

# LIVE ADVENTURE

## Get set for your first adventure race



Are you ready for a challenge? Do you want a reason to get fit? Do you love fun adventures with friends? Adventure racing could be just what you need!

Adventure races are multi-discipline events, usually in a team, where you navigate through the bush to find checkpoints. Most races include trekking (or running for the faster teams), mountain biking and kayaking. Some races include extra 'mystery' disciplines like canoeing or a mini-obstacle course.

Adventure races are gaining popularity, and for good reason. The events are well organised with safety in mind, but there is still the thrill of doing something exciting in the great outdoors. An integral part of adventure racing is the camaraderie with team-mates as you support and push each other to be your best. Not many colleagues will come to work on Monday having ridden, trekked, paddled and navigated through the wilderness the day before!

Embarking on your very first adventure race can be daunting. You probably have many questions and there may seem like a lot to organise, but don't be overwhelmed. Anyone can do it. Following this step-by-step process and you'll cross that finish line in no time!

### 1) Find a Race

Pick a race in advance to give yourself time to train. Depending on your current fitness level, this could be anywhere between one and three months. Six weeks is enough time for most people to get in shape to complete an adventure race.

If you are not confident about completing the full course, many races have a novice option which is a shortened course, often avoiding the more difficult sections. Check out <http://adventurerace.com.au/> for a calendar of off-road and multisport events in Australia.

### 2) How fit do I need to be?

Even if the course description sounds challenging, there is no pressure to 'race' (despite being called adventure 'races'). Whilst the top teams are highly competitive, for a large part of the field, the challenge is to finish, learn and enjoy the experience. Starting at a steady pace is a good tactical move. Many teams charge off from the start line, but tire out and struggle towards to the end. I'm sure we've all done that once or twice before!

For the shortest events, if you're generally active you could even just turn up and finish if you pace yourself well. For events taking 3-6hrs, I suggest being able to ride for an hour, walk for an hour (or run for half an hour), and having a practice kayak or two. Strength or interval training in the leadup will allow you to 'race' instead of 'survive', and make it much more enjoyable.

### 3) Team

Now that you've chosen a race, the next most important thing to do is find a racing buddy. Most shorter events are done in a team of two. Preparing, training and racing with a partner is much more fun. It's also very motivating when you have to keep training 'appointments' on cold, winter mornings! Don't worry if you can't twist your friend's arm, many race organisers have forums or can put you in touch with other people who are looking for a team.

# Make your next **ADVENTURE** a reality!

- 1 Want to get fit but find the gym boring?
- 2 Keen to enjoy adventures with strength and stamina to spare?



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#### 4) Training Plan

Now you know who you're racing with and what the event involves so it's time to start training. Communicate with your race partner about the team's goals very clearly before you begin. If you find out later you have different goals, it can be very frustrating. There's nothing like training your guts out to find your team mate hasn't trained all year – or exhausting yourself in the first hour of the race trying to maintain their frenetic pace!

If you can train together, all the better. Following a well-structured training plan will give you maximum benefit for your training time. Include a mix of all disciplines plus strength and mobility training to achieve your best performance and minimise the risk of injury.

#### 5) What to wear

Wear something you can use for the whole race. There are quite a few transitions so don't waste time changing clothes at each one. I suggest a merino or synthetic t-shirt (not cotton), bike pants and a hat. Use bike pants with thin padding as they may get wet in the kayak - nobody wants to feel like they're running around in a wet nappy all day! If you live in a colder climate, you may also need a jumper or leggings. Depending on the length of the race, it may be quicker to wear running shoes even while riding (ie no cleats) because of the time you save in transitions.

#### 6) Food

Lots! The most common mistake is to get carried away with the race and find hours into it that your food is still in your pockets and you've hit a wall. Try to remember to eat a small amount frequently, around every half hour, even if it's just a dried fig or two. Fat and protein are difficult to digest when you're exercising, so carbohydrate rich foods are the way to go. Try muesli bars, bananas, energy bars or dried fruit (don't go overboard with this or your team mate won't want to walk behind you!).

#### 7) Equipment

Next, consider the gear you need. Races have a mandatory gear list (on their website) which is the place to start. Ontop of that, think about the climate and the length of the race (in longer races comfort is more important). Test your race clothing and equipment in training so you don't get any nasty surprises on race day. Also practice eating your race food in training too so you know it is palatable, portable and easy to eat on the go.

#### 8) Navigation

A lot of people worry about navigation if they have not had much experience. But there's only one way to improve, and that's to practice - so just get in there and give it a go. The navigation in shorter events is not that difficult. As a guide, if you can read a street map, you will be fine. If you aren't confident, just take your time and consult your team mate. Other teams on course are also (usually) very willing to help if you are stuck. Even if you take a wrong turn, it just gives you a good story!

#### 9) Final preparation

Go through your gear list and pack everything the night before. Don't forget to check your bike is working properly, especially if you have to dismantle it to get it in the car. I took off on the bike in one race, only to find my team mate's brakes were stuck on and he could hardly pedal! I wasn't very impressed at having to do mid race repairs.

#### 10) Race Day

It's the big day and it's time to put your preparation into action. In your first race, finishing is already a big achievement. Take your time, particularly in navigation - going fast is no help if it's in the wrong direction! Soak up the beautiful natural surroundings, the feeling of being fit, and spending time in the great outdoors with a bunch of like-minded people. After all, you've earned it!

