



## WHAT IS ADVENTURE RACING?

Adventure racing can be defined as a non-stop, multi-day, multi-discipline, team event. In many ways it can be likened to an expedition with a stopwatch. The goal of the competition is to be the first team to get all members across the finish line together. The most common disciplines involved in an adventure race are mountain biking, hiking, paddling, and rappelling. There are many different lengths and formats of events, ranging from off-road triathlons, to month long expeditions. The course should take competitors through remote wilderness where they must travel without outside assistance. Each team must use strategy to determine the best route, equipment, food and pace to maintain to win.

### SEEKING THE ULTIMATE CHALLENGE

Simply stated, adventure racing is an opportunity for people to challenge themselves. It's a chance to push yourself to your limits, or for the really daring, to redefine your limits. Although the races are designed to be competitive, you quickly learn you are really only in competition with yourself. The point is not how well you did relative to the other teams, it's whether or not you truly challenged yourself.

There are many different reasons why people compete in adventure races, but most of them will relate back to the idea of taking on a bigger-than-life challenge and beating it. The sense of reward that comes with it is overwhelming, and the bigger the challenge, the bigger the reward.

### HISTORY OF THE SPORT

The origins of adventure racing lie in a multi-sport race (mountain running, kayaking, and mountain biking) that takes place in New Zealand called the Coast to Coast. Founded in 1980, Coast to Coast was the first multi-sport, wilderness endurance race. It was actually created when someone misunderstood a conversation they overheard suggesting some American's were looking to create a wilderness challenge. In an attempt to beat the American's to the punch, Coast to Coast and another race known as the Alpine Ironman were created. Not long after and completely unrelated, the American's actually did dabble in the extreme with a race called the Alaska Mountain Wilderness Classic, founded in 1983. While Coast to Coast has grown into one of the most heralded multi-sport races in the world, the Alaska Mountain Wilderness Classic has remained grass roots, advertising by word of mouth only, with all profits from the race being given back to the competitors.

In 1988 Gerard Fusil, a renowned French journalist and adventurer, founded Raid Gauloises, "The Challenge of the Warriors". Held in New Zealand, the Raid was the first mixed-team, multi-sport, multi-day wilderness endurance race that tested the limits of both body and mind. This race consisted of 400 miles of mountaineering, horseback riding, kayaking, canoeing and rafting over a two-week period. The Raid quickly popularized the sport of adventure racing by traveling to different locations around the world each year, including Costa Rica, Caledonia, Madagascar, Borneo and Patagonia.

Following on the heels of the Raid's success, Southern Traverse was launched in 1991, introducing a shorter format of race to competitors. Held in New Zealand every year, this race maintains the true spirit of adventure racing established by the Raid, but in a three- to five-day race format.

Although the popularity of the sport grew rapidly in Europe, Australia and New Zealand, it was still relatively unheard of in North America. It wasn't until two-time Raid competitor and talented entrepreneur, Mark Burnett, created Eco-Challenge in 1995, that the sport was taken notice by North America. Drawing in the largest group of international competitors ever assembled, Eco-Challenge set a new standard for adventure racing.

In the wake of the media attention around Eco-Challenge, a new, more accessible style of adventure race emerged – known as the ‘weekend race’. The longer five-day races require not only a huge time commitment for preparation and competing, but also a substantial financial investment. The weekend race, typically 36-hours in length, offers a more realistic starting point for those looking to test themselves in the adventure racing arena. They require substantially less time and training to prepare for, technical skill requirements are minimal, and the cost is much lower. Yet these races are still long enough and challenging enough to test the limits of most weekend warriors, and provide an ideal training ground for those looking to compete in longer races.

In 1998, Dave Zietsma, captain of Team Subaru Outback, founded Frontier Adventure Racing Inc., the first Canadian adventure racing company to offer both 5-day and 36-hour races. In just three-years of operation FAR's Raid the North Series has put Canada on the map, and Raid the North Extreme has become a qualifier race for the Discovery Channel World Championship Adventure Race.

Since breaking out onto the adventure racing scene in the late 90's, Canada has gained the respect from international competitors as being one of the world's best adventure racing destinations. With this new founded respect came a tremendous growth in the Canadian market. In 2000 alone, the Canadian industry saw a 147% increase in the number of races being held, and a 195% increase in the number of competitors taking part. It is predicted that these numbers will continue to grow as the sport becomes more accessible to first time competitors and Canada's reputation grows internationally.