is the elevation because this will tell you how hard the race is going to be.

The beauty of ultra trail running is that you spend all day and in some cases, all night in nature, and even with high elevation you can walk, you can jog and you can enjoy the race.

An ultramarathon is a beautiful journey that you can enjoy doing. Each event organizer encourages runners to walk during their races. That's why the time limit is huge.

There is a misconception that if you do an ultra marathon race you run non-stop, but actually you do walk and run, you walk and eat, you do what feels good for you. If you are not competing on a professional level then you don't have to worry about your pace and how you do it, as long as you do it and you finish within the cut off time.

You don't have to be intimidated by the title runner or ultra runner, but we will talk more on this topic in the next chapter.

For the time being, an ultra marathon race is a day where you have fun, you enjoy yourself and of course you challenge yourself.



2

WHO IS A RUNNER?

A runner is a person who puts his or her shoes on and goes for a run/walk/jog. A runner is not necessarily someone who competes at the highest level. They are human beings who run as slow or as fast as possible, according to their abilities.

Runners come in all forms and shapes. A runner can be a young chap or a young lady. A runner can be a man in his 30s and a woman in her 50s.

A runner can be slim, fit or overweight. A runner can be white, brown or black. Race, skin color, height, hair color or what type of shoes they wear doesn't matter.

A runner is an individual that moves his/her body, that's it.

A lot of people feel too intimidated to call themselves runners because they feel that they are not 'real runners'. But wait a minute, what does a 'real runner' even mean?

Does it mean you run on track races? Does it mean you run ultramarathons without stopping and finishing a 100km race in 8 hours? Of course not.

A runner is a human being that moves. The time you finish doesn't matter, the shoes you wear don't matter, the watch you wear doesn't matter. Your PBs (personal best) doesn't matter, all that matters is that you get out there and you run.

At UTVV Slovenia we see all different kinds of runners cross that finish line. We see proud dads, we see mothers, we see sisters and brothers, we see

young men and women, we see elderly beautiful souls that cross that finish line walking, running and in some cases crying.

Just this year in Ajdovščina, Slovenia we saw our Centurion 110km winner Matej Pečnik finishing the race in 12:57:21. He looked fit, you might say. But that's not the full story. Just 16 years ago, as he mentioned in his interview, he was overweight. He put on a pair of shoes and started running. He became a runner when he made the decision to challenge himself. He became a runner by putting on those running shoes and going for a run. He didn't become a runner when he crossed the finish line.

You become a runner and call yourself a runner once you put on a pair of shoes and go for a run. Speed and pace doesn't matter. Race time doesn't matter. Even if you sign up for a race and you did not finish (DNF) you are still a runner because a race result doesn't make you a runner.

Who is an ultra runner then? Well it's a human being that runs with the same running shoes, but that human being runs longer distances. That's it. We are all runners, some prefer longer distances and become ultra runners. They sign up for races and run those races.

Then we have trail runners. Trail runners are people who run outdoors on trails, often in mountainous terrain and often it includes significant ascents and descents. A trail runner is a person who runs on trails.

There are different runners with different goals and ambitions. Some runners run for time, they want to get a personal best (PB). Some runners run for health. Some runners run to connect with nature. Some runners run to meditate and have a clear headspace. Some runners run for medals. Some runners run for finisher's t-shirts. Some runners run to prove themselves. Some runners run to have fun. But all runners run to challenge themselves.

Whatever your reason is, that's absolutely fine, that's your reason and only you should determine what makes you tick and why you run. The most important mindset to have is that you are running for you and you are a runner.

3

HOW TO DEVELOP YOUR MINDSET

It can look intimidating, it can be scary, and legs are not the only thing that need training. Running an ultra marathon requires mental fitness as well. A lot of talk is about training days, strength training, stretching and cool down exercises but there is a very important component that gets you over the finish line. It's the mindset for an ultra marathon.

Being mentally tough enough to take on an ultra marathon race will determine whether the ultra makes or breaks you.

