

Atacama Crossing (Chile) 2023

Running to hate the earth is so happy!

sports events

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The most lunar surface-like place on Earth is the Atacama Desert in Chile, where NASA has tested planetary rovers many times. It is also the driest desert in the world. It has not rained for four hundred years, and the average annual Rainfall is less than 0.1 mm (Wikipedia). The Atacama Desert is like a tough guy with a deep heart. It is not easy to conquer. As one of the stops in the #World's Four Polar Ultramarathons , runners who have taken the challenge once described the Atacama Crossing as the most difficult one among them. Nineteen years ago in 2004, Lin Yijie was the Atacama Crossing champion. This year he was invited by the organizer to return to his old place to compete. He brought five other amateur runners, including Xiaobai, who had never run an ultramarathon, to participate in the seven-day race. A six-night, 250-kilometer race with self-supply and weight. What is it like to run in this extremely dry, primitive, steep, and surprisingly beautiful desert?



(Xiaojie-Lin Yijie and amateur runner Chen Qiren, nicknamed "Maka" came to the recording studio to talk about the Atacama Crossing event they participated in at the end of September. Their skin color seems to have returned to white~ 😊)

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Go to the driest desert in the world to surpass yourself

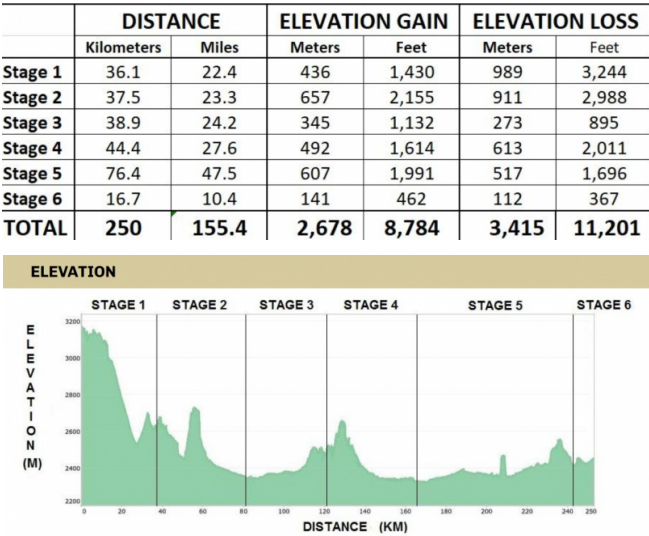
Chile's Atacama Desert was recently selected by National Geographic magazine for [The Cool List 2024: the 30 most exciting destinations to visit in 2024](#). For a few weeks in spring every three to ten years, the extremely dry Atacama Desert produces A large area of beautiful wildflowers dyes the desert with colorful colors. For this reason, the Chilean government built a national park, Desierto Florido National Park, in 2023. If you can go to the Atacama Desert once in your life, I believe it will be an experience you will never forget, let alone participate in a seven-day and six-night cross-country race.



(In the arid desert, there is such a sapphire blue lake that was struck by a meteorite, which is dazzling_Provided by Lin Yijie)

This is the second time Xiaojie has taken amateur runners to participate in the world's four major polar ultramarathons. The last time was in 2019 when he led more than a dozen people to the Namibia Desert, the oldest desert in the world in Southwest Africa. I was also lucky at that time Joining and witnessing an event of this level with your own eyes makes me feel very excited when I think back now!

To the remote Atacama Desert in Chile, it takes forty hours to fly from Taiwan to the event gathering place. On the first day of the race, we gradually descended from the camp at an altitude of 3,200 meters. The finish line on the seventh day was in the small town of San Pedro at an altitude of 2,400 meters. The high altitude and low oxygen made me feel very breathless while running, and my heart rate easily increased. Even the experienced Xiaojie accidentally ran too fast on the first day and found his heart rate soared to over 170, so he adjusted his speed to lower his heart rate to 150.



(Atacama Crossing 2024 daily mileage and track height map announced by the organizer_picture taken from the official website)



(Running in a group is fun! Xiaojie wearing sunglasses took a photo with five amateur runners at the camp_Provided by Lin Yijie)

The organizer only provides tents for accommodation in the camp every night, and all equipment and supplies have to be brought by themselves. Therefore, most of the players carry about ten kilograms, plus two liters of water, which is a very big test for their physical fitness.

"Maka" Chen Qiren has participated in the SUPERACE three-day race hosted by Xiaojie in the past and won the 14th place overall. In addition, he also ran 100.084K in the Taipei Super Marathon 12H in February and won the M40 group championship; in order to participate in this event, I had trained for 2,000 kilometers before the competition, lost ten kilograms, and my body fat dropped to 7.7%. "Teammates are training in Taiping Mountain, Alishan, and Yushan. In order to run in the desert, we also conducted weight-bearing training at Zhuwei Fishing Port and Tamsui Diving Bay in Taoyuan. We carried ten kilograms four months before the race."

When he came to the Atacama Desert and saw with his own eyes the landscape that looked like the surface of the moon, Makar didn't feel nervous, but very excited. This time he ran with Xiaojie almost the whole time. "Following can increase your speed and let you run faster." It will be much easier for Xiaojie to guide you; in such polar regions, you often cannot see other runners in front or behind. If you lose track of you, you may hesitate for a long time about how to run next, so I follow with all my strength..."



