



# Himalayan 100 Mile Stage Race

📅 April 28, 2023



It was a wild blizzard when I crawled into the sleeping bag yesterday. Now it is quiet, starry and the ground is covered with a thin blanket of snow – I can see this through a crack in the rickety wooden door. Someone has cleaned the entire Himalayas for me during the night, just to thank and receive. I take a deep breath and feel the rush in my teeth. Like a Vicks blue straight down the throat. It creaks under my shoes as I stomp a little stiffly towards a hill some distance away, where I hope to see the sun rise over the world's mightiest mountain range.

Where is that Everest anyway? In that direction? Or that one?

I turn around and Kanchenjunga, third after Everest and K2, hits me like a punch in the stomach. It has to be the most beautiful mountain I have ever seen. The sun turns the sky pink and then exposes in turn Makalu, Lhotse and finally Mount Everest itself. Now I can see four of the world's five highest peaks. A good fund for a coffee. I sit down on an icy rock, pour my morning coffee and look at Everest. The worlds highest mountain. 8,848 meters above sea level. I swallow and swallow but the coffee doesn't go down, it kind of gets stuck in my throat. And now the tears are flowing too. I don't want to run an ultramarathon, I just want to sit here and drink coffee and enjoy the mountains. For the rest of my life.

## Scared, simply



Was it a mountain race I signed up for – or a life-threatening expedition? I started to wonder when the packing list landed in the mailbox a couple of months before departure. In addition to the usual (backpack, sleeping bag, reinforcement garment...) it contained a long list of medicines. Each participant had to bring everything from antibiotics and altitude sickness medicine to prescription stomach pills and a first aid kit. I'm usually not particularly hairy, but this didn't feel like any ultramarathon. I was scared. Afraid of India, afraid of being alone, afraid that my stomach would explode, afraid of getting altitude sickness. I was afraid that I wouldn't be able to run as far as 100 miles, 10 miles - it's actually really long. I was scared, quite simply. But nervously scared.

When the plane landed in Delhi, I instinctively wanted to turn around and take the first flight back to Sweden again. But I didn't, of course. Once you start fantasizing about drinking morning coffee with Mount Everest, there is no turning back.



## Ready for start

We converge in Darjeeling, me and the other 59 participants in the Himalayan 10 Mile Stage Race. You can choose between running and walking for each of th 

Running clothes on, a cup of tea in hand (darjeeling, of course) and a box of rice as travel food. A bus takes us to the start in Maneybhanyang at an altitude of 2134 meters. The bus lurches up the narrow road; outside the window, rock walls drop straight down into nowhere. The sky is colored pink and the mountains slowly appear layer upon layer in shades of blue. The birds start to wake up and we see monkeys sitting in the trees and scratching each other.

So, now only a toilet is needed. I walk down an alley, some chickens jump to the side. A woman stands in a doorway, she puts her hands together in front of her chest and says "namaste". "Namaste" I reply, and close the board door to the toilet shed. There is a hole in the ground here, I try not to look down. Breathe through the mouth. When I'm squatting over the hole, my legs already feel tired - how the hell am I going to manage to run 10 miles? Up and down the mountains, a total of 11,600 altitude meters.

Tibetan music, children applauding and congratulating us by draping white shawls over our shoulders. The colorful race director Mr CS Pandee tries to quell the hubbub and get ready for the start. 77-year-old Rex from Hong Kong, who is participating for the ninth time, is called forward to hold the green starting flag. His plan is to reach the goal every day - we think alike there.



## Small, small peas

The runners start first, then the walkers. Maria and Julia from Spain are here to cheer on their sister and friend Silvia, who will be running. Today they surprise themselves by hiking 22 kilometers, before taking a coffee break and waiting for the jeep that will take them to the night camp at Sandakphu at 3,636 meters. We runners have been forewarned – the first day will be one of the toughest. The distance is a brave 38 kilometers, but it is mainly the altitude that can cause it. Lungs feel like a pair of tiny, tiny peas as I walk up the first hill. The one that appeared as a slap in the face already after 600 meters of running. By the side of the road, sacred cows graze and colorful flags flutter in the wind. I nag myself to look up and take in the mountains, not stare down the rocky path. The mist-shrouded mountains. Imagine growing up here, go to school and have Mt Everest as their everyday view. How would that be?



*Casey from Colorado, USA, was used to the altitude and finished first woman every day.*



## Water and potatoes

Rex is not the only 70-plus in the starting field. I join Ian from England, with the stage name Ancient Runner, who is 74 years old. He started running after 65 and has run four marathons this year to prepare for this race. He has his girlfriend Sheila with him, who plans to hike most of the distances.



After about two kilometers you will come to a water station. And a serious military man with a rifle. A "namaste" with a Swedish accent makes him smile. I try to find somewhere to pee, but every time I think "this is going to be good" a new soldier appears around the corner. Those who guard the border between India and Nepal are stationed here for four months at a time, with the most wonderful of prospects.



At the hydration station after 20 kilometers, water, potatoes, bananas and biscuits are served. And a toilet! Here is also my bag with some extra clothes and a headlamp, in case the sun sets before I reach the finish line. I put the headlamp in my backpack and run on.



*Howard gave himself a starting spot for the Himalayan 100 Mile Stage Race as a 65th birthday present. He usually runs in Colorado, USA.*

After a long climb comes a nice downhill. I hook up with the next retiree, Howard from the US, who got himself a starting spot for the Himalayan 10 Mile Stage Race as a 65th birthday present.

