

Costa Rica Ultra Trail - La Franstica 2014

The 2014 course, took the runners from the Manuel Antonio beach, through Santa Maria de Dota, La Esperanza, El Humo, San Pablo, up to the beaches of Manzanillo on the Caribbean coast, 196 km and 8 400 m of positive altitude gain.

On the Extreme race, the participation of the French well-known runner **Christophe Le Saux (Rank 11 Ultra Trail World Tour 2014)** and of the Costa Rican **Roiny Villegas**, winner 2009 and 2012, let's expect for a very high rhythm and a heavy fight for the podium.

On the solidarity side, the financial support of the "Amicale des Sapeurs Pompiers des Cabrières", and the profits harvested by the associations El Nino and CG Sport Event, from the races organized in France, will allow us to finance the local purchase and distribution of more than 100 school kits, for the schools of La Esperanza, Purisil, and San Pablo. Toothbrushes and toothpaste were also donated through the personal contribution of **Florence Teichman**.

November 21st: Prologue, 6km, beach of Manuel Antonio

8:00 am, ready to go, a 2 hours trip to Tarcoles, and then 2 more hours to Manuel Antonio on the Pacific coast.

Change of atmosphere here, pacific coast and intense heat, and upon the arrival at the hotel, in the early afternoon, some enjoyed the swimming pool while waiting for the prologue.

16:00: Start of the prologue, two 3 km loops on the Manuel Antonio beach under refreshing and welcome heavy tropical rain.

Roiny Villegas immediately set the tone and showed his ambitions by leading the race in front of Christophe Le Saux.

On the finish line just few seconds separated the 2 leaders, Roiny Villegas (Costa Rica) won this prologue in 23 '26, ahead of Christophe Le Saux (France) in 23 '31 and Jean Pierre Camus (France) in 25 '20, the first female, Harriet Kjaer (Denmark) came in 6th position in 28 '51.

Regis Serva (France) won the Adventure Race Prologue in 28 '25.



November 22nd: Stage 1: Villa Nueva - Naranjillo - Santa Maria of Dota

Extreme: 40.9 Km, D + 2,830 m. / - 1,380 m. Adventure: 18.6 Km, D + 1,153 m. / - 514 m.

Hot, Hot, Hot, Hard, Hard, hard!!!

A superb first stage, starting along the Pacific coast, in the middle of a green palm grove ... Approximately 10 km of flat run followed by a progressive ascent that took runners into the deep jungle. The serious stuff began on this day, the sun was out and an oppressive heat risked fast damage during one of the most difficult stages of the race.

The 8h40 departure from Villa Nueva was for the two courses, under a temperature of 30 degrees.

The first 10 kilometers were a warm up before attacking the hardest part of the route.

At PC1 (km 9) Christophe Le Saux was 1st, followed by Roiny Villegas, the challenges being climbs of more than 15 % and several boosting sequences.

At PC 2 (km 18,6), Christophe Le Saux was still in front of Roiny, behind them gaps were growing.

At PC 3 (km 29,7) Roiny took 1st, Christophe took a blast of warmth and was slightly distanced.

Roiny Villegas came in first at Santa Maria de Dota, covering the 41 km in 5h01' and confirming his strong ambitions, 13 minutes in front of Christophe Le Saux (5h14') followed by Jean Michel Soulet and Jean Pierre Camus sharing the 3rd place (6h15') in front of the first female Harriet Kjaer (6h24').

Régis Serva confirmed his leadership of the Adventure race (2h51') ahead of Frédérique Rossignol (4h01').

Despite the difficulty of the ascents there were no major problems in this first stage and everybody was able to enjoy the landscapes, the pastures, the rainforest and the coffee tree plantations.



November 23rd: Stage 2: Santa Maria de Dota - Ojo de Agua

Extreme: 39.7 Km, D + 2,912 m / - 1,527 m Adventure: 21 Km, D + 1,359 m / - 1,140 m

For the Extreme, the 8am start was at Santa Maria under a bright sun for one of the most difficult stages and huge elevation. As a starter, a first 15 % climb followed by a 15 km climb to join the PC 2 for the 9:00am departure of the Adventure race, then 10 km of breakable descent before the last 12 kilometres of final ascent which brought runners to 2990m, the culminating point of the race.

From the first ascent, Christophe Le Saux decided to take things in hand and lead at PC 1 (km 7,4) a few minutes ahead of Roiny Villegas. Despite it being the rainy region, the weather was sunny and it looked like, this year, the runners would be lucky.

