

## Race Preview: Cradle Mountain Ultra

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One of the most prestigious runs in the Aussie ultra calendar is the Cradle Mountain ultra down in Tassie. The race is a one day traverse of Tasmania's famous Cradle Mt to Lake St Clair Overland track. The beauty of this run is that it traverses wild alpine areas of Tasmania's Cradle Mt Lake St Clair National Park and World Heritage Area. The altitude of the track in several areas of the plateau is greater than 1,000 metres, which by world standards is not high, but here is well above the tree line. This low tree line illustrates the exposure and harshness of conditions that can prevail even in summer.

Just 60 runners get to sign up for the Cradle Mountain Ultra, with entries going in minutes and most years there's a healthy smattering of quality athletes plying their trade.

The ladies is lining up to be a very competitive race with last year's champ returning, Emma Flittner. She ran the course in a time of 9:37 but then had a quite indifferent UTA where she finished in over 17 hours. Clearly taking it easy or suffering an injury in some way as that time doesn't reflect her clear ability.

Battling against her will another local, the very talented Amy Lamprecht. She claimed wins in two of her three ultras last year, winning the Bruny Island ultra and the Convicts and Wenches 50km too. She finished second in the Gone Nuts 101km ultra. Perhaps one of Amy's most notable performances in recent years was her fourth place finish at UTA in 2016.

Also vying for line honours will be Victorian runner, Kylee Woods. She recently finished in a fine second place to Gill Fowler at Bogong to Hotham this month in a time of 9:17 on what was a very hot day. Last year, Kylee's most notable win came at the Surf Coast Century, winning in a time of 10:05. She also won the You Yangs 50km as well as finished third at the Alpine Challenge 60km in what was an all female podium.

Other names to watch out for include Katherine Macmillan and Nicole Paton, both heavily known around the Victorian ultra running circuit. Katherine recently finished third at Bogong to Hotham, just behind Kylee and ahead of Nicole in a time of 9:33. She also finished second

at this race last year, while also winning the GSER 50 miler, the Marysville 50km ultra and the Surf Coast Hell Run in what was a fairly bumper year that included an excellent fourth place in her first miler over in Canada, the Fat Dog 120 miler.

Nicole had an equally bumper year in 2017, winning many races including the Alpine Challenge 100km, Halloween Howler 50km, Great Ocean Walk 100km, You Yangs 100km, Macedon Ranges 50km and the Wilsons Promontory 100km.

The men's race if I'm honest, probably has one clear winner in Stu Gibson. The man who keeps 'retiring from ultras' just keeps on coming back for more, which means he's managing to get his body into some sort of shape. A Tassie local, Stu finished second in the highly competitive Kepler ultra over in New Zealand while also running a very close second place at the UTA 50km last year too. Stu's run this race four times, winning three of them in or around the eight-hour mark – it's highly likely that bar an injury, he'll be victorious this weekend too.

Up against him though is the very experienced Stephen Redfern, 'fresh' from his joint second place at the GSER 100 miler. Stephen had a massive 2017, running all manner of distances and types of races and you wonder how he keeps his body together! This includes winning the Hume and Hovell 100 miler, the Sri Chinmoy 24hr track race and the Narrabeen Allnighter.

Also keep an eye on Queenslander Troy Lethlean. A handy runner who's won the Blackall 100kms (2015), along with putting in a handy performance at UTA last year too. Last year's third place getter, Dave Heatley is also back for more. He ran 9:18 and will be looking to go closer to the 9 hour mark for sure.

Good luck to all competitors