TOP 10

FEARSOME FELL RUNS

SO, YOU THINK YOU'RE FIT? CHECK OUT THESE TEN LUNG-BUSTING, LEG POUNDING, HEART-RACING MOUNTAIN RUNS.

From panting in the Peak District to a killer climb on Kilimanjaro; from a Norwegian nightmare to daunting Dolomite downhills, here are ten running peaks that will break you. Lace those shoes up and start your watch. It's time to feel the burn.

"Nothing beats the thrill of running ridges. But you have to be very confident, there's no margin for error."

SARAH RIDGWAY

PHOTO: ALEX MESSENGER.

Local runner Sarah Ridgway blasting along the main ridge of Crib Goch on Snowdon. This a true fearsome fell run: blow it and you're in for a big ride.

Are you ready for the beastly Buchaille Etive Mor?

PHOTO: PETE LEEMING.


Win Hill: winner.

1 Win Hill
Peak District, England

Want a burst up the pimple of the Peak District? Sitting at the head of the Ladybower Reservoir, Win Hill is the Peak District's best summit and a regular barometer of locals' fell fitness. Start from Yorkshire Bridge, right at the bottom of the steps. On reaching the summit, you'll be rewarded with some of the best views of the Dark Peak whilst you wait for your racing heart to slow. Bomb back down, accompanied by great views across Lose Hill.

HEIGHT: 462m
WATCH OUT: Can you do12 mins?

FIT FACTOR: 1/10
A mellow introduction to mountain running.

3 Buchaille Etive Mor
Glencoe, Scotland

This photogenic, pyramidial peak looks unrunnable from the main road but – although a chunk harder than the average hill run – it's well worth a run up. Buchaille Etive Mor is made up of two Munros – Stob Dearg and Stob Na Broige – connected via a 7km-long ridge. The run, a 13km climb with 1,110m of ascent, follows the walker's route up Coire Na Tulaich on the north west of Stob Dearg, following a clear path all the way. It's steep with scree in the corrie, followed by a bouldery ridge, and the descent is spicy on steep grass. A tough but rewarding day out.

HEIGHT: 1,022m
WATCH OUT: Under 1hr is very good

"Some mountains are compelling as runs. Just looking at them, something jumps out and says 'run me'. Buchaille Etive Mor does that, standing at the head of Glencoe, looming big enough to be a challenging run, yet small enough that it tempts you into thinking you can just nip up and down it."
ES TRESSIDER

FIT FACTOR: 4/10
You're in the mountains now.
A tough mountain challenge up an iconic peak.

PHOTO: BMC.

2 Pendle Hill
Lancashire, England


Pendle Hill: bewitching.

PHOTO: ALASTAIR LEE.

The dark thrills of Pendle Hill will get you quaking in your studs. This mysterious hill has witnessed the birth of the Quakers, after a religious vision here, and the famous witch trials of 1612. Some say that you can still hear the cries of the witches on this Lancashire landmark, but it's probably just the ragged gasps of fell runners, strangely possessed with an insatiable desire to run up it.

HEIGHT: 557m
WATCH OUT: Under 1hr is good; 30mins for the elite

FIT FACTOR: 2/10
Real northern fell running.
Watch out for witches and whippets.

4 Snowdon
Wales

Experience a different, and rather more brutal, side to our most popular peak via the route of the Snowdon Fell Race. This ten-mile route heads up from Llanberis (and back down again) and features tough, varied terrain. The original idea came from Llanberis local Ken Jones: "It was pure curiosity that sparked the idea. I'd always wondered what was the fastest time someone could run up and down Snowdon."

HEIGHT: 1,085m **WATCH OUT:** The up-and-down record is a swift 1hr 2mins

Your Snowdon challenge awaits.

PHOTO: ALEX MESSENGER.

FIT FACTOR: 5/10
An achievable challenge for anyone – but still a real challenge.

5 Mt. Skaala
Norway


Amazingly, his legs haven't exploded yet.

PHOTO: VISIT NORWAY.

Norway: home of fjords and fitness. Combine both with a run to the top of Mount Skaala. Home to the Skaala Uphill, Northern Europe's toughest mountain race, Skaala offers a leg-breaking, soul-crushing 1,818m of pure ascent. The race starts just 29m above sea level before grinding up to a spectacular summit. Your reward: a panorama of fjords, peaks and glaciers.

HEIGHT: 1,848m **WATCH OUT:** Fjord-level to summit has been done in blistering 1hr 8mins

FIT FACTOR: 6/10
With 1,818m of unrelenting height gain, your legs will be begging for mercy; the ultra-fit Norwegians will not show any.

PHOTO: VICKY WILKINSON.


Vicky Wilkinson ascending Sass Ciampac.

6 Sass Ciampac
Dolomites, Italy

The white limestone fortresses of the Dolomites give inexhaustible possibilities for wild runs, fantastic scenery and plenty of pasta-refuelling in mountain huts. Ease yourself in up Sass Ciampac – part of an escarpment which looks across to the Sella range on the other side of the valley. Then check out the Dolomites Skyrace route to the summit of Piz Boè, the highest peak of the Sella Group: start in Canazei, in the Val di Fassa, and follow a 22-km loop of trails.