Your training should have some challenging runs. What are challenging runs? Well, they're runs that you don't want to do. They are runs that you simply hate doing.

Here are some strategies on how you can build your mental toughness:

- Set your alarm at 05:00 am and go for a run as soon as you wake up.
- Go for a hard hill workout.
- Hold a plank for 30 seconds / 60 seconds.
- Go for a run when it rains.
- Go for a run when it's really hot (always hydrate and put on sun cream).
- If you run for 10km on a training run, run for 10 more minutes.
- Run without listening to music, podcasts, or audio books.
- When running, focus on listening to every stride.
- Run on a different terrain - if you can, travel to unfamiliar places.
- Sleep without air conditioning in the middle of summer.



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- Practice making important decisions while you're tired or suffering from brain fog.
- Wear uncomfortable clothing on one of your runs.
- Run with wet socks and wet shoes - pay attention to how your body feels.
- Go for runs when you don't feel like it.
- Sign up for HIIT and strength classes that you don't feel comfortable with.

The goal of doing things that you are not comfortable with is to train your mind to get through feelings of discomfort. The goal is to develop grit. Grit will get you through all the obstacles you are going to face. It's that little bit extra that keeps you going even when you feel that you want to give up, it's the things that you do in your training that will help you go further.

To develop grit and become more mentally ready to take on a race, you will have to train more than just on the road. You have to go and run on terrains that you are not familiar with.

Most people fail and DNF because they are not mentally prepared for the race; they haven't experienced many discomforts. That's why you have to intentionally make your training harder. You have to keep pushing a bit more every time. Then you will know how your body responds to running with wet socks, you will know how your body responds to running in the rain without a rain jacket.

The goal is to position yourself in uncomfortable situations and learn how to deal with them.

On the 8th edition UTVV Slovenia 2023 the weather was so good, but it was slightly too hot. As runners came to the finish line they were exhausted because the heat was just on another level. That's why it's always good to train for all four seasons and then your race day will be much easier.

It's important to understand how crucial it is to train on days when you don't feel like it. These are the best training days because this is where you develop mental strength. You don't want to go because you don't feel like it but you pushed through. These are the training sessions that are vital on your race day.

Not everyone has the mental wherewithal to be an ultra runner, but training your mind to take on long distance runs is an important part of the whole process and you can't dismiss it or avoid it.



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WHAT GEAR YOU WILL NEED

Equipment is an important component of running. After training, gear is the second most important aspect. If you don't have the right shoes or other apparatus you can waste a lot of energy on deciding what you need to buy, and in the worst case scenario you will struggle during the race. You don't want to DNF because you bought the wrong shoes or you didn't have the route ready on your watch.

A lot of races have a mandatory list of equipment that you need to carry with you. At UTVV Slovenia we have a list for each race. You can find it under section races. You can also go to the "INFORMATION" part of the race. It's very important that you carefully read what is required by the event organizer, not just to pass the checks, but for your own safety. When running ultras on trails it's very important that you focus on safety and comply with all the rules in regards to gear.

Things can get overwhelming when you start looking for equipment but we want to keep it short and simple. Your kit and gear should be tailored to the event you've chosen. You have to consider the distance, time, weather and terrain.

There is a saying in the running community: "Never do anything new on race day". The saying is so true yet so many times we see newbies ignore this advice. It's a lovely idea to save a brand-new pair of shoes for the most important event but things don't work that way - make sure everything is tried and tested first!

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During your training, do some dress rehearsals and practice wearing your kit you are going to wear on race day. You have to make sure you are comfortable and everything fits together. Ensure that nothing rubs, chafes or irritates you.

Olympian Kara Goucher talks in her book *Strong* about the “Power of enclothed cognition,” or how clothes can affect your mental and physical performance.

“When I slide into my uniform on the morning of a race, I feel an extra layer of invincibility,” writes Goucher. “It’s as if my uniform turns me into my own superhero, and I can achieve anything.”