- I read about the race in a newspaper five years ago, tore out the pages and put them in my bucket list folder, he says, while letting his legs run freely over the stone path. Howard picks up a small piece of paper where he has written down today's distances and altitude meters.



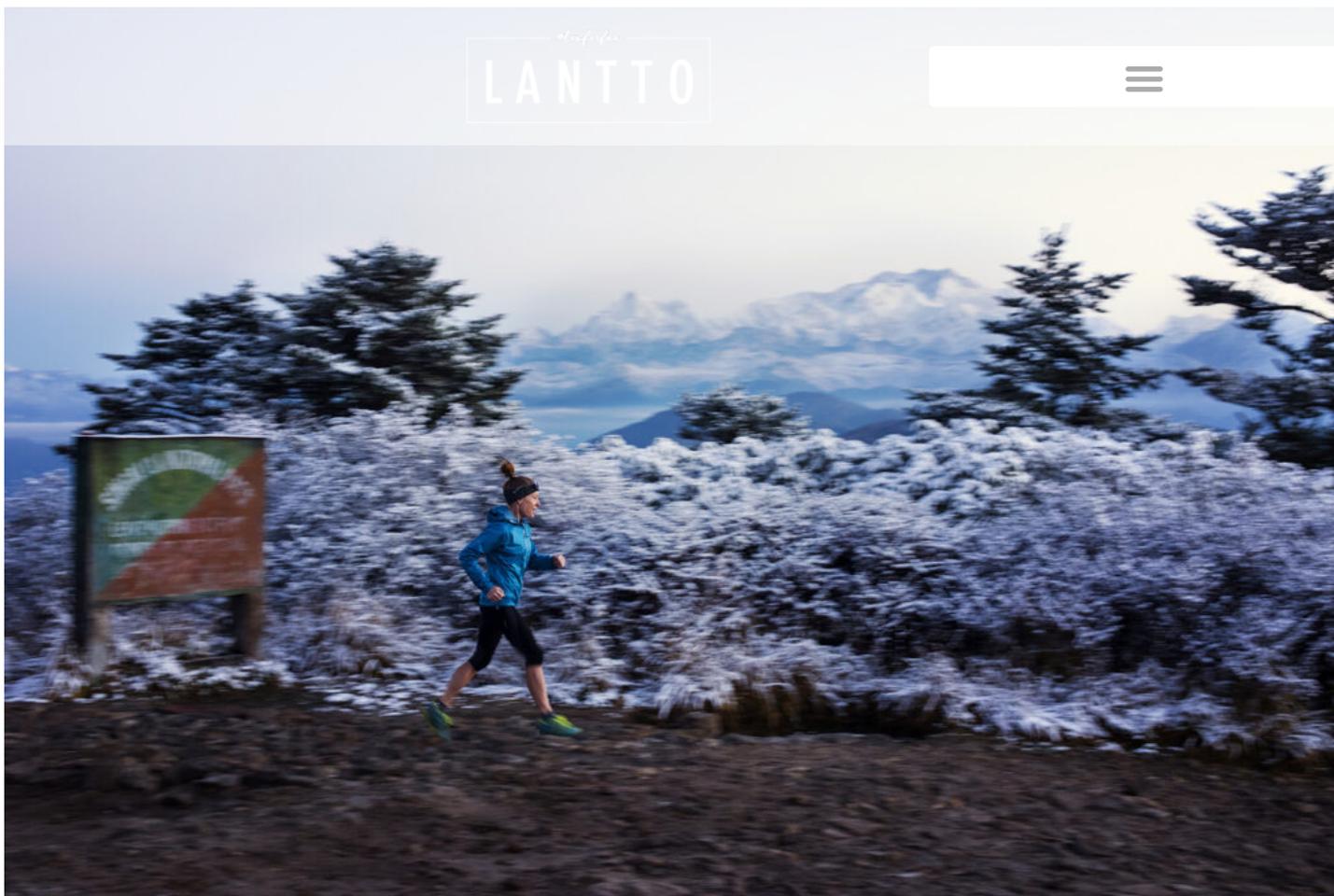
- I have the same for the other days, you want to keep track.

Everyone is a winner

Where did everyone go? The last mile I am alone. The air gets cooler and the fog comes in; the hairs on the arms stand up. I'm going up, up, up. The path is wide and impossible to miss, but it looks like a giant has trampled large boulders into the worn gravel. It's important to lift your feet properly, otherwise you'll lie right on the ground. Is there anyone moving over there? No, it's just my brain playing tricks. Or the height, maybe.

3,560 meters, announces the watch on the arm. It's beautiful with the trees appearing and disappearing alternately in the fog, but at the same time a bit ghostly. No mighty peaks are visible, but their presence is felt in the body in some strange way.

When I hear voices, at first I think I'm imagining it again, but this time it's real. I run the last bit to the finish banner, raise it to the sky and pat myself on the back.



*Kanchenjunga, third after Everest and K2.*

My roommate Casey from the USA has been here for several hours, she was the first woman to raise the finish banner today. But it's a democratic competition, everyone gets to raise the banner – that's important, says competition leader Pandee.

- Everyone is an equal winner here!

I get a bucket of cold water, rinse quickly, put on dry underwear and a down jacket. In a chilled stone house, we are served dahl, chicken and warm bread standing up. Many chop teeth, but everyone is happy. The first day is over.