(The Atacama Desert is like a tough guy with a deep heart, it is not easy to conquer_Provided by Lin Yijie)



(Leader Xiaojie and amateur runner Zhao Dong – Zhao Xuanwei, Ma Ka – Chen Qiren trio_Provided by Chen Qiren)

The Atacama Desert is dangerous and strange. The terrain of the track designed by the organizer is very diverse. It must pass through large salt-alkali land, go through canyons among boulders, steep sand dunes that make you cry, and rocks that are easy to turn your feet. The river was frozen in many places, making the ascent and descent very difficult. You must be wondering how there is a river in such a dry place? In fact, it is the snow water flowing down from the melted ice and snow in the mountains. It is very cold. The water is knee-deep and even up to the hips. Your feet are often numb because of the cold water.



(The feeling of wading in water is as cold as ice - Screenshot from runner Zhuang Bocheng's [video](#))



(The white flowers on the ground are all salt_Provided by Lin Yijie)

In the seven days and six nights of the 250-kilometer race, the daily kilometers in the first four days are about 40K, the fifth day is Long March 72K, the sixth day is a rest day, and the last day is about 17K, Marca said, "Right now, the race is about trying your best to complete the day's itinerary. Don't think about saving your energy for tomorrow, including the 72K day. The time after returning to camp every day is enough to rest and recover."

On the fourth or fifth day of running, he found that his shoes were all hard. Xiaojie said, "Because the salt is too heavy, your shoes look like they have been pickled. Dry and hard shoes are harder to run and wear. When I returned to Taiwan, my shoes became soft again. Fortunately, I only ran for seven days, so my shoes must be at least half a size larger."

The huge temperature difference between day and night was also a test. This time we encountered a heat wave. The highest temperature reached over 50 degrees and dropped to zero degrees at night. Macca vomited several times during the game and could not eat any food. "It's too hot. I drink 8,000cc of water a day. The electrolytes in my body are imbalanced but I can't eat. I have to eat slowly. But I never have the thought of not being able to finish the race. Now that I'm here, I must finish it!"



(Provided by Chen Qiren)

Even though he was the champion nineteen years ago, Xiaojie once ran to hate the earth, "It's all about running and walking. There are some terrains where it's really impossible to run. Even when walking, I would think about why the earth has grown like this? Hate it. Why do you do such a thing? But isn't it a different experience? It's worth it!"

When he saw the first place running very fast, he laughed and laughed at himself: "I thought, why is it so fast? I want to say that I was like this nineteen years ago, why have I become so weak today? What if I had given birth to a child nineteen years ago? I'm nineteen years old, haha!"

In fact, from the perspective of others, such a high-intensity event is like a trip to Xiaojie. Not only did he not practice before the game, but he fully enjoyed the track during the game. After the game, the feet of his amateur partners were terrible and they fell off. Nails and blisters appeared again and again, but Xiaojie's feet were still intact.

"I was so lonely before! Now there are so many people supporting me and participating together. It feels completely different! Although it is really painful sometimes, 99% of it is happy!" (laugh- 😊)



(Although the former champion did not practice, he was still able to run in the difficult desert with ease_ Provided by Lin Yijie)

The non-finishing rate this year was 27%, and all Taiwanese runners finished the race!

This time, the failure rate of more than 100 contestants was as high as 27%. Xiaojie, who is still young, finally ranked 10th. Under his leadership, Ma Ka, who followed him, ranked 15th among the men, and Zhao Dong ranked among the men. 16. The other three runners, Zhuang Bocheng, Fei Siliang, and Huang Shixian, also all finished the race. Team Taiwan's performance was indeed not easy.

"Although I have retired, I always believe that it would be meaningful if more non-professional athletes could broaden their horizons and experience such polar events, so I often promote it on Facebook and IG posts. If you are interested, please Come." Xiaojie believes that events in Taiwan have reached a certain limit, and the running population is probably the same. It's time to take everyone outside to see the world.

He was gratified to see his partners prepare diligently and diligently before the competition. "Participating in such a competition will form a life attitude and philosophy that can be applied to work and family life in the future."

As the official race video says: **Life is a race, and what matters most isn't when a person crosses the finish line, but how strong they've grown along the way.**



(Zhuang Bocheng, who was participating in the competition, was taking pictures while running. He often lamented that the track was "too difficult!" but was reluctant to let the race end. Screenshot from Zhuang Bocheng's video)



(All six members of Team Taiwan finished the race!_ Provided by Chen Qiren)

Next June, we are recruiting troops to challenge Ulaanbaatar, Outer Mongolia~

Next June, Xiaojie wants to take everyone to experience the Gobi March, one of the four major polar races. It will be located in Ulaanbaatar, Outer Mongolia. The track will pass through the Okrhon Valley, which is listed as a World Heritage by the United Nations, and you can enjoy the vast scenery. There are rich natural landscapes such as grasslands, sand dunes, stone mountains, stone valleys, forests and wild streams; Xiaojie, who participated in the competition in 2003, has a great aftertaste of the scenery of Outer Mongolia. Maka was also eager to try, and whispered: "As long as my wife allows me..." In fact, his wife and children are proud of him. The children even said to their classmates: My dad is super man!



(Marco has just completed the first of the world's four major polar ultramarathons and is already thinking about the second one_Provided by Chen Qiren)

Xiaojie said that as long as he likes outdoor sports and does not exclude amateur runners who do not take a shower (note: **for a seven-day and six-night race, since you arrive at the camp the day before, you will not be able to take a shower**), you can usually run up to 50 times a week. By the time you reach 100 kilometers, you can expect to finish the race happily if you participate in the four major polar races; if you haven't practiced to this level, you may still finish the race, but the process will be painful.

Makar said with a smile: "When I can finish such a difficult game, I can overcome any event!"

Are you excited to go to Outer Mongolia next June under the leadership of a world champion? 😊

*Official website of the world's four major polar ultramarathons <https://www.racingtheplanet.com/>

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