Goucher also recommends picking a design or color scheme that signifies something important to you. Maybe cheetah print helps you feel fast, or a unicorn headband (my race-day go to) reminds you that this is for fun. Include something that is a reflection of who you are. Aside from the psychological factors, here’s what to think about when you’re assembling your own superhero race-day ultramarathon uniform, accessories, and drop bag items.

These are the most important things that you need:

- **Technical running top** - short or long. Not cotton!
- **Arm warmers:** if you have a short running top.
- **Rain jacket:** depending on the season. This should be lightweight and easy to put in your bag. The Patagonia Houdini Jacket is very small and compact or Nike’s GORE-TEX INFINIUM is a great option.



- **A comfortable pair of technical running shorts.** There are different types of shorts that depend on how comfortable you feel. If the weather forecast is cold you will want to have technical leggings under the shorts. Or you can have shorts that are long. We recommend leggings and shorts or just shorts.
- **Hydration Vest:** this will allow you to carry your fuel and gear so you are hands free. Consider the following:
 - On Running Hydration Vest - a cool looking vest that comes in two sizes: 5L or 10L.
 - Thule Women's Vital Hydration 3 is a vest that is specially designed for women with a secure fit with the adjustable sternum strap.
 - Salomon Sense Pro 10 - is a high performance vest that has space for hydration, nutrition, clothing and other essentials.
 - Inov8 Race Ultra Pro 2 in 1 Vest - this vest has a removable 10 litre pocket that you can fix onto the back for more things to hold.All above recommendations are from runnersworld.com

Running Poles

If your race has technical climbs, a pair of poles can help take some pressure off your quads. Make sure you practice assembling, disassembling, and stowing your poles before race day. Leki Micro Trail Pro poles are super light and comfortable. The other option slightly cheaper is Evadict 3 Piece Carbon Folding Trail Running Poles.

Headlamp

Many long races start and end in the dark and in most cases they are required by the event organizer. BioLite 330 is a great headlamp because it's light, doesn't bounce and has a sweat-wicking headband. You don't need batteries as it's rechargeable and don't need to worry about it.

Trail running shoes

Choose shoes that you are comfortable in. There are so many brands out there that you can get easily overwhelmed with choices. Your race day shoes should have enough mileage on them that they're broken in but shouldn't be worn out. Please do not buy a new pair of running shoes and go on race day with them.

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Two important factors to consider: comfort and comfort! Your trail running shoes need to feel comfortable and you need to love them. There is no point in buying trail running shoes and not loving them or not liking the design or feeling uncomfortable. Many brands offer free returns if you order online so you can try them on and the ones you don't like back.

Ideally we recommend you visit a running shop and speak with an expert about which running shoes you want to buy. Some stores like Runners Need, Niketown, and The Running Works have treadmills so that you can test the shoe on the spot.

Brands to consider: SCARPA Shoes, Nike Trail, Hoka, Salomon, On Running, Adidas Terrex or New Balance.

Because every brand has so many options and some of them promise you that their shoes will finish the race for you please make sure that they are trail running shoes, not road running shoes.

One mistake I made when I started my ultra marathon journey is I went into a store, and asked the sales person for a recommendation. Because I didn't know what trail running shoes I needed, I bought the shoe he recommended. I used the shoes on all my training runs and it was great, but when race day came, I got injured on the 50th km kilometer because it was the wrong shoe. All my training runs were up to 50km!

He sold me a marathon shoe, not a trail shoe. He probably didn't hear the four letters before the word marathon - ultra-marathon. So you don't make the same mistake, ask multiple times why that particular shoe is good for your race. In the end I finished my ultra race walking and jogging, and I got a full refund from the store.

The main difference between a road running shoe and trail running shoe is that trail shoes are designed to grip softer surfaces than road shoes, which is especially important when trail running in the rain. Manufacturers often use a stickier rubber for the outsole. Since this rubber is softer than the blown rubber used for road runners, it's vulnerable to abrasion on the pavement.

