

France - Ultra Running - Festival Templiers 2009

This year I ran

Southend 10 k in 0:45mins

Southend Half Marathon in 1:57

Not record braking speed but not too slow either.

So why was my first Templiers Marathon time **7:34:17** so long.
Welcome to the world of ultra running read on and I will describe the event



You can find me in lane one on swim nights so say "Hello". For the last three years I have attended the festival in France. Beautifully, rugged and isolated perfect extreme terrain to run in. The tracks are tight, steep rock infested and difficult to keep a good grip under foot. The elevation is demanding on your heart as you are often reduced to walking speed but your heart is still pumping hard. It's a relief to run because you can gain control again. The Marathon organisers ensure you have the minimum of 2000 meters to ascend and then descend.

My kit -

Salamon trail trainers

¾ leggings

Running top and light jacket with zip off arms

Lycra arm sleeves, thin gloves and a Buff.

My Back pack contains

- 1.5 litres of water
- 2 Cereal bars
- 2 Gel tubes
- 1 Banana
- 6 Hydration tablets
- 3 Jelly bars
- 1 Small bag of dry fruit
- 2 LED head lights units
- I pod (just in case I get depressed)
- Garmin GPS forerunner

The Race - Start to 24k

Starting at 13:15 I lined up at the back of the 750 strong field. I quickly glanced at my profile chart showing mileage and elevation. I can cross reference my GPS mileage and see what delights are next. So key the loud music and a big French build up, kiss good bye from Karyn and head out of the village to people shouting and cheering "Ally Ally Ally" straight into a 200m ascent, running all the way. 3k on and I over heat, I stop remove my jacket arms and pop behind a bush to spend a penny. I kicked off in last place, disappointed and now with a lot of ground to make up. Slowly I picked off runners and concentrated on getting to the first water stop without being eliminated. The organisers make the first stop tight to ensure weak runners are kicked off the mountains early. I made it with 10 mins to spare and have been running for 1:25. Time to eat a bar and the banana. I calculated burning around 700 cals an hour so food and hydration is important to succeed. I was soon in my rhythm and the km were incrementing on the GPS, I was happy. At 20k I had a straight 500m climb through the trees and then exited on to a mountain top. I had a new problem to deal with I was getting cold quickly so out came the lycra arms and the buff which gave me some relief from the cold. I just gritted, knowing I had only 3k to the next water stop. This was also the last stop and positioned at 24k. I was in good state of mind but my legs were feeling a little pain. My muscles were close to cramp but my knee joints were hurting from the constant impact of jumping off the ledges and generally scrambling over the terrain. Sometimes you feel like a mountain climber.

The Race 24k to Finish

I push off with my hydration tank full and a good felling that I had passed at least 100 runners. I was taking good care of hydration and food, I was saving the gels for later. I prefer to eat the solid food first. The isolation is beautiful, I don't see many runners now as the field spreads out. I happily run on the 30k point mainly downhill and I'm careful to control the impact even through the ground is wet and lose. Then I realise my pace is a problem I need to speed up fast. The clouds are low and I calculated that it's going to get dark 1 hour earlier. I push hard and risk blowing the motor but I think its risk worth taking as the last 10k has 600 meters of elevation followed by the descend and its pitch black in the tree line. I nod at a race organiser and say "10k to go" in school boy French. "No he reply's 12k to go" including a 2K detour. "Sugar" that's going put another 30 mins on my time. I break out my head light all 4 LED's light up the trail and I pass a few more runners on the tight climb. I was soon met by lights coming down, it was two race officials escorting a runner who was in a bad way wrapped up in a space blanket. I step aside and gave them priory as the trail was only 9 inches wide with drop offs. I did not speak I just shone my light on the trail for them. I pushed on making a metal note to be careful, after around 45mins I reached the top and knew I had around 6k to

complete. I handed out dried fruit to an exhausted runner who I had passed. I felt a little smug as I had controlled my speed and hydration and had plenty fuel in the tank. I said a few words to man who spoke a little English, he appeared to be a faster runner than me! He had caught me up and tucked up behind me.

I noticed he had no light. I stopped and insisted he take my spare. Now I had a train and soon we were passing and calling to people to give way. The train was soon 4 and we were pushing hard ripping up the kilometres. I called the GPS readings 4k to go 3k to go. I was now hurting, my knees were killing me and I had pins and needles in both hands. I pushed as hard as I could and descended towards the village. I was buzzing shouting "ATTENTION" to warn my fellow runners of hazards. I enter the village, Karyn was screaming at me and my French friends were shouting at the top of their voices I dug deep and lifted my speed and passed a few more runners. I had finished "Yes" and enjoyed every minute of the race. I finished 589 out of 750 and covered 42k in the mountains. I retired to a very nice French restaurant to loud cheering reception and to a dinner I had been dreaming off all day. "Cheers"

The next day my French friends competed in the big race 72km over 3000m. With good success Roman finished 21st out of 2500 in 6:15 sadly his father pulled out at 25k with a broken ankle. For the last couple of years I've want to do the big race, however, it's going to take me 13 hours and that's a long time. I think it may remain a dream.