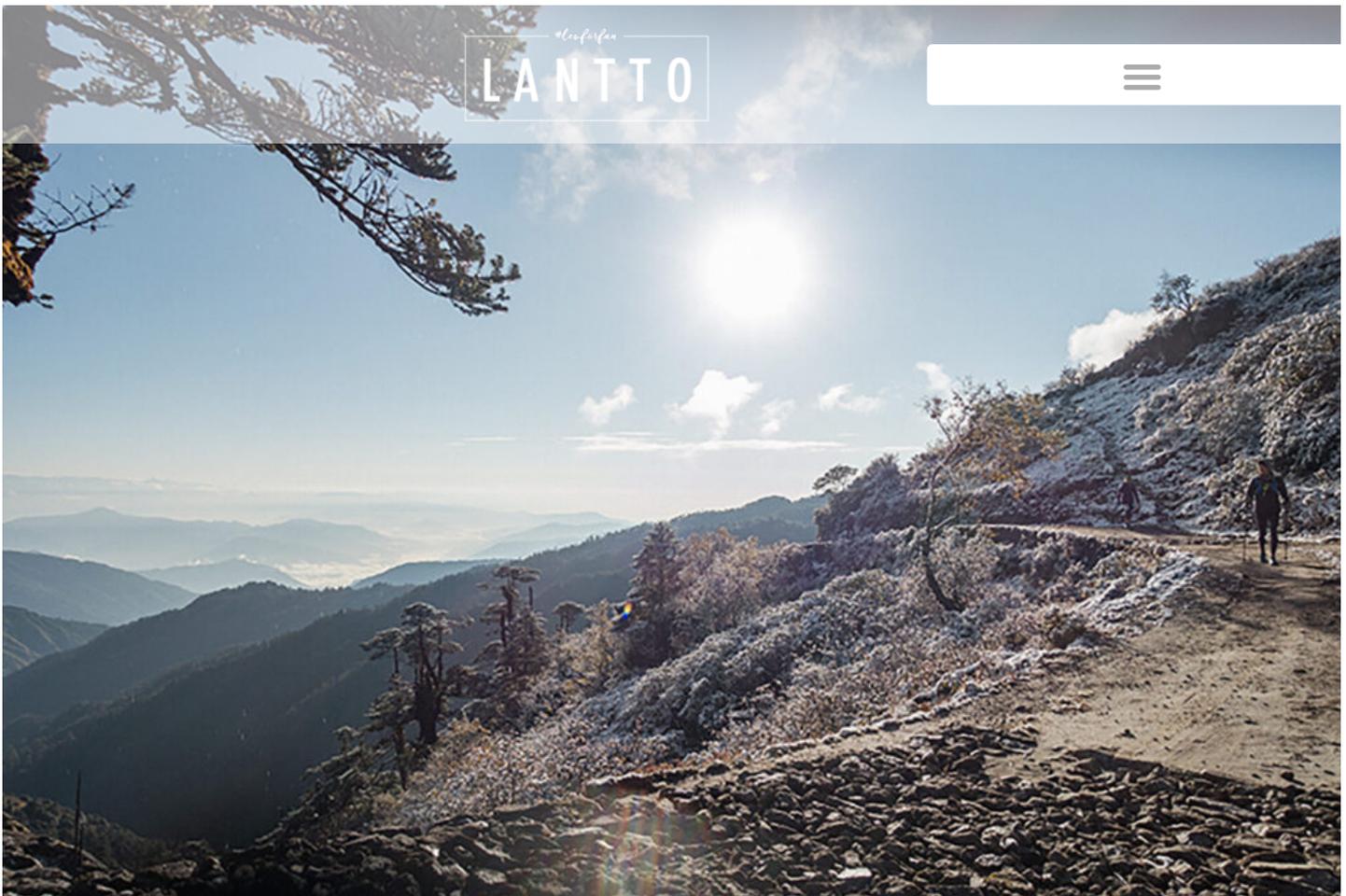
Deputy race leader Mansi steps through the door and silences us. She tells us that 14 people are still out there fighting in the dark, but she still wants to go through tomorrow's stage so that those who want to can go to bed.

After my private morning coffee with the four 8,000-meter stops, I go back to the camp and get ready for the start. Someone tells us that the last people who finished the night before we:

really cold - one was apparently so bad there that the doctor has been sitting and giving drips all night. I promise myself not to be food that dy, a broken race is also a



*There are not many roads in the area, mostly winding small paths. Local carriers are responsible for most of the transports.*



Today we will run or walk 32 kilometers, back and forth to Molle. I'll go up and run down. Soon I will catch up with the Brits Marion and Julie. We talk about which days in our lives qualify for the "top three" and agree that this morning is one of them.

- And then a day on a boat with the family, says Julie. It was nothing special, I just remember it as everyone was gathered and everything was so calm.

- Your wedding day, says Julie.

- No, it's not on my list, counters Marion.

- Wow, it was great!

- Yes, but there are probably other days that have been much better than that particular one...

I stop to take photos and hear the chatter about Marion's wedding day fade away.

Carl and Jason, also from England, can count a lot of good days in their lives. However, this particular one is not a highlight so far, thinks Jason, who has terrible luck more for the last day of competition.

- It will definitely be in the top three! Another good day was when I entered the paratrooper school, he says.

