

Cradle Mountain Run 2017- Guest Post

Leah K (<http://run.dj/>)

I've always wanted to do this run for a few years now, I mean c'mon – Australia's Oldest Ultra Marathon, who wouldn't wanna do it! Especially since it's a one day traverse over the infamous Overland Track (who has time to hike it anyway?!)

After being sad that CMR was cancelled in 2016 due to the devastating bush fires that were raging in the North Western parts of Tasmania, I was even more motivated to secure a spot for the 2017 race. Fingers ready on a Sunday night in October, I scored a spot!



Fast forward to February 4th 2017, I was lining up at the crack of dawn (6am) in a small asphalt area outside our Waldheim Cabins in the freezing cold. While Sydney was getting blasted with a 39 degree heat wave, it was about 10 degrees in the Cradle Mountain National Park – PERFECT!

Two roll calls from the Race Directors and a quiet count down, 60 of us runners ventured out over the iconic chicken wired duckboard and off into the untouched Tasmanian wilderness.

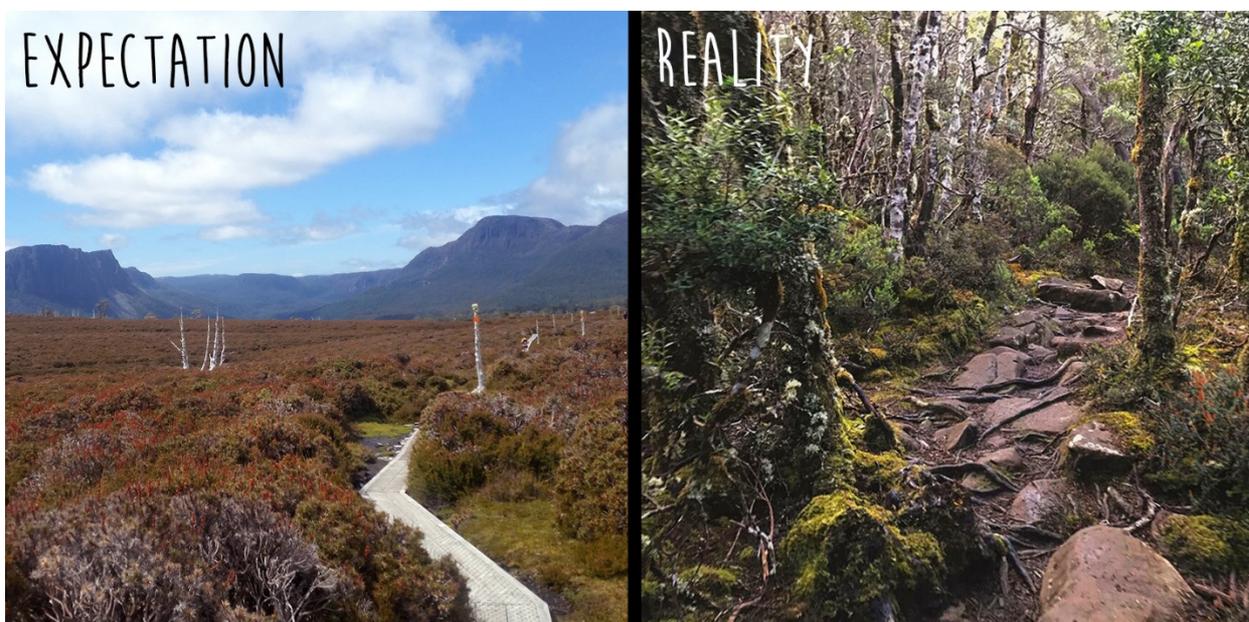
And what a wilderness!!! It is a beautiful, prehistoric and really, really untouched wilderness! Photos and descriptions really can't portray how amazing it is to wind your way past ancient mountains, bluffs, and flora that seems to go on forever.

The only real climb in this course is Marions Lookout. Once you're up there, the VIEW!



Anyway, long story short, it is a visually spectacular run!

Something incredibly deceiving about this run is that it has a lot of beautiful images depicting runners cruising along the duckboards. I think these photos I took sum it up perfectly (but it did get much worse than the pic on the right!!!):



This run is a battle. A long, 78km battle along tree roots, rocks, tree roots, rocks, more tree roots, wait is that duckboard?! NOPE! Just more rocks, and an awful lot of time being spent in ankle deep mud. OK, I lie, there's about 12km of duckboard, but the rest of the 66km route is tree roots, rocks and mud. It's slow going and by the end of it, the soles of my feet felt like they went through a meat mincer.