Last but not least, have two running shoes that you alternate. There are a lot of benefits to having two pairs of running shoes. The biggest one is that when you run, your body relies on a certain set of muscles to take each stride. It's a repetitive motion. If your feet are in the same shoes for each run, that repetitive motion puts stress on the same muscles and joints.



Running watch

Like with running shoes, there are a lot of options in watches. It depends on your budget and how much you want to invest. Here are the main features you want to look for in an ultramarathon watch.

1) Battery life. It's obvious that you need a GPS watch that can work for 10 hours non stop. When looking at watches make sure it says 'GPS Active' battery life. You should also consider the length of your ultras you're running and the maximum time you'd expect to be out in the field.

2) Ability to recharge on the move. This is an important factor. Even the best ultra running watches conk out. Always check if you can recharge while you are running.

Think long term. You might be planning on 50km for your first ultra marathon race and that's it, but you don't know if in a year you will want to go for 100 km, or maybe a multi day stage event. We recommend you get something better as it will last longer.

As soon as you start looking for watches Garmin is going to show up in every search as they are the market leaders in endurance watches. They are quite expensive and they don't look that stylish. You don't need to go with a Garmin as there are a couple of other brands that are worth considering.

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These are our suggestions:

- Garmin Fenix 6S Pro: GPS battery life of up to 25 hours or 50 hours of 'UltraTrac' mode (lower sampling rate)
- Garmin Fenix 6 Pro: GPS life up to 36 hours or 72 hours in UltraTrac mode.
- Garmin Fenix 6X Pro: GPS time up to 60 hours or up to 120 in UltraTrac mode.
- Garmin Fenix 7 - Solar Edition: this watch is an upgrade from fenix 6. Battery life up to 57 hours using GPS and only 40 hours using satellite system. With solar edition watch it can charge while you wear it in the sun.
- Apple Watch Ultra: it's a productivity smartwatch aimed at endurance athletes who also want outstanding GPS capabilities. The battery life in full GPS can last up to 17 hours.
- Suunto 9 Baro: The Suunto 9 Baro watch really stands out in terms of potential battery life. By using its Intelligent Battery Mode, you can be tracking your activity for up to 120 hrs before this thing will die on you.
- Suunto Spartan Trainer: the watch has a maximum GPS life of 26 hours.

The best way to choose a watch is to decide what suits your budget, what feels better for you and go with the one that you feel is good. You can get the cheapest watch that lasts for more than 16 hours and go with that.

You don't need to spend a lot of time on choosing what watch you need. All of them have similar functionalities. Choose one and start training.





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TRAINING PLAN BY CAMINO ULTRA

We know how hard it's to start this journey. You might be thinking that running for ultra is just running 10km every day, but it's not. Training can be fun, training can be challenging and training needs to be different. Each individual has different ambitions and different goals. Each individual has a different body. That's why ideally training plans should be customized to each individual.

Sometimes hiring a coach is not feasible. That's why we partnered with our friends at Camino Ultra to help you run your first ultra marathon.

They are experts in training ordinary people for ultras at all abilities.

Here are some training plans that you can follow:

50 KM TRAINING PLAN PHASE ONE

M T W T F S S

Mindful Mondays Let your mind guide a pace that makes you feel good	Rest, Cross Train or Curiosity	Tempo Easy 15 Mins Steady 15 Mins Hard 15 Mins	Rest, Cross Train or Curiosity	Super Easy 30 MINS	Long Run 90 MINS	Rest, Cross Train or Curiosity
Mindful Mondays	Rest, Cross Train or Curiosity	Tempo 25 Mins 5*1 Min Easy 1 Min Hard	Rest, Cross Train or Curiosity	Super Easy 30 MINS	Long Run 120 MINS	Rest, Cross Train or Curiosity
Mindful Mondays	Rest, Cross Train or Curiosity	Tempo Easy 15 Mins Steady 15 Mins Hard 15 Mins	Rest, Cross Train or Curiosity	Super Easy 45 MINS	Long Run 120 MINS	Rest, Cross Train or Curiosity
Mindful Mondays Let your mind guide a pace that makes you feel good	Rest, Cross Train or Curiosity	Tempo 25 Mins 5*1 Min Easy 1 Min Hard	Rest, Cross Train or Curiosity	Super Easy 45 MINS	Long Run 90 MINS	Rest, Cross Train or Curiosity

