

Prologue : 6 km Manuel Antonio

Fast race on a black sand firmly packed allowing a good cruising speed on a splendid beach wedged between the primary forest and the rolls of the Pacific. Idyllic places, small comfortable bungalows with swimming pool, splendid bar-restaurant in terrace where to enjoy the traditional beer after the race.

The +: A marvellous frame, the setting in situation, the swim in the Pacific at the end of the race, the discovery of the other runners.

The - : none



Stage 1: 20 Km, D: +1 375 m, La Selvita-San Marco,

20 km of a breathtaking climb between 200 and 1600 meters of altitude, starting by 500 meters of a technical single-track in the muddy jungle with rivers to ford to put ourselves in leg, before a long and hard climb on a large track, under an heavy sun, without any real interest except that it is a forced acclimatization. After a dozen kilometers as we reach the first point of supply, it's a total change of scenery through the majestic coffee fields and the village of San Marco, lovely welcome from the locals and even from the wandering dogs accompanying the runners until the finish line.

The + : the single-track, the excellent position of the points of supply, the route very well marked, the superb place of bivouac (ranch of altitude with chimney, bar, big room, cold shower for recovery, 2 substantial hot meals).

The - : lack of technicality on the first section.



Stage 2: 21 Km, D: +1180m/-1020m, heights de Santa Maria de Dota-La Esperanza

9 km of an abrupt way down immediately followed by 12 km of brutal climb, no technical difficulty, on a very wide runway with lot of rolling stones (blisters ...) and our quadriceps will be severely tested on steep slopes often reaching the 20%. The frame is splendid between 3000 and 1500 meters of altitude, with primary forests looking similar to those of the heights of La Reunion Island.

The + : Sumptuous frame and finish line close to the highest point of the country, the donation of school kits (school bag and stationeries) to the children of the school before the departure of the stage, the football game between the two local teams.

The - : Rather rudimentary bivouac in the freshness of La Esperanza.



Stage 3: 23 Km, D: +585m/-1830m, La Esperanza- El Humo

23 km of descent and flat sections with a magic part in the jungle of the Tapanti national, through a technical single-track, a suspended bridge above the river. We join then a large runway in construction in the middle of the coffee fields, some more descent then a large false-flat section of 5 km before the arrival at the CP 2, a super lodging on the river side.

The +: The magic single-track in the Tapanti with the members of the organization posted along the path to encourage us, the lodging of the last point of supply on the finish line where it was possible to fish a trout before tasting it in a 'casado', the quality of the welcome of the community of El Humo (delicious spectacle and meal).

The - : The long transfer to our place of bivouac (but the beauty of the crossed landscapes compensates).



Stage 4: 22 Km, D: +790m/-520m, El Humo-Napoles

Night departure for this stage, the first ten flat kilometers are run lit by our headlights, firstly we don't see the purpose, no visibility and we just know that we are running along a river. Then the first ray of sunlight appears and the magic operates: The sunrise on the peaks of the Turrialba Volcano and its plume of smoke whereas we are running through the middle of the sugar cane fields. A beautiful fording before tackling the climb towards the arrival where everyone is applauded by the children of the nearby school.

The +: Idyllic sunrise, river fording, spectacle and donation in San Pablo.

The - : Food poisoning for several runners, cancellation of the rafting due to the bad weather (replaced by the visit of the Cahuita national park which helps to relativize).



Stage 5: 21 Km Puerto Viejo-Manzanillo

After a tough night in small open-air bungalows in the middle of the jungle, it is a morning departure for this last stage in the moistness of the Caribbean Coast. In the agenda, lot of sand, more or less hard, reactivating some muscle pains despite the day off, several fun estuaries fording insured by rope installed by the organization, single-tracks in the jungle along the beach and to finish a muddy single-track in the heart of the jungle.

The + : The emotion and the welcome on the finish line, the sloughs sleeping in the trees above us, the refreshing fording, the swim in the sea upon arrival, the chicken-coconut of midday on the beach, the fiesta in Puerto-Viejo.

The - : none.



General feeling on the race

The Costa Rica Ultra Trail is an excellent way to discover the Costa-Rica: crossing the country from west to east, out of the beaten paths, to meet the "Ticos" so authentic and so generous. The various stages make possible to discover sumptuous landscapes, sometimes under extreme conditions: From the luxurious hotel rooms of the Gran Hotel to some bivouacs really rustics, from the cold while crossing vertiginous pass to the smothering heat of the Caribbean coast, from the wide runways to the single-tracks in the jungle. Beyond the athletic performance (succession of the stages really testing in particular for the extremes), the human and solidarity dimension of this trail gives it all its originality, giving to each runners the feeling that he have brought his contribution to this country which gave them so much in two intense weeks. Lastly, the wealth of the meetings we had on this event is incomparable: other runners, members of a well ground organization constantly and friendly taking care of us (a doctor, two physiotherapist, first-aid workers and firemen), the local people... These two weeks where we have shared everything have created indefectible links and real friendships. Only one desire prevails today: to see each other again and renew the experience, here or elsewhere.

PURA VIDA !

Vivien Vedrenne Cloquet

Winner Costa Rica Ultra Trail 2012, Adventure Race