Once you're out of the open plains and into the forests (there's a lot of that!) you can't get rhythm either. As soon as you get some sort of pace going, you're forced to stop and delicately pick your way across super narrow but very broken down duckboard / tree roots / rocks / mud. It's all ankle breaking stuff!

That said, I'd do it again in a heartbeat!

THE PINNACLE



Here's the break down of my run:

Start to Pelion Hut: Cruising along duckboard, trying not to freeze, until about 20km in and took a massive stack, majorly bruising my left knee and spraining the front of my left ankle. Nice work Leah. Frog Flats is horrendously technical as was Pine Forest Moor. Slowly slowly!

Pelion Hut – Kia Ora Hut – Du Cane Hut: Able to get some pace along here and enjoy the views. The historical huts are very cool to look at and seem to pop up out of nowhere.

Du Cane Hut – Narcissus: Back to technical trail dancing with my new friend Deb Nicholl for about an hour before she scooted off into the distance. It seems never ending and exhausting. Narcissus popped out of nowhere with the time keepers yelling “Welcome To Narcissus!!!” They had a small amount of fruit and coke (blessed coke!!) This was the only thing that resembled half an aid station and I was so thankful for it! Did I mention this was a fully self supported run? Surprise; it is!

Narcissus – Watersmeet: Good lord the rocks and roots!!!!!! Turns out, running around the edge of Lake St Clair and into Cynthia Bay is verrrrrrrrry long and soul destroying. It's around 16 – 17km to Watersmeet (where all the rivers join up into one giant rapid) and took me around 3 hours to do this final section. The trail kept disappearing too, making it hard to find the clear trail path again. I really had to concentrate once the trail disintegrated and

ensure I scanned the entire area to find the trail start back up again usually around 20 – 50 metres ahead.



Watersmeet – Cynthia Bay: Approaching Watersmeet was salvation! I knew I was about 2km away from the finish line. Time to get a wiggle on! Too bad that this still took me around 30 min to quietly shuffle my way to the end..... But the finish line popped up out of nowhere! I saw two timekeepers, Deb, another finisher who offered me a soft drink and no one else around. Nice! While it seemed like an uninspiring finish, it was really cool to have a quiet finish line – it kept it inline with the casual vibe of the run. The great news was, I finished in a time that allowed me to bus it to the Derwent Bridge

Hotel, shower and still have 5 minutes to spare to order dinner and a pint before the kitchen closed – winner!

The Next Day: Breakfast time was a time to huddle in and receive our participation awards and our Huon Pine Coaster (very cool). I may have to run it another 5 times to get a set of 6 coasters.



During the presentations, I think the winner of CMR (Damian Smith) summed this race up really nicely when he accepted his award: *“The dickheads seemed to have not discovered this race yet, and I hope it stays that way”*. Yup, me too.

Overall, pretty happy with my splits:

Cradle Mountain Run - 04/02/2017												
Place	First Name	Name	Gender	Age	Split times				Estimated Time	Difference	Handicap	
					PELION	WINDY RIDGE	NARCISSUS	CYNTHIA BAY			Factor	Adjusted Time
46	Leah	Kulinitsch	Female	32	04:53	08:24	10:03	13:27	15:00	01:32	0.8	10:46

For anyone wanting to do it, a few things to note:

- This thing sells out quicker than 6FT Track, so have your fingers ready at rego time to be one of the 60 lucky runners to score an entry.
- I highly recommend adding in the accommodation and bus tickets during registration, this was an excellent way to meet other scallywags heading to Cradle Mountain for this run.
- Immediately call Derwent Bridge Hotel (or other nearby accommodation) to secure your bed for the finish line. Otherwise you’ll be stuck paying \$300-\$400 / night when these all sell out.
- For the race itself, I highly recommend only taking two 500ml flasks to fill up at the creeks and rivers during the run. There’s so much water available on course that you don’t need to be worried about carrying too much. I used ‘Aquaprove’ to sanitise the water. It works in 5 min and I had no stomach trouble. (Thanks Dom Gallagher!!!)
- It’s actually 78km, not 82km as stated on the website. It’s also 2400 metres of elevation gain.

•The cut off points: Pelion Hut is at approximately 32km, and Narcissus is at 61.3km.

Over Distance ▾



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