

Situated in northern Namaqualand, at first glance, the huge, arid landscape of the Richtersveld seems devoid of all life. Look a little closer, however, and you'll discover a biosphere home to a startling diversity of animals and plants, specially adapted to survive the harsh environment. This year, for the first time, 57 runners took on this extreme yet incredibly beautiful terrain in the inaugural Richtersveld Wildrun™.

Set across four days in June, covering 150 km of harsh desert terrain and climbing a vertical ascent of more than 3 000m, the Wildrun™ invites competitors to conquer a land in which only the hardest life forms survive. There's no doubt about it, it's an extreme event taken on by an assortment of runners, from weekend warriors to seasoned professionals, and was guaranteed to challenge them both physically and mentally.

Entirely self-supported, the route is unmarked, meaning competitors need to use GPS devices to map their way across the trail each day. It makes the run a little bit more intense, because a wrong turn could add serious time to the day. So it helps to have a working knowledge of the GPS, or at the very least, the ability to make friends with another competitor who does.

Tackling the terrain

But beyond the obvious challenges, it is an adventure in the truest sense of the word, geared at runners who love a challenge.

While it may seem an arid, uninviting place, this mountainous, desert expanse offers visitors a myriad of natural wonders. Runners make their way through rock gardens, across quartz fields, over loose desert sands and up steep mountain climbs, while encountering native animal and plant life.

So different and desolate is the Richtersveld, you'd be forgiven if you thought you were no longer on Earth. A leopard spoor on a dry river bed may remind you that you haven't slipped through a portal to Mars, but may also be the only other sign of life you see... Apart from your fellow competitors, of course.



run to remember

THE RICHTERSVELD
WILDRUN™
IS NOT
FOR SISSIES
By Rob Peters

KNOW THIS TIPS FOR TRAIL RUNNING

1

⇒ Find a good pair of shoes

Your shoes are probably the one thing you don't want to skimp on. Bad shoes can lead to blisters, a dismal run or, worst of all, serious injuries.

2

⇒ Hydrate

A 10 km trail run, depending on the route, can last well over an hour, so make sure you are carrying water.

3

⇒ Start slow

Trail running in South Africa is booming and there are plenty of events on offer, from short 5 km trails to 60 km endurance events. Take your time getting started with a warm-up on a shorter route, before tackling the bigger, more technical events.

4

⇒ Don't run alone

Running in an event is always the best option – not only is there safety in numbers, but there's also the camaraderie that comes with it. If you are running your own route, take a friend – a nasty fall could lead to all sorts of problems if you are alone.

5

⇒ Have a sense of adventure

This is the perfect sport for those adventurous souls who don't mind if a wrong turn at a fork adds another hour to their journey.

Win!
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DETAILS ON p56





The harsh and rugged landscape is unforgiving. But for experienced trail runners, it's a once-in-a-lifetime experience

event info

DATE

2–5 June 2015
(entries opened on 3 July 2014)

WHERE

IAi-IAis/Richtersveld
Transfrontier Park,
Northern Cape,
South Africa

DISTANCE

150 km
Daily distances:
38.8 km, 36 km,
36.3 km, 38.3 km

COST

R13 950 pp
restricted to
80 runners yearly

FOR MORE INFORMATION

wildrun.com/event/
richtersveld
tamaryn@wildrunner.
co.za



‘You could be running on the moon,’ says a runner on the landscape he encountered

Route markers

Staged within the IAi-IAis/Richtersveld Transfrontier Park in the Northern Cape, the four stages incorporate all that is on offer in the Richtersveld. From the moment the track leaves Sendelingsdrift and heads out into the desert, the remoteness of the place captivates you, but this is just the beginning.

As the journey unfolds, the runners make their way along the heights of Helskloof Pass, the granite boulders of Tatasberg, across the banks of the Orange River, the gargoyles of Halfmens Ridge and the crystal fields of the Sendelingsdrift plateau.

When the finishing line of the final day at Sendelingsdrift comes into sight, the enormity of what these runners have accomplished sinks in. For many, it's the furthest distance they have ever run, but for all, it is an adventure and an achievement that'll last a lifetime. This isn't so much a race, it's a journey. 📍

PHOTOGRAPHY: DYLAN BEN HASKIN/WILDRUN™