Helpful Aims Phase One

- Between 90-120 Mins Long Run
- 3-4 runs per week feeling do-able
- Test Nutrition in all Long Runs
- Start training your Mind(full runs)

Camino ToolBox Ideas

Practice Nose Breathing

If this is new to you then explore how breathing exclusively through your nose on a walk feels.
Then introduce it into the middle of one of your Super Easy runs

NEW IDEAS

What is the Curiosity?

For first time Ultrarunners there should be plenty of questions regarding running, energy levels, life balance - so explore how this journey can help you in every part of your life

50 KM TRAINING PLAN PHASE TWO

M T W T F S S

Mindful Mondays Let your mind guide a pace that makes you feel good	Rest, Cross Train or Curiosity	Tempo 45 Mins with 1 min Hard End of each KM	Rest, Cross Train or Curiosity	Super Easy 45 MINS	Long Run 120 MINS	Rest, Cross Train or Curiosity
Mindful Mondays	Rest, Cross Train or Curiosity	Tempo 60 Mins with 3 x 10 Mins @ 7 RPE 5 Easy in between	Rest, Cross Train or Curiosity	Super Easy 60 MINS	Long Run 120 MINS	Rest, Cross Train or Curiosity
Mindful Mondays	Rest, Cross Train or Curiosity	Tempo 45 Mins with 1 min Hard End of each KM	Rest, Cross Train or Curiosity	Super Easy 45 MINS	Long Run 150 MINS	Rest, Cross Train or Curiosity
Mindful Mondays Let your mind guide a pace that makes you feel good	Rest, Cross Train or Curiosity	Tempo 60 Mins with 3 x 10 Mins @ 7 RPE 5 Easy in between	Rest, Cross Train or Curiosity	Super Easy 45 MINS	Long Run 90 MINS	Rest, Cross Train or Curiosity

Helpful Aims Phase Two

- Between 90-150 Mins Long Run
- 4 runs per week feeling great
- Ensure you are getting quicker in your speed sessions

Camino ToolBox Ideas

Practice Walking

This is often seen as a weird thing to ask ultra runners to do but the reality is that almost everyone will walk at some point in a long race. So get good at it. Do Brisk Walks - Hill Walks - Uncomfortable Walks

NEW IDEAS

Where is my Super-Power ?

There is such a wide variety of things that sit inside the sport of ultrarunning that you might find that what makes you strong is that you can eat well and move or you can stop and stop at Aid Stations efficiently.

50 KM TRAINING PLAN PHASE THREE

M T W T F S S

Mindful Mondays	Rest, Cross Train or Curiosity	Tempo 12 mins @ 8 or 9 effort 6 mins easy Repeat 3 times	BONUS RUN Run that nourishes you at 7 RPE	Super Easy 45 MINS	Long Run 150 MINS	Rest, Cross Train or Curiosity
Mindful Mondays	Rest, Cross Train or Curiosity	Tempo 60 Mins with 3 x 10 Mins @ 7 RPE 5 Easy in between	BONUS RUN Run on New Terrain	Super Easy 60 MINS	Long Run 150 MINS	Rest, Cross Train or Curiosity
Mindful Mondays	Rest, Cross Train or Curiosity	Tempo 12 mins @ 8 or 9 effort 6 mins easy Repeat 3 times	BONUS RUN Run with Partner Friends Run Group	Super Easy 45 MINS	Long Run 180 MINS	Rest, Cross Train or Curiosity
Mindful Mondays	Rest, Cross Train or Curiosity	Tempo 60 Mins with 3 x 10 Mins @ 7 RPE 5 Easy in between	BONUS RUN Run with Bonus Hills Run the Ups	Super Easy 45 MINS	Long Run 120 MINS	Rest, Cross Train or Curiosity

