



**7<sup>th</sup> November – 10 January 2016**

**Total Days Run      367      Total KM Run      c.17,000      Total Money raised      £23,373.73**

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**My last Newsletter (For Now)** – After 367 days of running I have now finished my Running the Americas Expedition. I ran c.17,000km or equivalent of 400 marathons, through 14 countries, wearing out 17 pairs of shoes and raising nearly £23,500 or \$33,500 for three great Charities – CALM, Macmillan and WaterAid. I can quite easily say that is the single best thing I have ever done in my life. Not a day has gone by when I haven't sat and reflected on the journey. A lot of people asked if I was happy that it had finished - The simple answer is no. I was happy when I left my nine to five job but I was sad when the expedition came to an end. However, life back in London is not all that bad. It is great catching up with friends, having a normal relationship with my girlfriend and being able to sit down and work through all the videos, photos and blogs from my expedition. book!!!

**But it's not the end** – While the expedition is officially over it is by no means the end! Right now I am working on my book which gives a more detailed account of my expedition and I am already trying to plan the next expedition. I will also be filling in the time with a few small excursions such a cycling from Edinburgh to London – more on this in the coming days.

I have also published my new website which can be found at – [www.jamieramsay.net](http://www.jamieramsay.net). This will be the home of all new blogs and details of everything I will be doing over the next few months.

And if that is not enough I will be speaking at the Telegraph Outdoor Adventure and Travel show on Friday, 12<sup>th</sup> of February – Check out here for details - <http://telegraphoutdoorshow.co.uk/>

In March, it is the annual National Adventure Awards and I am really excited to be nominated for 4 awards – Adventurer of the Year, Charity, Physical Endeavour and Inspiring Others. There is also a Public Vote awards and if you think I deserve it then you can vote by click the following link - <http://www.scottishadventureawards.com/the-public-vote/>



## A couple of short tales from the road:



**Crossing the Atacama:** When I first started running from Vancouver back in 2014, I was not going to be running across the world's driest non polar desert – The Atacama. It sounds slightly odd but I could get my head round running 17,000km but the idea of running across that particular desert seemed a little daunting. This all changed when I met Nacho in Nicaragua. He was walking around the world and had crossed a section of the Atacama. Meeting someone that had crossed it immediately filled me with the confidence to undertake this extra challenge. Indeed, it was at that time that the Atacama and Andes crossings were to become my main focus for the rest of the expedition. Having two such huge challenges at the end of the expedition allowed me to view all the obstacles prior to them as mere training. Every time it would get difficult I would tell myself "if you can't overcome this small obstacle how are you going to manage to conquer the Atacama or Andes." It allowed me to train myself not to give up.

When I thought of the Atacama Desert I thought of vast open expanses of nothing, wild conditions and daily challenges. I worried about lack of water and provisions and daily struggles. And I dreamed of the feeling of achievement when I got to the other side. Well, all of the above came true. The vast open expanses did not come as much of a shock as I had been running in deserts for nearly 3 months solidly and by the time I got to the official Atacama I was a bit of a desert pro. What really hit me was the wind and lack of shelter. The daily temperatures were in the mid to high 30's which made running thirsty work but what made things a little more awkward was the wind. Nearly every day the winds would pick up just as I wanted to set up my tent. After running 50-60km under the desert sun, trying to pitch a tent in strong winds was less than amusing!

But to experience the beauty of the Atacama I would have endured so much more. Running south from Arica in northern Chile to Calama was breath taking. The large expanses of sand disappeared as far as the eye could see. But the desert is not just sand, every once in a while there would be a little oasis of green where people had set up villages. Northern Chile had once been a thriving mining area (and still is in some areas) and all along the highway are old mining villages, deserted mines and cemeteries. I keep finding myself taking sneaky looks on Google maps and it honestly makes feel sad not to be running through this amazing landscape anymore.

For me the Atacama ended in San Pedro de Atacama, a wonderful village nestled at the bottom of the Andes just before the crossing to Argentina. This quaint little town is surrounded with the most dramatic rock formations and scenes that look like something from Mars. It was here that I prepared for the next section of my expedition – The Andes.





