



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Death Valley National Park

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Death Valley National Park News Release

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World's Hardest Foot Race Gets a Little Hotter

DEATH VALLEY, CA – On July 23-25, ninety-nine of the world's toughest long-distance runners participated in the legendary Badwater 135. Even by Death Valley's standards, this year's ultramarathon was hot.

The annual summer race is widely recognized as "the world's toughest foot race." Extreme athletes from 22 countries and 22 American states faced off in a grueling 135-mile non-stop run from Death Valley National Park to Whitney Portal, CA in scorching temperatures.

With the hottest start line temperatures yet recorded (118⁰F), the racers began at Badwater in Death Valley National Park in three waves at 8:00pm, 9:30pm, and 11:00pm on Monday, July 23. It remained over 110⁰F through much of the first night of the race, eventually dropping to 95⁰F just before the sun came up and temperatures climbed up to 127⁰F.

With that brutal first night behind them, many runners struggled to meet the first time cut-off at mile 50.5, located approximately halfway up Towne Pass. Beaten down by the heat all night, which was also unusually humid, many were forced to stop to cool off in their support vehicles and were experiencing stomach issues and more.

As the new day began, the racers were climbing the 17-mile-long, 5,000-foot ascent of Towne Pass, as temperatures climbed to 127⁰F, setting a Death Valley temperature record for the date. The 135-mile race route includes three mountain ascents (Towne Pass, Father Crowley, and Whitney Portal), totaling 14,600 feet of elevation gain.

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Twenty-two of 32 women and 47 of 67 men finished the race and earned an honorary belt buckle. This year's winner, Michele Graglia, finished in 24:51 hours. The fastest woman was Brenda Guajardo, finishing in 28:23 hours. Sixty-two-year-old Pamela Chapman-Markle set a record in the women's 60+ age group for the third year in a row with a time of 34:30.

Thirty of the 99 competitors were not able to finish the race this year, the lowest completion rate in the 41-year history of the event. This high "did not finish" (DNF) rate was likely due to the unusually high temperatures.

The vast majority of those who withdrew were veterans of the race and yet they still succumbed to the challenges of the course and the conditions. Notable "DNFers" included 2015 and 2016 champion Pete Kostelnick and 20-time finisher and four-time champion Marshall Ulrich.

"I've never seen such an astonishing number of withdrawals from the race. It was heartbreaking to see these incredible gladiators forced to withdraw from the race due to time cut-offs or because they succumbed to the incredible challenge of the race course and the extra brutal weather unleashed by Mother Nature," commented Race Director Chris Kostman, who has helmed the race since 2000. "Of course, this race is widely known as 'the world's toughest foot race' and the athletes intentionally come to Death Valley to compete during the hottest part of the year. They, and their personal support teams which leapfrog along the course to provide aid to the runners, know what they signed up for and they relish the challenge, even if they meet with DNF. In fact, seeing so many incredible athletes having to withdraw only underscores how fortunate and life-changing it is to actually finish the Badwater 135," he continued.

-www.nps.gov/deva-

Results:

http://dbase.adventurecorps.com/results-compact.php?bw_eid=85&bwr=Go

Webcast (with links to all photo galleries, GPS tracking, and more):

<http://www.badwater.com/2018-badwater-135-webcast/>

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Death Valley National Park is the homeland of the Timbisha Shoshone and preserves natural and cultural resources, exceptional wilderness, scenery, and learning experiences within the nation's largest conserved desert landscape and some of the most extreme climate and topographic conditions on the planet. About two-thirds of the park was originally designated as Death Valley National Monument in 1933. Today the park is enjoyed by about 1,300,000 people per year. The park is 3,400,000 acres – nearly as large as the state of Connecticut. Learn more at www.nps.gov/deva.



NPS Photo: A female runner trudged up toward Towne Pass as the sun rose on Tuesday morning.



Photo credit: AdventureCORPS.
The coveted prize for finishing the Badwater Ultramarathon.

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Photo credit: Ron Jones, AdventureCORPS
The first wave of races prepare to start from Badwater just after sunset.



Photo credit: Chris Kostman, AdventureCORPS
Runners on the first night of the race.

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