Helpful Aims Phase Three

- Between 120-180 Mins Long Run
- 5 runs per week feeling great
- Race is getting closer - do you have everything you need re kit
- Have you reflected on Why you are doing this event

Camino ToolBox Ideas

Practice Chunking

Before your long run, think about your upcoming run and divide it into four equal segments
Visualise what is coming and be prepared
Set some simple intentions for each part

NEW IDEAS

What are my 50KM Race Goals?

Have you heard of DNF - a Did Not Finish when a runner doesnt complete a race. Often this happens not through injury but the desire isn't there. So think now what are the reasons why you might keep going - family / fundraising etc

50 KM TRAINING PLAN PHASE FOUR

M T W T F S S

Mindful Mondays	Rest, Cross Train or Curiosity	Tempo 60 Mins with 3 x 10 Mins @ 7 RPE 5 Easy in between	Rest, Cross Train or Curiosity	Super Easy 45 MINS	Long Run 240 MINS	Rest, Cross Train or Curiosity
Mindful Mondays	Rest, Cross Train or Curiosity	Tempo 25 Mins 5*1 Min Easy 1 Min Hard	Rest, Cross Train or Curiosity	Super Easy 45 MINS	Long Run 120 MINS	Rest, Cross Train or Curiosity
TAPER TIME	Rest, Cross Train or Curiosity	Tempo 25 Mins 5*1 Min Easy 1 Min Hard	Rest, Cross Train or Curiosity	Super Easy 30 MINS	Long Run 60 MINS	Rest, Cross Train or Curiosity
Super Easy 30 MINS	Rest, Cross Train or Curiosity	Super Easy 30 MINS	Rest, Cross Train or Curiosity	Super Easy 30 MINS	RACE	RACE

Helpful Aims Phase FOUR

- **Between 150-240 Mins Long Run**
- **5-6 runs per week feeling great**
- **ACE Nutrition in all Long Runs**
- **Begin Your Taper Journey**

Camino ToolBox Ideas

Practice Gratitude

It is common for anyone in the middle of tiring training to have 'many moments'. To deal with these proactively check out Gratitude practices like www.rungrateful.com and build them in

NEW IDEAS

What is the best way to Taper?

Throughout this journey you will have found that you are unique and that you needed to train in a way that served you best. For Tapering use that same degree of observation to feel how much you need to rest before race day

50 KM TRAINING PLAN

CAMINO HELP GUIDE



Rest - Rest means rest - think one hour nap
some easy 10 min yoga



Cross Train - If you already do other sports then see how
they compliment your running



Cross Train - Swimming and Cycling are both proven
as they are less impactful sports



Long Runs - Add Walks in - Use nutrition throughout
Vary your pacing - Be Race Specific



Tempo -- Intervals - Ensure 5-10 mins WARM-UP (WU)
and COOL DOWN (CD) in each one

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RACE DAY STRATEGIES

A lot of people have this misconception that you have to run the whole ultra marathon. Some might have done a half marathon or a marathon and think they can't run the whole 100km race. But this is the wrong mindset to have.

Ultra marathons are all about pacing yourself and implementing the run - walk strategies. You can walk on hills, you can walk on downhills, you can walk on flats, you can walk and eat, you can run and eat, you can walk and drink, you can do whatever you feel comfortable with.

You might want to run for 30 minutes and then walk for 10 minutes, you might want to run for 60 minutes and walk for 15 minutes. You might want to run at a slower pace and then walk on hills. Unless you are running towards a podium position, you shouldn't be worried about what others are doing and how others are running.