**Crossing the Andes:** This was to be my second excursion into the Andes following my time in Ecuador. In Ecuador I ran to about 3800m and had the most amazing experience. I ran passed Cotopaxi, an active stratovolcano, which had just erupted, I ran passed Chimborazo, whose peak is the furthest point from the earth's centre. I camped at the top of the mountains in the freezing cold and experience wonderful hospitality. The Andes in Ecuador are very different from those on the Argentinian/Chile border. As I stood at the bottom looking up all I could see was high peaks, a winding road and not much else. The crossing I was going to take would peak at 4830m, higher than anywhere in the whole of Europe, and it would be about 160km to the border crossing and 260km to the next "proper" town.

This was one part of the expedition that I was going to have to get my logistics sorted. I needed to have water and food calculated correctly and ensure I could finish each day in a place suitable to camping. To help with water I enlisted the services of a local tour company that ran tours to the salt flats in the mountains. They agreed to transport water to me the next morning so I could run with 6kg less of weight on the first day which also happened to be the longest climb. I also needed to buy a few new items of clothes. In the Atacama it was about 35-40 degrees, in the mountains it would be about 30 during the day but at night it would be about minus 10. The wind also meant that all this was exaggerated!

San Pedro sits at about 2500m and the first day of running would take me up to about 4200m. The run was hard but the views rewarding. I had wanted to make it to the top in one go but my legs couldn't quite handle the strain. While I didn't feel it too badly it must be noted that when running at 4000m the lack of oxygen does become a factor! My first night camping was pretty comfortable but I did wake the next morning to find my cup of water frozen in my tent!

Day two and three were the most amazing days for scenery. There were large expanses of desert with high hills skirting around the edges. Salt flats with their crusty white salt could be seen in the distance and tour buses would be darting back and forth. Being the only runner on this stretch of road made me even more of a tourist attraction than normal and buses would pull over to chat which gave me perfect excuses to take lots of rests. All the tour guides said that they had never heard of anyone running across these mountains. The main source of entertainment came from the Vicunas (Llama-esque animals) that would be grazing at the side of the road then bolt to safety when they saw me.

Weather wise, wind was the biggest factor. I had been warned that the wind would be bad but had no way of working out exactly how it would affect me. As per usual I had hoped and prayed it would be in my favour and just set off into the unknown. Luckily = the wind was mostly in my favour and quite often made the run even more



enjoyable as it propelled me along the long straight roads. But if you deviated from it being at your back it was a nightmare, blowing my feet into each other and causing the stroller to stray all over the road.

The border crossing to Argentina was pretty straightforward and on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of November I entered my last country – Argentina. To me it felt like I had crossed the Andes at this point but in reality I was still over 4000m and over the next few days I would slowly start my descent to Buenos Aires (over 1500km away). Was the Andes everything I had hoped – yes and more!

My description here may make the crossing sound quite simple and that is because I have such great memories. But believe me it was a tough experience and that is why I think it will go down as one of my favourite sections of my whole expedition. The easy bits are fun but it's the challenging parts that make you proud of what you have achieved.



**Arriving in Buenos Aires:** This was obviously something I had been dreaming about for such a long time. It was the one thing that drove me on each day. During conversations with my girlfriend and best friend at my sister wedding I had set my finish date as 31 December – New Year's Eve. This meant I had to average a marathon every day (That's over 173 marathons!) for six months without a single day of rest. Obviously I would be able to engineer it to take the odd day of rest here and there but it was a hard challenge. There were so many points along the route that I thought this was unachievable but every time I spoke to my girlfriend I would blindly assure her that I would make it even though every time I spoke to her it was becoming less and less likely. But somehow I dug deep every day and when I could I would run a 60+km day to make up the deficit.

So on the 29<sup>th</sup> of December when I arrived in the outskirts of Buenos Aires I was overcome with relief that I was actually going to make it and had somehow managed to get there a whole day early. The night before arriving at the Casa Rosada in Buenos Aires I was only 25km away from the finish and I had till 4pm in the afternoon to achieve it. I could not believe that I was actually going to have to do some time wasting on my last day. Instead of running the most direct route into town I actually looked up some local sights and planned a few sightseeing stops. The Cementerio de Chacarita is wonderful!