Hängel with rat

How strange the spout on the water bottle feels. Did I bite into it without thinking about it? I realize coldly that the rat that chewed through Casey's water bottle in our room during the night probably got on mine too. How could I have missed it?

So disgusting! Can you wash your mouth with antiseptic wipes? Or gargle with rubbing alcohol? I resist the temptation to throw the bottle down the mountain and never give it another thought. I guess we'll just have to wait and see how sick you get after making out with a Himalayan mountain rat for four hours, I guess. Luckily it wasn't one of the ugly garbage rats roaming around Delhi.



The fog sweeps in over the mountains, suddenly you can't see more than your own feet and a couple of meters in front of them. Cows can be heard mooing in the distance, soon they are all over the road and I have to zigzag my way between them. Two children in golden boots sit on a hill and have some goats on a rope. Or is it sheep? I wave and get a cautious smile back.

People rarely move in this area, Mr Pandee told us before we set off this morning. After 20 kilometers the road ends and all that remains are small, tiny paths that wind down into the jungle. The trees become more and more, greener and greener. The air becomes more humid and the fog comes creeping in. I run in small gutters where water usually appears to flow. But today it is dry.



## Right is India

I have saved half a bag of Good & Mixed to have as a haltime reward. When it starts to go downhill, I pick it up and enjoy salty cats; wondering if there is any taste difference between the yellow lemons and the red berries. I even eat those hollow licorice bits which are quite disgusting. Laughing a little at the story I heard on the radio about the truck driver who for ten years threw the black pieces in the wine rubber bag out the window thinking they were licorice - and then found out they tasted like black currants, which he loved.

I come to a crossroads and remember Mr. Pandee's words: "Right is India, left is Nepal. Always choose right. Should you run astray, ask for Siri Khola, then you will come to the right end." Siri Khola, how will I remember that? I try to remember that I very drunk order "three coke".

But no need to worry, the route is really well marked. Red arrows in the ground. Even in the jungle where I run completely alone for several hours, it is easy to orientate.

I round a large tree and suddenly a small house appears, and then another. A dirt path winds through the village, past small tin sheds and what looks like an Indian temple. I am met v

generous smiles and greetings. Namaste, namaste. A girl holds her little brother's hand. I get a lump in my throat and have to take a few deep breaths, the longing  my body. Oh, how I long. Wondering what they are doing right now? We are four and a half hours ahead so they should have breakfast and be on their way to school.

Proposed at Everest

On the last day, we take a bus for an hour to the start, where we finished the night before. I start running with Howard, he offers a "waffle" that he brought with him from the USA.

- I had 20 with me, four more every day, he says. Love the taste of honey and waffle.

After four days on a crash diet consisting of salty potatoes and sports drink, it feels luxurious to be able to eat something else.

Ian "Ancient Runner" catches up with us, we let our legs drum downhill and talk about how to live a happy life. Ian's advice is to eat in moderation so you don't get overweight, because then the diseases will come.

- Train your body and head, he says. Keep learning things, or at least solve crosswords. And spend time with friends and family, they are the only ones that matter in the end.

Further along the road we see three women - they are the hikers Maria, Julia and Caz. Today they started in the village at the top and we will all finish in the same place. We follow.



*Caz and Vicky from England are charged up for the race. Here, Caz did not know that Vicky was going to propose to her, with Everest as a witness.*

At each water station, you sign at your start number. Caz draws hearts by Vicky's name. Her best memory from these days, she says, is when Vicky proposed with a view of Everest.

- And the worst memory was day two, when I came back to Sandakphu absolutely frozen and had to wash myself with ice cold water!

It feels unreal, but up ahead is actually the last village. Maneybanyang. 100 miles. Just over 16 miles. 5 days. What felt like an unreasonable distance and an extremely long time is soon over. Now we hear drums, the sound is getting louder. School children clapping their hands - and we run to the finish line. An orange shawl is wrapped around my neck and I hug my new friends. We did it, together! And of course, as Ian said, it's family and friends that matter in the long run. Now I have 59 new friends. And even more memories.



Here you will find my packing list for the race.

Portrait of a bunch of people!

