

This was my third Cradle Mountain Run experience, although I have also run the track numerous times on my own. The Overland is one of the most special places on Earth for me and has been the home of amazing adventures for over 30 years. I have always drawn great energy and motivation from this uniquely Tasmanian environment.

I'm a recreational female runner in my 50s and it usually takes me around 14 hours to go from Cradle to Cynthia Bay. Respectable but not speedy. I surprised myself (and husband) in CMR 2024 when I had a perfect day and ran a PB of 12hr41min. I was sure I would never be revisiting that time. This is my CMR 2026 Report about the event that proved me wrong!

Slower-Runner Starting Strategies

When you're a slower, older female runner, making the Narcissus cut-off time is a challenge and you have to consider all the little things in your power you can do to not have a boat trip.

I told myself not to take too many photos and not chat too much to walkers. But then the place and the people as always were too good and how could I not, so it's no surprise I was again a repeat offender to this rule.

There was some strategy employed at the start with a plan to run up to Marions behind Clint, my husband, as he was more gutsy in overtaking people if needed. I then had a good excuse to follow him to make a not-too-slow time up the hill.



This strategy almost became unstuck when Clint's heart rate hit 210 on the way up to Crater Lake and he was reporting early heart attack signs! Clinton is totally the loving character to put his life on the line to help me. Oh dear... (He's fine by the way thank goodness.)

In the days leading up to the event, significant time had been spent considering the mild to moderate south-westerly forecasted wind. I knew from experience this was enough for me to be very cold on the plateau and for it to be slightly demoralising to run into. Jacket on or off at the start? Hmmm... In the end I decided to start with it off but stored it in a pocket so it could be whipped out quickly. Embarrassingly, lots of practice storing the jacket and putting it on and off happened in the days before.

Cradle Plateau to Windemere

Once we hit the plateau I decided to zip ahead to don the jacket. Well, the atmospheric cloud and sideways wind and wet air and cool temperatures and that magnificent environment lit me up and I felt like a spring that had just uncoiled and went boing!... I ran and I ran and I ran. It's a memory that will stand bold in my mind for a long time to come. There was this magic sense of flow and I was completely comfortable in my most favourite environment in all the world. At Kitchen Hut I looked back and couldn't see anyone - this was of course because there was so much cloud but I kidded myself that I had just accidentally outrun everyone!

I loved the boulder hopping and fast footwork through Fury Gorge; also shrouded in white. Just before leaving the cirque, an outline of Barn Bluff appeared through the clouds with a hint of brilliant blue sky in the background.

After a standing ovation from breakfasting Waterfall Valley walkers (thank you!), Barney did a full Monty just for us and accompanying scaparia wildflowers. What a treat!



Windemere to Pelion

I traded places a couple times with a fellow known as Caz. He wisely filled water bottles at Windermere while I chose a normally reliable nearby creek that was not so reliable on this particular day. Oops.



Caz passed for the final time in the recently burnt area before Pine Valley Moor. Watching his effortless movement that powered him into the distance never to be seen again made me think he was for sure some sort of trail running sensei.

The forested descent to Frog Flats with all its rocks, roots and mud was a hoot. It brought back memories of the 2024 CMR Kylie and Clinton Spouse Duel. It was the year Clint and I discovered that even though we had only ever been recreational runners and had never done any speed training, we were highly competitive but only with each other. We couldn't help ourselves and played cat and mouse while going at top speed with more than three quarters of the run still to go. So silly! So much fun! I made the comment we were either going to bring out the very best in each other or blow the other up. We did both.

Pelion to Kia Ora

It's a very special place and crew of people that you come across when you arrive at Pelion. These are volunteers who have walked 12kms into a remote area carrying lollies, bells, water drums, camera and emergency equipment and are now spending the entire morning cheering you on. They then go on to support unable-to-continue runners back out the Arm River for 4+hrs and drive them another 4hrs to Lake St Clair.



Photo Credit: Ben Wells

I've always loved the Pelion to Kia Ora section. It's the home of too-many-to-count much-loved adventures featuring snow, Ossa missions, Clint time and winter trips with students. The memories and myrtle twisted rainforest spur me on. I particularly like the climb to Pelion Gap with the rhythm of swinging the poles and propelling up with them.

Pelion Gap arrives before you know it. You can't help but be bowled over by the beauty and sheer size of Ossa with her big rump, by the perfectly symmetrical Pelion East looking over at Ossa and the foreground amphitheatre of Massif, Castle Crag and Cathedral.

I was lucky enough to still have the legs to enjoy the downhill boardwalk from the Gap. Not particularly fast but strong, swift and free.



Kia Ora to Windy Ridge

The momentum somewhat continued onto the flatter sections leading into Kia Ora and with a bit of focus, beyond and onto the more runnable initial part after leaving the hut. I stayed motivated knowing the rooty section would bring relief with the forced slower pace to pull out the fancy footwork of navigating the roots. It's a huge reset for me to have my head entertained by guitar-hero-style root hopping (thank you Josh Eastgate* for this perfect analogy) and to be cooled by the rainforest which shields you from the midday sun.

*[*Josh Eastgate's Guitar-Hero Explanation](#)*

This wasn't a section I always enjoyed. The first time I ever ran the Overland track in 2018, I couldn't believe how long I was in that rainforest for. Those roots went on and on for hours with it appearing I was stuck in the never-changing forest forever. Since then I've broken the entire section up into five parts by focusing on making it to DuCane Hut, then each of the waterfalls, then

DuCane Gap and finally the descent. Never will I again allow myself to think of Kia Ora to Windy Ridge as one section!