The final dash through the streets of Buenos Aires was exhilarating despite having to navigate round a maze of one way streets while dodging some of the worst drivers in South America. I knew my girlfriend was going to be waiting and this spurred me on. I had also received an email from some travellers I had met in Quito and again in San Pedro who were also going to be there. (They are pictured above).

To be honest it was a weird feeling as I ran into the Plaza de Mayo and reached the finish line. The life I had enjoyed and thrived in for the last 16 and a half months was at an end. My mini cheering group did a great job of



making it special with banners flying that made local tourists stop and take photos unaware of what I had achieved. There was a journalist there to interview me and once that was done we all looked at each other and decided to go for a burger. The expedition was over... well almost, there was one more run to do....



**Arriving in London:** The idea to run into London started off as just a fun way to finish the expedition as it gave the end a fitting British finale. But when CALM heard about it they set in motion a project to make it a much larger affair and I am so grateful to them for doing so. They enlisted the help from Hanover Communications, Media Intelligence Partners, The Octopus Foundation and volunteers to help make it special.

The plan was simple. I would fly from Buenos Aires to Heathrow Terminal 5, get through customs and run to the centre of London. And that is exactly what I did. After a 12-hour flight with no sleep, I got off the plane, was met by Jane, the founder of CALM, and made my way to the lounge to recharge before my last run. At Terminal 5 I also met up with my family and a few runners, including my brother and brother-in-law, friends and supporters. We all dressed up in our CALM running tops and set off towards central London. Our first hurdle was getting out of Heathrow which proved to be a little harder than it really should have been but very shortly we were in stride and making good progress. In Chiswick we were met by a few more runners and as we got closer to the Hyde Park Corner more and more people had joined our merry band. We arrived at Hyde Park Corner to find an amazing number of people who had made the trip to meet me at the finish but more excitingly to join for the final stage. After a brief pause to gather everyone together we hit the road in a large group with everyone in high spirits. We ran down Constitution Hill, along The Mall, passed Horse Guards and into Parliament Square.

I was blown away by how many friends and family had made the trip into London to share the finish with me. People I had not seen for years were all there clapping and cheering, my parents were on hand with champagne and nibbles and the atmosphere was electric. While it all passed so quickly and was a bit of a blur it was the most amazing way to finish such an exciting and fulfilling chapter of my life!

**A Big Thank You** – It would be naive of me to think I could write one paragraph and come anywhere close to being able to thank all the people who played a part in making this expedition a reality. I am going to have to work out a different way to do that but in the meantime I would like to just say a quick thank you to those who supported me from beginning to end, to my Dad for his awesome website and always being at the end of telephone, to Octopus for flying me home, to all my kit suppliers for everything you did for me, to all the people who donated to

my charities or contributed to my costs, to everyone who gave me food or a roof over my head... the list literally goes on and on... I am indebted to you all!

**The Beard Transformation:**





# If you haven't already please give to my chosen charities and help make my run make a difference

- Suicide is the biggest killer of men under 50 in the UK and 78% of all suicide victims are male
- There are an estimated 2.5 million people in the UK today (2015) who have had a cancer diagnosis.
- Over 500,000 children die every year from diarrhoea caused by unsafe water and poor sanitation. That's over 1,400 children a day.

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## The Final stage:

The last section of the expedition took me from Arica, Chile, to the finish line in Buenos Aires. Below I have included the map, an elevation graph and a few stats.



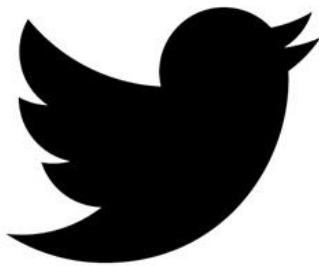
Minimum Altitude	3.43m
Maximum Altitude	4830m
Total Ascent	11,982.7m
Total Descent	11,983.04m
Total KM	c2661km
Running Days	50
Running Day Average	54km

Thank you to the companies that have helped me on different stages throughout the expedition:



To find out what products I was using go to: <http://jamieisrunning.com/companies-that-have-assisted-me/>

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THANK YOU EVERYONE FOR YOUR SUPPORT

And, as usual, sorry for typos and grammatical errors