On race day sometimes we can get competitive because of all the adrenaline and all the excitement so we start the race and we get caught up on what the runner on our right hand side is doing, and how the runner on our left hand side is running.

Way too many times I started races much faster than I should have and then struggled to finish the race. That's why coaches always say start slower, go slower and then finish harder. At the end, the last 10 km is when you should be pushing harder than you can.

HOW TO RUN YOUR FIRST ULTRAMARATHON

When preparing for race day, you should have in mind what terrain you will run on, if you are going to run through the night or early morning, and the weather conditions. All these factors are going to come into play in how you are going to pace yourself.

If you are running with a head torch through the night or early morning, your pace is going to be slower, and it should be slower so you can orient yourself and be cautious about where you step. It's always better to go slower and make sure you are safe and know where you are stepping.

If it's raining and your visibility is not that great due to altitude you need to slow down and make sure you are going in the right direction.

Using your heart rate pace strategy. If you are into data and want to go a bit deeper you can use your heart rate to dictate your pace. Here are the different heart rate zones:



ZONE 1: this is the lightest intensity and should be about 50%-60% of your HR Max (maximum heart rate). When you walk or cool down you are in Zone 1.

ZONE 2: this intensity should be light and you should feel like you can sustain the exercise for a longer period of time. Aim for 60%-70% of your maximum heart rate zone.

ZONE 3: this is considered moderate as far as intensity levels go. Aim for 70% - 80% of your heart rate max. The biggest benefits of training in this zone is the increased blood circulation to your muscles and heart.

ZONE 4: this is a tough zone to be in. Your heart rate reaches 80%-90% of its max. Training or running at this level of intensity will help your body endure longer bouts of speed, use more carbohydrates as fuel, and withstand more lactic acid accumulation.

ZONE 5: this is the hardest zone of them all. This is when you go all out, this is when you run after a bus like it's the last bus of the night. Your body can't maintain that level of intensity for long.

A good strategy is to focus on running in Zone 3 - this means that your heart rate is at moderate level.

Most running watches have heart rate capabilities that show you what zone you are running in. To get a more precise measurement it's better to buy a heart rate monitor chest strap. There are a lot of them on the market, a good one that can connect to most watches is MyZone Chest Strap, Polar H10 Heart Rate Sensor and of course Garmin HRM Pro Plus Heart Rate Monitor.

For your race day you should aim to run at a comfortable pace, don't get carried away with other runners because a runner that is running faster than you might run out of energy very soon and DNF.

Find your flow and go with it until the finish line.





FINISH

CHALLENGE YOURSELF



NO PLACE
TO FAR.

UTVV SLOVENIA

CHALLENGE YOURSELF

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7

THE DAY AFTER - RECOVERY

This is the part that a lot of runners skip and jump too fast into running back. A lot of runners don't want to rest and take a break but this part is an integral part of your running journey.

Rest and recovery is part of your training. After you finish your first ultra marathon it's important that you don't run the next day - it's common sense. But what is more important is that you don't just sleep in and eat pizza all day. Well, you can eat pizza but you need to get out a bit for a walk. It can be a 20 minute walk around the block.

You put your body in a lot of stress and after all that, you need to take it easy, perhaps go for a walk on the first day after your race is over, the second day you might want to go for another walk, on the third day you might want to go for a yoga class or pilates class.

To be a healthy ultra runner in the long term, it's vital that you give your body and mind a significant break between events. For many athletes, running is a part of their lifestyle, which means recovery after an ultra race requires patience and a change in routine.

The first few days after an ultra most probably you will not have the desire to run more than 20 minutes. Maybe you don't have the desire to put on your running shoes at all. But it's likely that you will come back sooner than you think.

HOW TO RUN YOUR FIRST ULTRAMARATHON

Here's the strategy: In the first week, go for walks and runs of no longer than 20 minutes. For Week 2 and Week 3 , continue with recovery paced runs only and keep them under 1 hour.