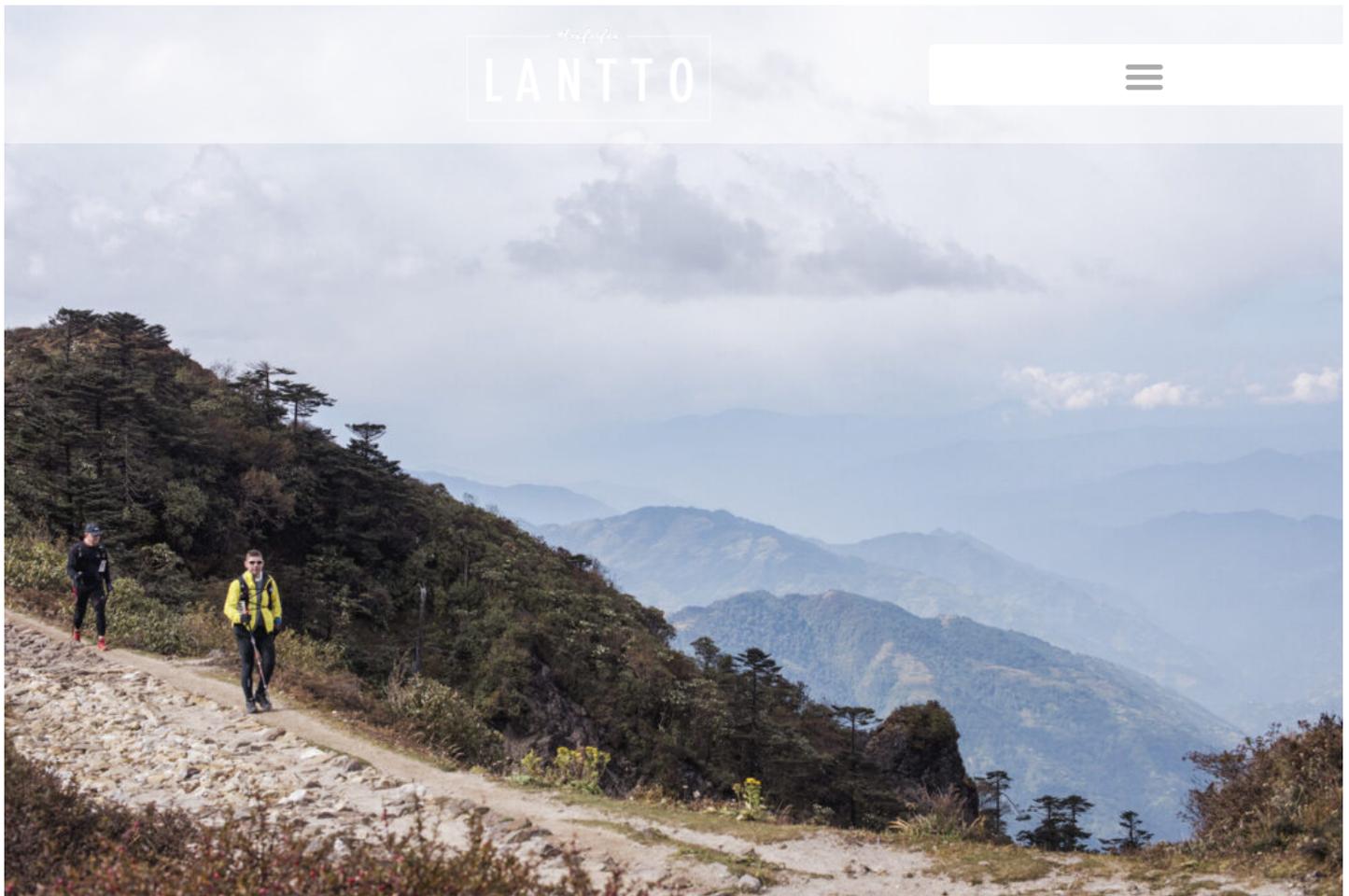
The moment published in Runners World .



*Half a bag of Good & Mixed, it doesn't get more luxurious than that. The salty cats were among the tastiest of the whole race.*



*A soldier stood around every corner. And they all wanted to take a selfie with me.*



Carl and Jason from England during day three.





