



THE ADVENTURE RUNNING BUCKET LIST, PART 1: North American Races



News - General

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For runners that need more hills, mud, rocks and nav!

Runners that like races that include navigation have a lot of races to choose from including orienteering races, rogaines, urban city chases or scrambles, adventure runs and mountain marathons. No matter what the name these races range from a dozen minutes to two-dozen hours in length and take runners to different parts of the globe for new and often muddy or rocky adventures.

Adventure Running has its birth with the Original Mountain Marathon (OMM) in Scotland. The OMM is held in late October and as I sit down to write this article several thousand adventure runners are challenging the Scottish Highlands at this year's race. Being the original adventure running race, and certainly one of the largest, it is by far 'the' adventure running race do to in one's lifetime. It is a race that is on the top of many adventure runner's bucket list and I'll explain a little bit more about OMM in Part 2 of this article. But here in Part 1 I want to kick things off by focusing on eight 'must do' North American adventure running races.

1) The Billygoat

The Billygoat is North America's original long distance orienteering race and is held each year in the spring in the northeast US. It was developed over thirty years ago by Fred Pilon and Peter Gagarin of the New England Orienteering Club. An interesting twist to this mass start 12-15km race is the option to skip one checkpoint on the course which makes for interesting race strategy. It is worth taking a visit to the www.BillyGoat.org to peruse the statistics and awards of this storied race - complete with the annual award given to the person that follows the best navigator at the race!

2) The Hudson Highlander

Harriman State Park is located about 45 minutes to an hour north of New York City and was the site of the 1993 World Orienteering Championships. Large hills, intricate contour and rock detail and gnarly single track running challenges make this annual 'metric marathon' (26.3km) race a very tough challenge. The race comes complete with a King of the Mountain competition, a rocky trail run and some of the toughest navigation you will find in North America. It isn't uncommon for the winner of this mass start race to take over four hours to complete the course. Search the www.AttackPoint.org website for articles and racer stories on this tough race (and while you are there sign-up and log your own training!).

3) Whitehorse, Yukon

Whitehorse is the mecca of Canadian orienteering offering great running, lots of long and steady climbs, fantastic maps and stunning views. There are a lot of other reasons one should visit the Yukon so when you go visit in one of the Yukon Orienteering Association's races. There is usually an event every Wednesday evening in the summer or better yet plan your Yukon holiday around the W*A*R – the Whitehorse Adventure Run. W*A*R is a two-person adventure run that some years has been known to follow along a section of the Klondike Gold run route through Whitehorse. www.yukonorienteering.ca/war.html

4) Dakota Rogaining Championships



24 hours of sweet terrain, running and navigation. This race offers a variety of terrain with Canadian Adventure Racing guru Barb Campbell having this to say about the race "the terrain was beautiful and varied - and the wildlife even more so. It was the first time I had to deviate off a (compass) bearing to avoid a buffalo!" The Dakota Rogaining Championships are organized by Rick Emerson of Primal Quest 2009 fame and he will take this race to the next level in 2014 and host the World Rogaining Championships. www.peakassurance.net/Rogaine.html



Dakota Rogaining Champs. Photo: Barb Campbell.

5) Salomon Dontgetlost.ca Raid the Hammer

I tried to remain unbiased about this race which I started over 10 years ago but because it has grown to be Canada's largest adventure run each year I just had to include it on North America's adventure running bucket list. Teams of three race for 25-30km in and around the city of Hamilton, Ontario (aka the Hammer). The race includes orienteering, trail running, road running and one year a crawl through a tunnel! Each year team members split up for a few checkpoints in a section called the matrix. The Raid the Hammer often attracts many top adventure runners, trail runners, ultra runners, and triathletes each November to Canada's Steel City. www.AdventureRunning.ca





Raid the Hammer. Photo: Mike VandenBosch.

6) Barebones Weekend

"Bloody fantastic orienteering" is how the organizers hype this weekend orienteering festival but it should be more like "Bloody fantastic mountains" because the race is often held in places like Canmore, Alberta and Whistler, BC! But it isn't just the great mountain scenery that make the Barebones Weekend 'the' adventure running race to attend in Western Canada each year. It's the fact that Barebones is actually four or five races wrapped up in one. This party weekend often includes a sprint, long, night, and relay race in the mountains! Great racing, great social atmosphere and excellent Western Canadian hospitality. www.barebones.ca

7) Night & Day Challenge (in Seattle or San Francisco)

This is urban adventure running at its very best. Originating in Seattle and equally popular in San Francisco, Night & Day Challenge is a great way to get your run and nav on while discovering hidden gems and adventures in two of the great U.S. cities. About five dozen checkpoints are scattered throughout neighbourhoods in each of these cities, and individuals or teams have a time limit to find as many checkpoints as possible under the time limit. The classic Night & Day Challenge is 16 hours, going all through the night, and shorter options are available. These events have been produced by MerGeo, a Seattle-based adventure-sport company, since 2003! www.nightanddaychallenge.com/

8) Eco Endurance Challenge

The Eco-Endurance Challenge is 24 hours of running and navigation through Nova Scotian forests, bogs, streams and trails. Eastern Canada's largest adventure run is a hybrid of classical orienteering, ultra-distance running and the navigational training practices of Search and Rescue Emergency Responders. Excellent maps, challenging terrain, and often challenging weather with several dozen checkpoints scattered across over 200 square kilometers of Eastern Canadian wilderness. www.ecoendurancechallenge.ca



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