

Delusions of Grandeur

The Grand to Grand

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START:	Utah
WHEN:	October
DISTANCE:	273K
FEAR FACTOR:	Massive fluctuations in terrain, climate and altitude

THE GRAND TO GRAND is a beautiful race, but you'll have to endure drastic changes in elevation, climate and terrain. Runners carry their own gear on this self-supported, 273K, seven-day race across the Grand Canyon in Utah. A newcomer to the stage-race circuit, the six stages over seven days cover everything from a massive plunge down the side of the canyon at the start, to sun-seared treks across sand dunes, mesas, buttes, slot canyons, hoodoos and pine forest, before heading up the dizzying heights at the far end to the finish at 2,636 metres high.

"Not everyone who starts will finish this race, but those who do will forever reflect on their achievement," says event director Colin Geddes. If you do make it to the end, you'll enjoy a spectacular view of the course from the edge of the Pink Cliffs of the Granite Staircase. Gazing over one of the Seven Wonders of the World, you'll wonder how you ever made it across in one piece.



Photos: Courtesy of the Grand to Grand Ultra, Madmotion

Your Worst Nightmares

The Spartan Death Race

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START:	Near Pittsfield, Vt.
WHEN:	June
DISTANCE:	About 65K
FEAR FACTOR:	Manual labour and a risk of death



DESCRIBED BY the *New York Times* as "Survivor meets Jackass," the Spartan Death Race isn't so much a trail race as it is a series of absurd tests of mental and physical endurance, with about 65K of trail racing thrown in for good measure. "Wake up in the morning and remember all the worst nightmares you had from the previous night and make them come to life – that's the Death Race," says two-time winner Joe Decker, a San Diego-based ultrarunner and boot camp trainer.

Race director Andy Weinberg says he adds challenges that are designed to mess with competitors' minds and make them drop out. "Athletes don't know when our race starts, they don't know when it finishes, and they don't know what to expect," Weinberg says. One year, entrants were told to bring a bike with them to the start, only to have the wheels and chain promptly removed and thrown into a pond. They then spent most of the race being forced to tote around the now-useless hunk of metal. In 2011, runners had to spend about six hours lifting heavy stones from one pile to another before starting. Another task involved chopping up and eating 10 pounds of raw onions over several hours of running.

Weinberg's motivation for creating the Spartan Death Race? "Boredom," he says. "We wanted to create something fun and exciting, something different." So if you have exercise ennui, head over to the race website, youmaydie.com, sign the death waiver and get ready for some, uh, "fun."