Let's talk about sleep. Sleep is essential for recovery because of the physiological processes that only occur while you sleep. Your body releases hormones essential for repairing muscle, maintaining the immune system, and adapting to exercise stress when you are sleeping. Focus on both sleep quality and duration. This is not the time to stay up late to catch up on projects you may have back-burnered in the weeks before your event.

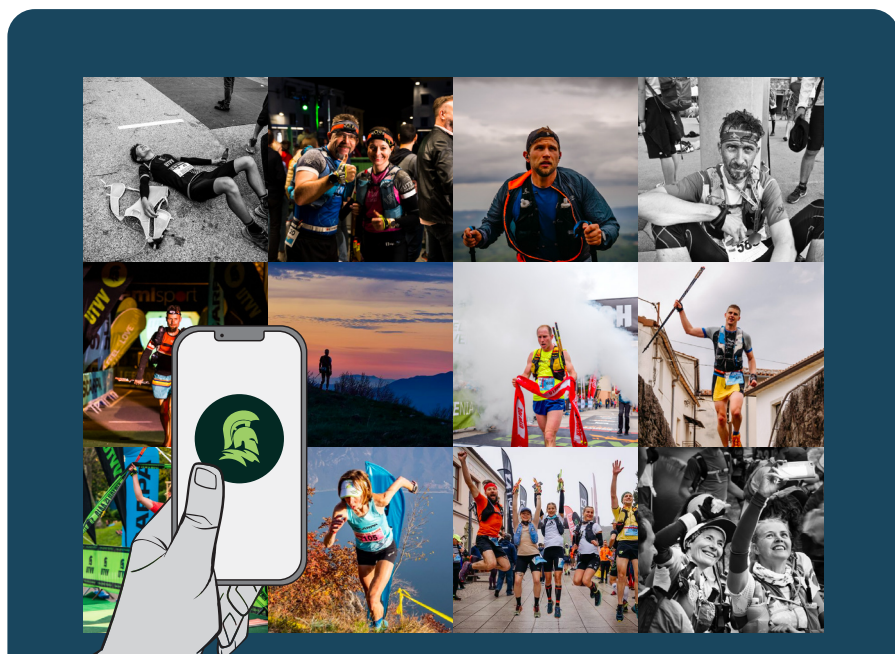
We recommend going to bed earlier, if necessary, to get 8-10 hours of sleep on a regular basis for at least two weeks. To optimize sleep quality, cool the environment to 16-21 Celsius degrees, avoid backlit screens (phones, tablets) for 1-2 hours prior to getting in bed, and eliminate as much light as possible.

Food is an important aspect of recovery. You can have pizza, burgers or your favorite meal after your race but it's important that you mainly focus on fruit, vegetables, lean proteins and whole grains. Just like you should focus on them before running your ultra.

1.2-1.7 grams of protein per kilogram of bodyweight per day is plenty.

If you got some small injuries while on your ultra race then it's time to address them now. Perhaps a visit to a physiotherapist is a good idea or a nice sports massage is something you should consider. It's important to treat all your injuries now before you start running again.

Last but not least, we do recommend that if you have an opportunity to take an ice bath, do it. This will accelerate your recovery faster. There are some great resources for you to check out on ice baths and cold showers. You can start by looking at The Wim Hof Method.



Share your experience on social with us
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There you go, you have a full guide of how to run your first ultra marathon.

You can now sign up for your first ultra, if you would like to do our own race you can book your next race with us here:
www.ultratrail.si

If you have any questions or would like to ask us anything in regards to your next race or any training questions you can email us at info@ultratrail.si

You can also purchase running gear from our shop Be Active.
You can visit www.be-active.si for more.

If you have any specific questions in regards to training you can get in touch with our partners at Camino Ultra
info@caminoultra.com

You can follow us on Instagram / Facebook for ultra trail inspiration and tips at [@UTVV_Slovenia](https://www.instagram.com/UTVV_Slovenia)

We hope you enjoyed this eBook.

Author: Alexander Novicov





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