*Lisbet and Jurgen. He likes to run and she likes to hike.*

LANTTO



*Kin Yui was there with her two friends Ka Lai and Chung from Hong Kong.*



LANTTO



PREVIOUS  
INSPEL - customer

NEXT  
FIVE DAYS IN NEW YORK

Well, if you like this, you probably will too

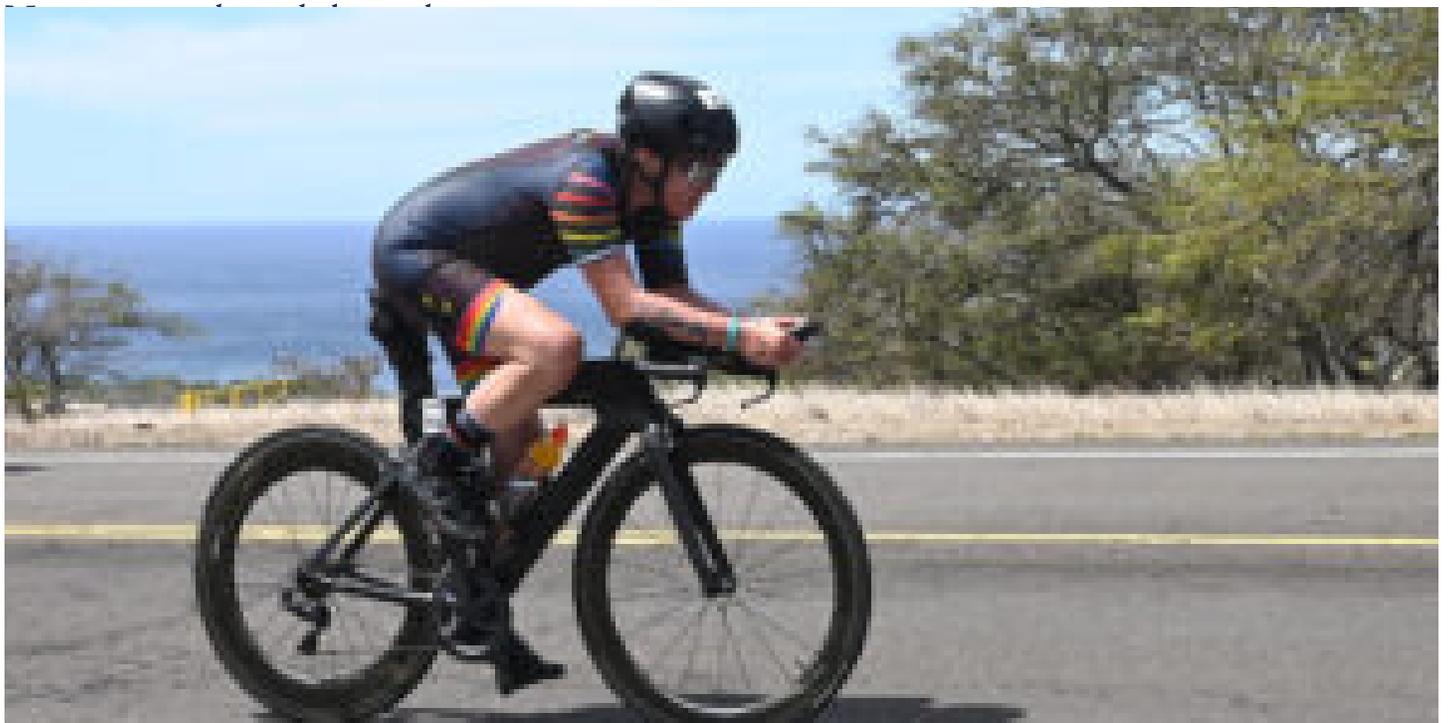


## Lapland 2023 race report

July 15, 2023 /// 2 comments

Laponia triathlon 2023. For the seventh time in my life, I put on my wetsuit in the midnight sun and go into





## IRONMAN HAWAII

October 18, 2022 /// 10 comments

Ironman Hawaii. It's on the other side of the world, it's insanely expensive to join and so fucking hot the soles of your shoes melt