HEIGHT: 2,670m
WATCH OUT: Under 4hrs is good going

FIT FACTOR: 7/10
Carry the bare minimum and a credit card and connect routes between the excellent huts.

PHOTO: ALEX MESSENGER.

7 Helvellyn (in winter)
Lake District, England


Helvellyn: a real mountain challenge.

An imposing winter route. The route profile is varied (and sheltered from the northeasterlies for most of the ascent) quickly accessing an impressive ridge run to the summit with its commanding views of the central lakes. Local runners use the mini crampons that appear in the shops every winter, or use screw-in rally studs.

HEIGHT: 950m
WATCH OUT: Under 3hrs in winter is respectable

FIT FACTOR: 7/10
Serious mountain running. Snow. Ice. Poor visibility and cornices very possible.

8 Mettelhorn
Switzerland

You might not be able to run the Matterhorn, so choose the next best thing: the Mettelhorn. It's also got that perfect mountain silhouette but, unlike the Matterhorn, is one of the few true peaks in the area that can be tackled by walkers. The route exemplifies pure mountain running, and is a fairly severe challenge for a runner if you plan to do it in any style. The altitude will hurt, the snow field below the summit requires care and the final ascent is a desperate energy-sapping anthill of switchbacks. But the reward is obvious when you get there, not forgetting the promise of a mad descent and a post-peak beer in the Trift hotel.

HEIGHT: 3,406m
WATCH OUT: 2 days, with an overnight in a hut

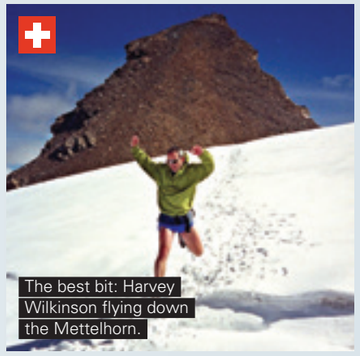

The best bit: Harvey Wilkinson flying down the Mettelhorn.

PHOTO: VICKY WILKINSON.

FIT FACTOR: 8/10
A very exposed situation for a lightly-equipped runner. Be very careful about what you carry; every gram is paid for. Get local advice on weather and conditions.

9 The Cuillin Ridge
Skye, Scotland

Bagging the Cuillin Ridge in two days is a dream for many; running it in a few hours is goal for a rare few. Running the Ridge is a unique test of skill, nerve, speed and stamina, and is a much sought-after prize. The route is approximately 13km long, plus 7km of approach and descent, and once on the ridge you face some 20 peaks, including 11 Munros. Extremely long and exposed, running the ridge means competent soloing at Difficult grade, often on wet and dubious rock, and tricky navigation.

Despite this, it was run in a criminally fast 3hrs 15mins in 2007, by Es Tresidder.

HEIGHT: 992m (but it's the 13km length that counts)
WATCH OUT: 3hr 15mins is the time to beat

FIT FACTOR: 9/10

Few will be up to this challenge. Extremely long. Exposed. Soloing. Magnetic rock affects compasses. Escape only possible at certain points. A very daunting course.

PHOTO: ALEX MESSENGER.

The Cuillin Ridge: not a running track.

"You need to be a climber as well as a runner, since you're often using all four limbs at the same time but moving very quickly. There's nothing else quite like it. I've run a circuit of the hills around Glencoe, taking in the Aonach Eagach, that's like an athletics track compared to the Cuillin" **ES TRESSIDER, ELITE MOUNTAIN RUNNER**

10 Kilimanjaro
Tanzania

Kilimanjaro, Africa's highest mountain, is a lifetime tick for many walkers. This snow-capped giant attracts thousands of trekkers each year, all mad with summit fever. Yet as they're toiling up the endless volcanic slopes, few walkers could imagine that this enormous equatorial beast of a mountain has been ticked in a quite staggering 7hrs 14mins, by Kilian Jornet, an Austrian mountain athlete. It's one way of saving on Park fees but, really, is beyond bonkers.

HEIGHT: 5,895m
WATCH OUT: 7hr 14mins (up AND down)

"Kilimanjaro – a bit bonkers to think people run up and down it."
SHANE OHLY, ELITE MOUNTAIN RUNNER



Kilian Jornet: Austrian mountain animal.

Kilimanjaro: the white giant of Africa. Why spend two weeks climbing it when you could tick it in your average working day? Now that's time saving.

FIT FACTOR: 10/10

Superhuman. A Kilimanjaro ascent really worth sponsoring.

PHOTO: ALEX MESSENGER.

Thanks to: Vicky Wilkinson of Alpine Running (www.alpinerunning.co.uk), Sarah Ridgway of Run Snowdonia (www.runsnowdonia.co.uk), Shane Ohly (www.shaneohly.com) and Es Tressider (www.es-on-ice.co.uk) for all their help with this article.

Words: Katy Dartford and Alex Messenger.

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