

Cradle Mountain Run Race Report 2014 Gill Fowler  
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Gill at finish Cradle Mountain Run *photo Simon Ferraro*

**Cradle Mountain Run Race Report** Gill Fowler ventured down to Tasmania at the start of February to take on the Cradle Mountain Run, here is her report on this iconic trail event.

It was a perfect start to the day at Waldheim, t-shirt and shorts weather and views! The locals would have preferred a few degrees cooler, but I was very happy for a summery run. I had

done this run once before, 3 years earlier, and I was really looking forward to it again. There are very few runs where you get 80 kms of single trail!

6:00am “Go” – a quick run down the boardwalks (hoping not to stack in the first km, as the legs warmed up) to the start of the first climb to Marion’s Lookout. With just 55 runners lucky enough to start the Cradle Mountain Run, the conga line thinned very quickly. Stu



Gibson and ‘Barry’ the Gorilla tightly secured to Stu’s pack led from the start. They soon disappeared into the distance with a few following in pursuit, so most of my day was spent enjoying the trail in Solitude.

With no cloud or fog, it was spectacular run across the tops, with Cradle Mountain to the left and Barn Bluff to the right. Even if only to glance at the views for a second or two at a time, as my eyes weren’t straying too far from the rocky path. I was having heaps of fun rock-hopping and then faster running on the boardwalk sections.

Dave Heatley was not so lucky, I came up to him near Waterfall Valley (~10 km), Dave had slowed to a walk after a pretty nasty fall. Most people would have turned around, but Dave assuring me he was OK, wished me well and said he was here to spend the day on the track even if he had to walk. Around 20 km I caught up to John Cannell. The bonus of catching up to a local, is they can tell you how far you have run and

where the next good creek is for water (the 3<sup>rd</sup> creek in about 15 mins). Pretty important for this run, as its was building to a hot day, and the area hadn’t had rain for 3 weeks!

First little mishap... I role my temperamental left ankle. That’s what you get for chatting while you run. I let John go, and swear to myself for 5 mins or so. Then pick-up water, run around a corner and there is John again. Cramping? no, Stack? Yes! It was my turn to jump in front again. A telltale sign – Frog Flats wasn’t even muddy! I ran through without even noticing and I would also get to the end of the run with mud-free shoes. About 9:30am I reach Pelion (~33 km). A pleasant surprise as I’d didn’t realize I had run through Frog Flats, because the usual mud section had dried up. No need to loiter here.

I was feeling good and was reassured by the support crew at Pelion that water (creek) was just around the corner. Next stop Windy Ridge Hut (~20 kms) down the track. This section has two good climbs to test the legs. Pelion Gap and Du Cane Gap. But once over Du Cane Gap, the hills are done (relatively) and it’s a fairly sheltered (and steep at times) descent, over tree roots to Windy Ridge Hut (about midday). Liv Ferraro was in the support crew here

cheering all the runners in before her pacing duty (Alas, no Cow Bell!?!). The next section was a quick ~10 km to Narcissus. Gradually downhill through the forest, jumping tree roots and once it flattens out the path became smoother. Another runner?? I'd caught up to Peter Preston, about halfway on this leg. A quick hello, and off I went again, in search of watermelon (which I remembered from the 2011 run). I was in luck, watermelon, coke, and the traditional Anzac Biscuits. Dave Cole didn't have any success tempting/force-feeding me with a biscuit, but they did taste very good at breakfast the next morning. I'd been out on the course for 7:10. Dave said not far to go now – 2.5 hours. 2.5 hrs? No thanks, I thought, I like this next section and its only about 18 km. This was the first time I thought about time and I set myself a goal of 9:30 hours.

Many people find this last section hard and never-ending with the monotonous, undulating windy track next to the lake, choked with tree roots. New runners are warned, but I enjoyed this section last time, so wasn't too worried. Its not too different from the Sydney bush trails along the creeks and the advantage of this section for the day was the shade. OK it does take a little while dancing tree roots, and even a bit longer when you don't quite jump them high enough and find yourself horizontal. The 9:30 time was fast approaching, and I was yet to catch a glimpse of the visitors centre at the far end of the lake. But then...there it was! I just had a final uphill pinch on the trail (into the sun and heat) before back to the shade of the wider path and the final 1 km into the finish.

The Overland Track was run – 9:28! 1<sup>st</sup> Female and 7<sup>th</sup> Overall.

Thanks to all the Organisers and support team, The Overland Track is a fantastic run, you make it a great event and social weekend. Thanks must also go to National Parks for letting us run the Track, plus cutting a gap in that massive tree (taller than me!) which had recently fallen across the path, it surely would of made for a clambering detour. My legs pulled up really well after the run. I'm sure the cold water of Lake St Clair helped and a swim at Cataract Gorge on Sunday, to escape the heat. At orienteering, the almost mandatory Wednesday night run for me my legs felt fine, but I was amazed my head did not want to concentrate on any more technical single trail! I have never had that sensation before.

My Overland Track tips – practice lots of single trail running and on the day if you cross a creek grab water.

- I put my Helios shoes to the test for their first long run, and they were great! Light and grippy! Note to self: wear half a size larger on long runs, to save my big toenails.
- I didn't run with a GPS, just time – too bulky for my wrist
- I ate close to each hour, sometimes a bit sooner if my energy was fading.
- My left hip injury generally behaved for the day, even without compression!
- I carried a small water bladder, which I used this for the first 10 km, and then this was my back-up if my flasks ran out before a creek (there are plenty of creeks, particularly in the second half).
- I'll aim to be back in 2015!