As the run progressed, Christophe gradually nibbled away at Roiny's gap from the day before and was the first to reach PC 2 (km 19,2). At PC3 (km 26,5), before attacking the last 12 kilometres of ascent, Christophe had increased his advance, and it seemed like he would easily win this stage. He crossed the finish line in 4h34' followed by Roiny Villegas in 4h54'. Behind them, Jean-Michel Soulet and Jean-Pierre Camus shared 3rd place once again in 5h24' ahead of Agnes Bernard in 6h01' and Harriet Kjaer in 6h02'. Christophe also took 1st place in the scratch with 5 '55 advantage over Roiny, anticipating a close fight. Régis Serva won the Adventure in 2h49', ahead of Frédérique Rossignol in 3h16'.

We spent the night in La Esperanza School, lodged in the 3 classrooms. The organization knows this place very well as we have held various solidarity projects for this school since the first edition. Every year, donations are made to help the children and to renovate the school itself. So far 12,000 Euros have already been invested in computers, painting and renovation of the classrooms and renovation of the roof and toilets.

This year, as every year, school supplies were distributed to the children. On top of this, French runner Florence Teichman, a dentist, brought in her luggage hundreds of toothbrushes and tubes of toothpaste to be distributed in 3 schools, during the race. The Costa Rica Ultra Trail is a tough race but it's also a way to help the children of Costa Rica.



November 24th: Stage 3: Purisil - Kiri Lodge - El Humo

Extreme: 33 Km, D + 1,120 m. Adventure: 24.1 Km, D + 585 m.

Sunny wake up and about thirty children, accompanied by their mothers, meet the runners and receive the school kits. A lot of emotions on both sides... Joy in the eyes of the children and a lot of tenderness in those of the runners. After this magic moment, it was time to prepare for the 3rd stage which heralded moments of pure happiness.

Stage 3 was amended and shortened, as we did not have permission to go in the Tapanti, so, following a bus transfer, the start was from Purisil.

A new option was proposed to the Extreme runners with a rising track of 3.5 km, bringing them to a farm, followed by a grassy track with a panoramic view of the whole valley and the Turrialba volcano.

Then, a descent to reach the Monte Sky eco-hostel where, like true adventurers, the organisation had freshly hacked a single track in the jungle with machetes. A last muddy descent through the pastures would lead to the village of Purisil and the original track. All runners loved this new route and, due to the heat and sun on the day, the reduction in kilometres was duly appreciated.

Upon arrival at El Humo, Roiny Villegas was first in 3h03' taking 3 minutes from Christophe Le Saux who kept his first place in the general ranking, at 3 minutes and 30 seconds... In third place again, Jean Pierre Camus in 3h57' followed by Harriet and Agnes who arrived hand in hand in 4h10'.



November 25th: Stage 4: El Humo - San Pablo

Extreme: 41.8 Km, D + 1364 m. / - 1259 m Adventure: 24.1 Km, D + 819 m. / - 589 m.

A new route was proposed to the competitors this year with a 6am morning departure after a short night disturbed by mosquitoes and the ambient heat. This 4th stage took runners through the sugar cane fields up to a last path before heading down toward the Caribbean coast. The course of the day seemed the most balanced of the entire race. The pace was good before the first climb, followed by a muddy descent to join the PC1.

The run through the heart of the sugar cane “fincas” marks the beginning of the ascent to the summit of Cerro Atirro. The sunlight on La Suiza lake was magical, the first rays, unveiling the peaks and the summit of Turrialba Volcano surrounded by smoke, gave an unreal atmosphere to the stage, but as an additional difficulty, the heat soon replaced the relative freshness of the night.

In Pueblo Nuevo, a suspension bridge was crossed before the long ascent to the village of El Silencio, a final killing climb of 4 Km to reach PC3, km 23.7. It was still very warm and the rain was welcomed to refresh bodies affected by the previous 3 stages.

Roiny Villegas was determined to catch Christophe Le Saux and immediately set the tone by taking the lead of this stage. An interesting fight, finally won once again by Roiny, 1'05" ahead of Christophe which still kept him in the lead in the overall classification with 2' 25" advantage. In third place, once again, the regular Jean Pierre Camus. On the women's side, Agnes Bernard benefited from Harriet Kjaer's orientation error to take first place with a comfortable advantage of 1 hour.

Despite the heavy heat, all completed this stage and were able to enjoy a well-deserved rest at the San Pablo school. In the evening, competitors attended the third donation of school kits and once more, runners were involved in the solidarity aspect of the race. The rest day ahead of them would be welcome to recover before the final stage.



