

RACE REPORTS ▶

REAL RUNNERS' VIEWS, THE BUZZ FROM THE PACK, AND EVENTS TO MARK ON YOUR CALENDAR

ZOOM WITH A VIEW
The course took runners along the cliffs of Heddon's Mouth



Shore thing

Twenty-eight miles, 300 runners and nearly 10,000ft of ascent: it's Exmoor's first ever off-road marathon

Exmoor Coastal Marathon

EXMOOR, DEVON/SOMERSET, APRIL 12

FIRST MAN	ANDREW SIGGERS 4:40:32
FIRST WOMAN	VICKY SKELTON 4:58:19
LAST FINISHER	8:08:00
NO. OF FINISHERS	292 (75 MARATHON, 135 HALF-MARATHON, 82 10K)
RW ONLINE RATING	90% (AS OF 24/04/08)

As a general rule there are probably as many mountain goats, sheep and ponies in Exmoor as there are people – but on April 12 there was a mini invasion of fell runners who had come to take on the inaugural Exmoor Coastal Marathon.

This was the fifth and final stage of the Endurancelife Coastal Trail Series, with previous races in Pembrokeshire, Portland, South Devon and Cape Cornwall.

It was the first time an off-road marathon had been held in Exmoor – the total climb of almost 10,000 feet perhaps providing a clue as to why it hasn't been done before!

For those not feeling brave enough to tackle the full marathon there were options to run a half-marathon or 10K instead along the same initial section of the course.

Conditions were perfect – light rain in the morning gave way to bright sunshine as the race got underway, and many runners came back with a hint of sunburn.

The course was designed to take advantage of the diversity of the Exmoor terrain – the area straddles parts of West Somerset and North Devon and is a patchwork of different landscapes, encompassing moorland, woodland,

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AT ONE WITH NATURE
Runners passed through the lush emerald woodland



coastal terrain, cliffs and even waterfalls.

Nearly 300 runners lined up outside The Hunters Inn in Parracombe for the start, with 75 opting for the full marathon. The course worked westwards around the cliffs of Heddon's Mouth and over the exposed moorland at Holdstone Down before heading east for a long descent through winding woodland tracks to the halfway point at Lee Abbey. There was no time for any back-slapping however, as the next two miles were a tough uphill climb through the Valley of the Rocks, the reward for which was a breathtaking panoramic view from the top of the South Wales coastline.

After skimming the outskirts of Lynton and passing the fast-flowing rivers and waterfalls at Watersmeet (the 20-mile mark), the weary trail runners made their way round to Foreland Point, passing

briefly into Somerset before picking up the coastal trail route back to Parracombe.

The overall length of the marathon and half-marathon course was longer than normal. The race organisers explained that this was due to the difficulty in accurately charting distance over uneven terrain, and they confirmed that the half-marathon was actually 15 miles and the full marathon 28.

Everyone who finished the gruelling course was rewarded with a race T-shirt, Endurancelife dog tag and – much more importantly at the time – a big steaming bowl of delicious chilli.

Organisation was slick and efficient, and many of the competitors were already planning to repeat the experience next year, citing it as a perfect choice for anyone wanting to get back to nature and avoid larger mass-participation events.

WHAT YOU SAID www.runnersworld.co.uk

"Wow, what a course to run a marathon on. A real sense of achievement and great to relax with a meal at the end. This series of coastal runs is strangely addictive and I will be back for more." **John M**

"A 28-mile marathon. Brutal hills and very muddy. Is there a tougher one in the UK?" **Peter Hatch**

"I ran the half-marathon and found it a real challenge but ultimately very satisfying. It's certainly one of the hardest runs I've ever done and I will be back for more." **The Chelsea Plodder**

LIKE THE SOUND OF THIS? TRY...

COUNTING DOWN

Salisbury 5-4-3-2-1 Trail Marathon, Salisbury August 10

A hilly trail run over 5 rivers, 4 hills, 3 large country estates, 2 castles, and 1 Cathedral. Also 5K, 10K, 20K, 30K and 42K (26.2 miles) options

SEE THE SEA

Kent Coastal Marathon, Cliftonville, Margate, September 7

Picturesque town and rural course overlooking the sea for long stretches with a strongly undulating first half and largely flat second half

RUN A RIVER

Four2Go Trail Marathon, St Margaretsbury, Hertfordshire, October 4

Rural point-to-point run along the River Lea towpaths with corporate relay marathon, 5K and 10K trail run options

PUSHING ON
Staggering landscape, or just staggering?



THIS MONTH'S RACES



111
DERBYSHIRE 10K



112
HARROLD PIT RUN
+ BOLTON 10K
+ DOUGIE MAC 5K



114
ALDBURY CROSS 5
+ HORTON BULL RUN



117
UTTOXETER HALF
+ SHAKESPEARE MARATHON



118
WIGGLE THUNDER 10K
+ SHOBDON WOOD 6
+ FRENCHAY 10K



120
BALFRON 10K
+ BLENHEIM 7K