Running Solo

For 11 hours I ran almost entirely on my own. From the descent to Frog Flats to the end of the Lake's rainforest, I only saw two runners briefly. I didn't even see any walkers from Pelion Gap to almost Cynthia Bay; only abandoned packs at the waterfalls. It was just me in this most wonderful place of mountains and wildflowers and glory and immersion in something far greater than me. It was the most natural thing in the world to be doing. There was flow, there was strength, there was gratefulness. I was just out there doing my thing; doing what we do as trail runners. Magical.

Windy Ridge to Narcissus

A while after leaving Windy Ridge I encountered the other thing we tend to do as trail runners - deal with an emerging seedy feeling that we might just be sick and all the food we are carrying is now quite unappealing. This moment was unsurprising as I knew I was pushing the boundaries by moving faster than usual for a lot longer. I had gone into this run intentionally taking this risk with a level of wonder as to what would happen and when.

Not being a fan of running crook in a beautiful environment, this was the cue to ease everything back for a while. Pace was reduced to my usual funny-looking robotic shuffle which instantly felt as comfortable as changing into the night-gown and slippers after getting home from work. 'This will get us there,' I reassured myself.

And it did. It wasn't long before the mild nausea subsided and a blok lolly was allowed to sit in the cheek and dribble glucose into the system. Crisis averted.



The Lake

The Lake and I have history. For almost a decade each winter, Year 9 students and I would walk the shores to Pine Valley and beyond. Student joy was interwoven with blisters, leeches, fatigue and falls and yet they somehow continued on in a manner that sent a message of them being wonderful human beings. Their inspiration and the debt I feel I owe them always keeps me going.

Surprisingly, there are a number of landmarks along the lake but I've usually been too fatigued to be able to work out the order. I ran a lake recce two weeks before CMR and took photos of key spots with the hope it might just give me a sense that we are actually moving forward.

Funnily, when I reviewed the photos, so many of them looked the same (featuring mud, myrtles and fallen trees) that I ended up deleting half of them! But a recce is always a good recce and seeing the stepped log, ferny open section, big mossy rock, wonky boardwalk and last water fill, definitely helped.



Finishing

I already knew I was going to be able to run the last three kilometres with a bit of strength, but that was cemented when two male runners emerged from the lake forest behind me while I was at the top of the ascent headed for the Platypus Bay turn-off. I hadn't anticipated seeing Phil Beeston again who only days before had hiked the Mt Anne Circuit with his daughter and a 20kg pack. Given my lack of competitive tendency, I was surprised by how motivated I was to get a move on! Of course they could have easily outrun me but graciously let me go and hold my place.

It felt quite ridiculous and surreal to run into the Cynthia Bay cheers at such an early time of evening (for me) and still feel fantastic.

What a privilege to quickly come across Amy Lamprecht and ask her straight out and with not enough filter if she won. Of course she did but failed to mention it was her second best time ever after 10 finishes and however many wins. Such a gnarly athlete!

It was also an honour to spend time with Angus Tolson, young, sub-8hr winner and within a stone's throw of the 30yr-standing record. He had finished in the middle of the day and was now spending hours and hours and hours through till near-dark, cheering the last runners as they came in. Seeing this from a young speed horse told me the future of trail running is in wonderful hands.

On the topic of Angus, I must add that I'm chuffed to be able to say I was the only person to get to run with Angus on the day! Before the start, we were out in the dark doing a warm up and he

slowed from a supersonic pace to run and chat. Once the race started, he ran so fast he didn't see any runners for the entire day. He even outran the bus and arrived at the finish line without any cones or gear set up!

Personal Best

CMR 2026 was one of the best performance runs of my life, which is pretty nice to be able to say when you're in your 50s. Almost an hour was taken off my very good PB which I never could have imagined I could break.

A personal best was set for every segment from Cradle Plateau to Watersmeet. That's a lot of Strava gold! It was fantastic to share this experience with Tom Bryan who I had run with the year before and was at the finish line when I arrived - also taking an hour off his PB and pulling in gold for EVERY section of the track.

CMR 2026 Strava Link



Committee and Support Crew

It would appear that legendary status is a prerequisite to be a CMR committee member, sweeper or crew person. They all have their own amazing achievements and personal connection to the track and event. What an honour to rub shoulders with these wonderful people and how grateful we all are for their dedicated work.

Then there were the interstate parents waiting for their son at the finish line who epitomised one of the most inspiring groups of CMR people. They'd come to Tassie, stood in the drizzle in the dark at the start, done a lap of the state and were now spending hours cheering every finisher through in a manner to suggest they had extended their family to include all 60 runners. What champions!

And of course, my biggest supporter Clint, as well as running a great race himself this year, made his usual generous contributions of logistics, encouragement and patience. We are and always will be each other's greatest fans.

Even though I spent most of the run on my own, the people of CMR were a huge highlight.



Nothing Else Like It

Cradle Mountain Run is unlike any other event. Where else in the world do you have the opportunity to run on almost 80k of single track with no road access through world heritage landscapes? It has changing environments from exposed alpine terrain to lush myrtle rainforests to dry eucalyptus forest and looked on the whole time by magnificent dolerite mountains. On top of this, you share the experience with a group of legends, with legendary history doing legendary stuff.

What a journey, what a place, what an event! Can't wait for 2027...