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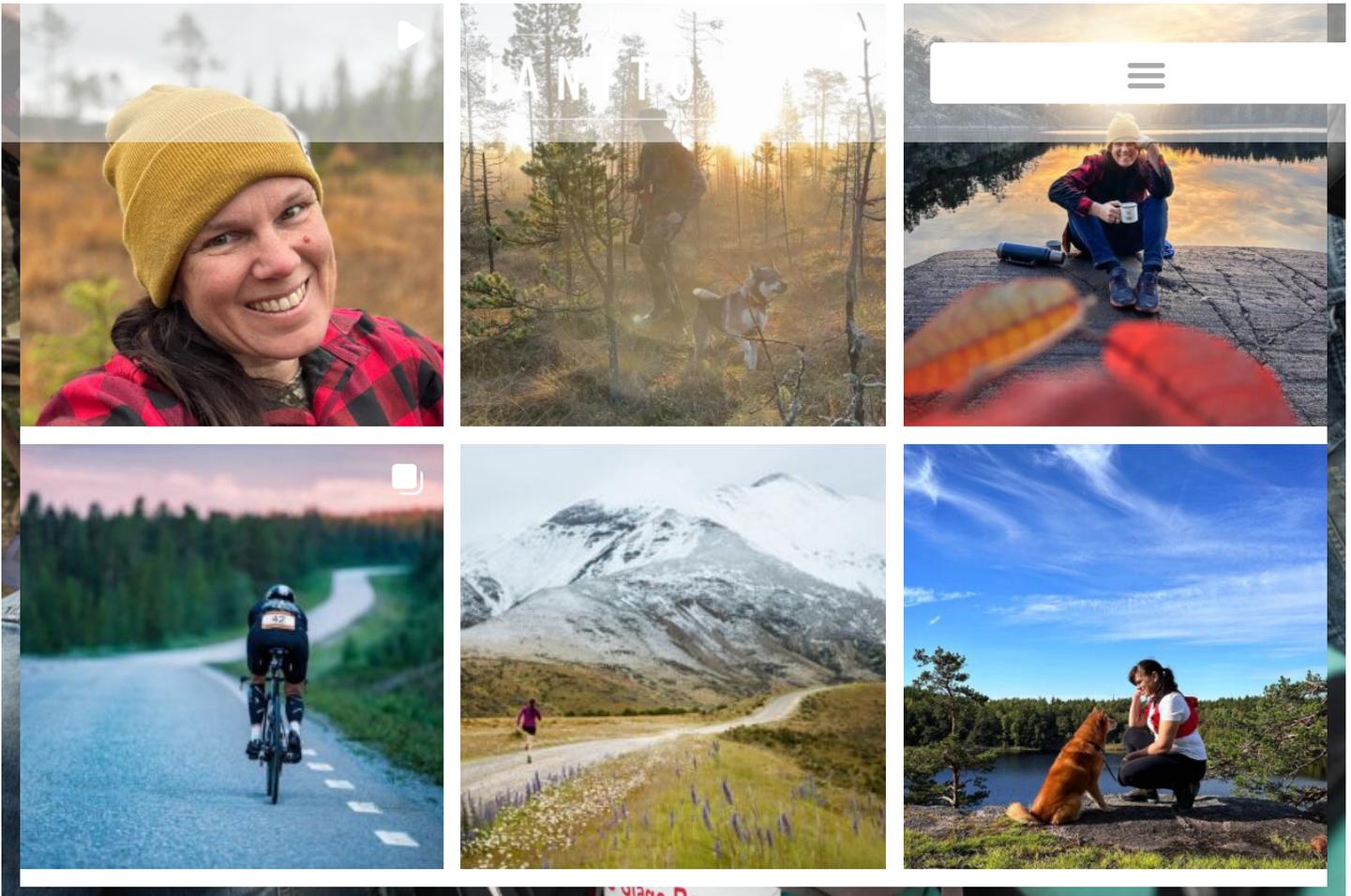
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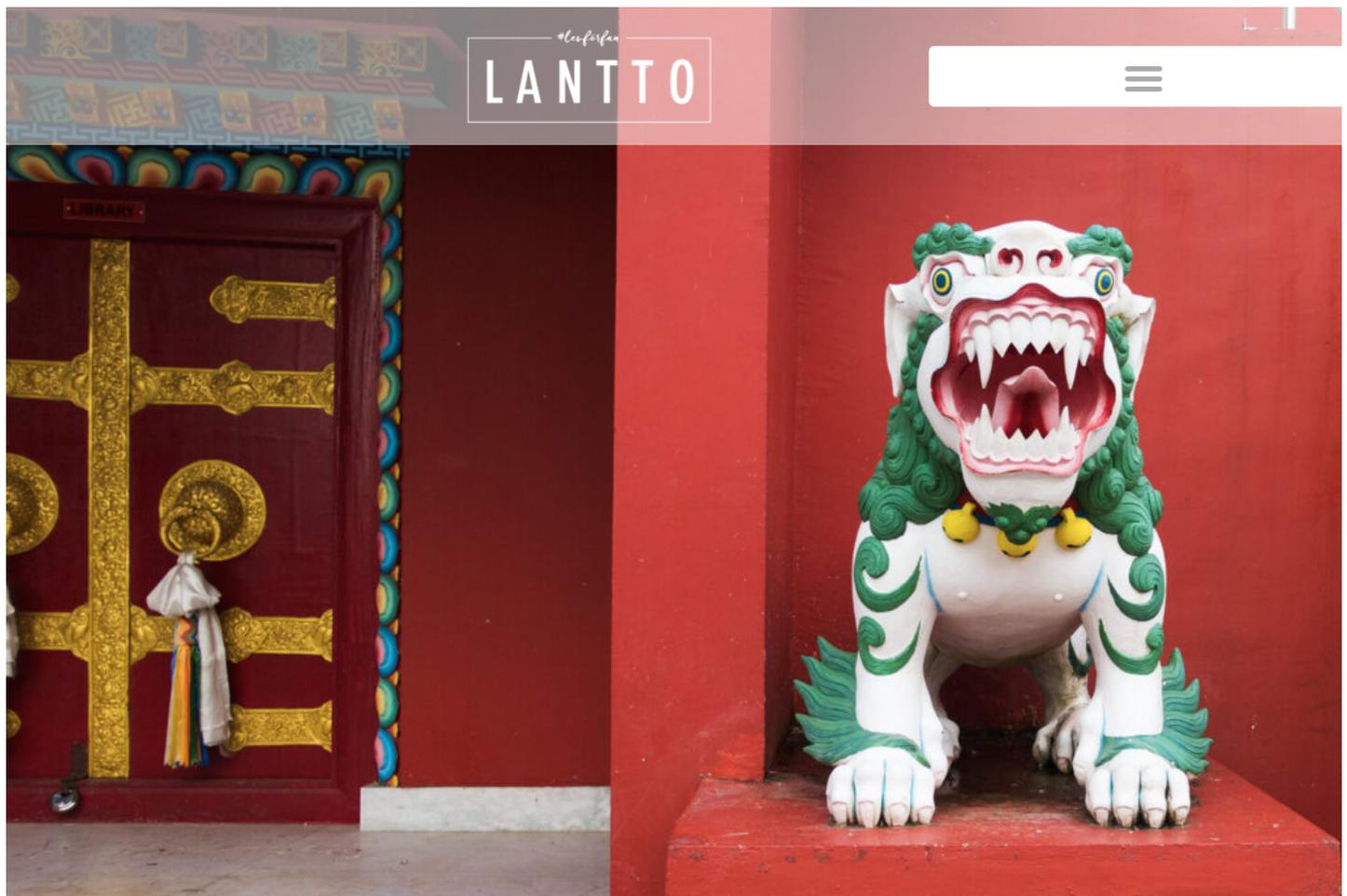
Sports drink. Or what do you think it is?