November 27th: Stage 5, Playa Negra - Manzanillo:

A final of fire under the Caribbean sun

Extreme: 27.8 Km, D + 124 m. / - 127 m Adventure: 20.6 Km, D + 62 m. / - 63 m.

The departure of the last stage was at Playa Negra Beach, 5 km before the village of Puerto Viejo. The profile of the stage is simple, beach, beach, beach then muddy trail in the surrounding jungle. A first section of wild black sand beach, crossing Puerto Viejo, and a shaded path before joining the second section of white sand beach surrounded by an exuberant jungle, followed by 2 km of road to avoid the rocky coastline.

From PC2, back on to the last portion of beach with rivers crossings to reach the PC3 and then a muddy loop in the reserve of Gandoca. The finish line was located in Manzanillo, the last village before the Panama. After a rainy night, lulled by the cry of the howler monkeys, the sun was back.

Nice ambiance at the starting line even if Roiny Villegas' tension was palpable, as he only had 27.8 kilometres to close the 2'25" gap that separated him from Christophe Le Saux. At the 8:28am start it was very hot and the beach was beautiful, buffeted by the rolls of the Atlantic Ocean, a real invitation for a swim, but it was a different challenge that awaited the competitors.

Roiny took the lead of the race closely followed by Christophe who seemed to manage his pull with serenity. The two quickly outstripped the group but, despite all his efforts, Roiny was never able to increase the gap on Christophe.

Upon the arrival at Manzanillo, Roiny only grabbed a few seconds on Christophe who won the 7th edition of the Costa Rica Ultra Trail with great humility despite the amazing performance of Roiny Villegas, 2nd with 4 stages won. Jean Pierre Camus was rewarded for his regularity by finishing 3rd on the general ranking. Agnes Bernard retained first place in the General ahead of our fruitarian Harriet Kjaer. In the Adventure race, Régis Serva, with 5 stage victories, logically finished first ahead of Florence Teichman who benefited from the withdrawal of Frédérique Rossignol to gain 2nd place in front of Isabelle Chansigaud



Conclusion:

The runners of this edition 2014 discovered various landscapes through the different stages, from the Pacific coast to the Caribbean coast. They were lodged, fed and welcomed by the local communities, with amazing moments of sharing, exchanges and emotion through the meeting of the different communities of Costa Rica and their way of life. They have been involved in the solidarity aspect of La Transtica and the different donations have also involved many moments of shared emotions.

The 2014 organization, with the experience acquired in previous editions, has been exceptionally efficient, welded and reactive, giving all runners the chance to fully live this adventure within conviviality and in full safety. The excellent behaviour of the whole group of runners has also largely contributed to the complete success of this Transtica 2014.

Our objective "The discovery of a country and its way of life through a sporting competition with humanitarian goals" has once more been largely achieved. The warm feedback received, during and after the race, the support of our partners and sponsors, the French Embassy in Costa Rica, Mapache, Gran Hotel Costa Rica, Altec Sport, 6th Sens, Incomm, gave us the daily motivation and the energy needed to succeed.

The emotion felt on the finish line clearly shows that the Costa Rica Ultra Trail is not just a race, because beyond the sporting challenge, La Transtica is made of great moments of discovery, of sharing and of emotions. Each edition is unique and singular since each runner brings his or her own motivations, life story and differences, to live this, sometimes extreme, adventure!

And finally, comes the magic moment where osmosis is reached, when such a special atmosphere builds itself up, within the bivouacs and through the newly formed friendships. It's just amazing, pure happiness and obviously our best reward.

Thanks to all of you.

Pura Vida!

Bernard Marchal



Costa Rica Ultra Trail, La Transtica 2014 in figures:

- 7th edition
- 2 Formats.
- 12 days of trip.
- 5 Stages.
- An extreme course from 30 to 40 km per day, 196 km in total with a D+ of 8,400 m.
- 14 finishers, 19h30 for the 1st, 37h10 for the last.
- An adventure course from 20 to 25 km per day, 114 km in total with a D+ of 4,100 m.
- 4 finishers, 15h 44 for the 1st, 25h36 for the last.
- 0 withdrawal.
- 16 Members of organization included 9 rescuers.
- 1 Doctor.
- 2 physiotherapists
- 2,000 \$ of school supplies distributed to the communities of Costa Rica.

The 8th Edition of La Transtica will take place from November 18th To November 28th, 2015 and will be limited to 50 participants.

