



**[15 September 2021]**

## **RacingThePlanet Stages First Event Post-COVID19 with a Successful Race in the Country of Georgia in August 2021**

After a year-long delay and with new COVID-19 protocols in place, RacingThePlanet staged a successful race in the county of Georgia. With a relatively small but intimate field of racers coming from 29 countries around the world -- racers, volunteers, the medical team and the local team were joyous to be outside again in a bubble of normality.

After arriving in Tbilisi, one of the world's most charming cities which sits at the crossroads of the East and the West, the racers were bussed to the first campsite rather than the traditional hotel due to enhanced COVID-19 protocols. Racers were greeted with some heavy rain at the first campsite but the weather remained mostly good throughout the week, with only light showers and some thunderstorms.

The course was located in the Javakheti Region of the southwestern part of Georgia, in the Southern Caucasus Mountain Range. The course took racers through old forests, dormant volcanic valleys, breath-taking mountain passes, unique villages and traditional monasteries over some 250 kilometers (155 miles) over six stages.

The Long March, the infamous 80-kilometer stage, took racers through abandoned former Russian villages, towards the Abuli Fortress which is over 3,000 years old. This mysterious fortress has only recently been discovered and is part of an archaeological expedition to understand more about Georgia's history and beginnings. The race finished at the edge of the caves of Vardzia, which is a cave-palace-monastery built by the Georgians in the Caucasus for their fabled queen Tamar, with everyone breathing a sigh of relief when zero COVID-19 cases were reported among the race participants.

The overall champions were Reinhold Hüge, 48, of Switzerland and Isabelle Dufour, 57, of Reunion Island (France).

As racer Narayan Bharadwaj put it: "It's been a long and painful 148 odd miles and every fibre of my body hurts so bad, but my soul has never been happier from realising how much I have it in me to push myself to take on this challenge!"