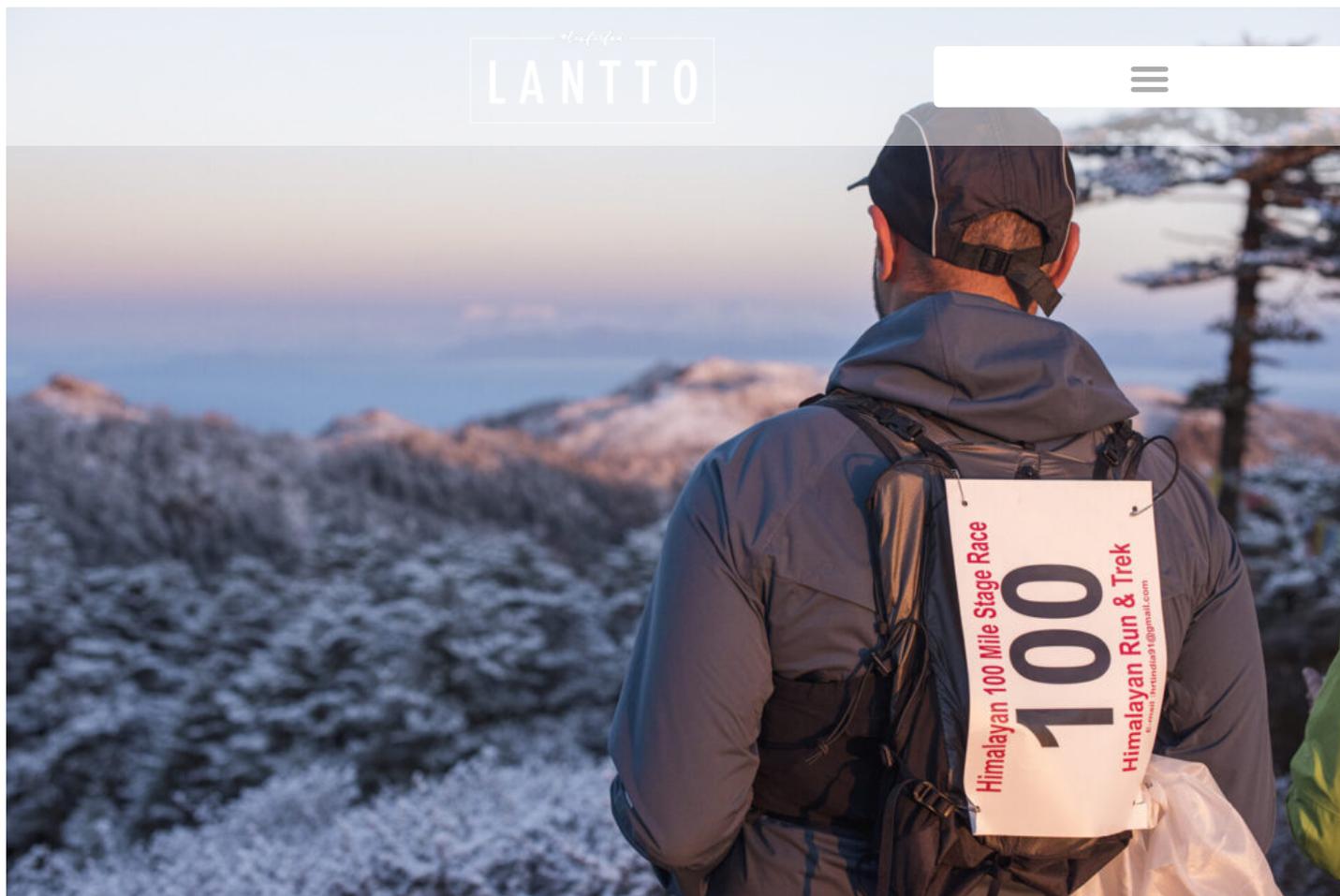
At the end of day three which consisted of 43 km of running. Mt. Everest Challenge Marathon  
The day started up in the mountains and for the first few hours we had a view of Mount Everest. As I ran across a bridge, this gang asked if they could take a selfie with me. Absolutely, I said, if I can take one with you.



Good carrier.



Rimbyk



*Day three was the most beautiful day. When we went to bed there was a blizzard but we woke up to the most beautiful of mornings. A morning where we got to see the sun wake up four of the highest mountains in the world (Kanchenjunga, Makalu, Lhotse and Mount Everest)*



## Himalayan 100 miles

*inspired*



100 miles, just over 16 miles, spread over five days. You can choose to run all the routes or walk parts of them with a guide. The race was organized for the first time in 1991.

Travel here: Fly to Bagdogra and then about two hours by car to Mirik. Start and finish in Maneybhanyjang at 2,134 meters above sea level.

Dates 2023: 27/10–2/11

More info: [himalayan.com](http://himalayan.com)

The race day by day:

Day 1: 38 km, Maneybhanyjang – Sandakphu

Day 2: 32 km, Sandakphu – Molle

Day 3: 43 km, Mt. Everest Challenge Marathon

Day 4: 19 km, Rimbik – Palmajua

Day 5: 28 km, Palmajua – Manebhanjang

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## Jogging in Sweden

Not at all keen on the Himalayas? Mixing hiking and trail running is a growing trend, which also works well here at home. Experiment with light packing and cabin accommodation – or set up a base camp and run day trips.

### The Jämtland triangle

The tour between Storulvån, Sylarna and Blåhammaren is 47 kilometers long. There are cabins and marked mountain trails in between, so it's easy to put together a nice trip.

### Padjelantaleden

The Padjelantaleden is 140 kilometers long and runs from Ritsem to Kvikkjokk. Cabins to spend the night in are available throughout the area.

## Hoga kustenleden

128 kilometers from Hornöberget in Kungälv to the square in Örnäs. It's worth an extra detour from the trail.



## Kungsleden

Approximately 425 kilometers between Abisko in the north and Hemavan in the south - you just have to choose which route you're interested in, and start running.

## The Sörmlandsleden

1,000 kilometer trail that includes 101 different stages, between 3 and 21 kilometers long. Stage 1 starts at Björkhagen subway station.

## Ljusnanleden

Start in Måga outside Ljusdal, Hälsingland. A total of approximately 58 kilometers.

## Kullaleden

Start in Scania Utvälinge towards Arild, Kullaberg, Mölle, Höganäs and Helsingborg. About 70 kilometers.



## Pack for a cottage run

A light running rucksack

Liquid container + liquid

Energy cake or nuts

First dressing and chafing plasters

Charged mobile Down

jacket Rain jacket Sun protection factor Map and compass Headlamp Extra underlay to sleep in Light sleeping bag/silk bag

*Published in Utemagasinet 2018 number two.*