

THE "JAMIE BRUNNING" NEWSLETTER

23rd October – 23rd November 2014



Welcome to the third instalment of my newsletter which follows my progress from Los Angeles to Guerro Negro, half way down the Baja peninsula. More importantly it marks the end of stage one of my expedition – Phew! When I first settled on this route the sheer distance was overwhelming and there were so many variables that could have influenced the outcome and still can. I decided to break down the total distance into three stages to make it easier for me to get my head round. It also allowed me an achievable target to focus on and, in my mind, would be a minimum of success. If I made it across America then I might just have gone some way to abating this constant need to run and explore – of course that's not the case but it was a nice thought. When I got to the Mexican border it was as if the expedition was just about to begin, America was behind me and my mind was set of the next target – La Paz (Mexico).

When I sent the last newsletter I had just arrived in the hectic, movie world of Los Angeles and as I write this I am sitting in a small cafe drinking very bad coffee (no Starbucks here) with Mexican music videos blasting from the television. I am now on the Baja peninsula and while the picture I have just painted may not sound appealing I have fallen in love with this part of the world. It is the blend of beautiful scenery and amazing people that makes this part of the world so special. But having said that I miss the US. The US was very kind to me and I have so many great memories that will live with me forever and again these are memories of generosity and kindness.

It is the continuing theme of generosity and kindness that makes this trip so amazing. Ever since day one when a group of waitresses clubbed together to make a donation right through to drivers leaving bottles of water on the side of the road in Baja these acts continue. I am aware that running along the side of the road in a bright yellow t-shirt while pushing a stroller is not normal and attracts disproportionate amounts of attention but it is really refreshing to see so many people going out of their way to help. It makes me think about all the times we could all be a little more open to helping those around us. It's amazing how just a little makes such a difference.

Anyway, back to the expedition. As I got closer to the Mexican border more Americans warned me of the dangers that lay ahead. It seemed certain from everyone I spoke to that I was going to fall foul to some kind of evil as soon as I stepped on Mexican soil. I am so glad to report that is not the case. There has not been one moment in Mexico when I have felt threatened or scared. Everyone I have met has wanted to do nothing but help me in any way they can. It is such a shame that Mexico has this reputation in the US and I only hope that people actually take the time to visit Baja at least. Everyone is super chilled and super nice.

It is amazing how quickly things change when you cross a border. In America everything is clean and convenience is a priority, evident by drive-thru banks, Starbucks, pharmacies etc. As soon as you enter Mexico the streets become more hectic, street food becomes more available and things we take for granted become a little more difficult to come by. It is one of the things I love about travelling. The one thing I would like more of is showers - In America I was strangely excited to go a few days without a shower, in Mexico it is becoming the norm to wake up and be repelled by my own body odour. This is not because people are less hygienic here but because I am not staying in campsites with showers but at the moment I am finding restaurants and sleeping behind them after eating! The long hair and beard seemed such a great idea when I started but now they act as barometers of how dirty I am becoming!

The eagle eyed amongst you will have noticed a slight change in my route. Originally I was going to be heading east through Mazatlán and south down the mainland. However, I took advice from people and running down Baja was going to be safer and more scenic. As I am not trying to break records or anything like that then I don't feel too bad. My Dad did a comparison and the difference is only a few km.

My diet had been a topic of discussion in blogs and emails and while I honestly do want to be healthy it is very difficult here. When you stop at roadside eateries the choice is burritos, tacos, Coca Cola and an amazing range of biscuits. After running a marathon in the heat while pushing about 25kg, it is hard to resist the temptation to indulge. So far it hasn't affected my running so I am not going to make any drastic changes just yet but it is something I will need to monitor.

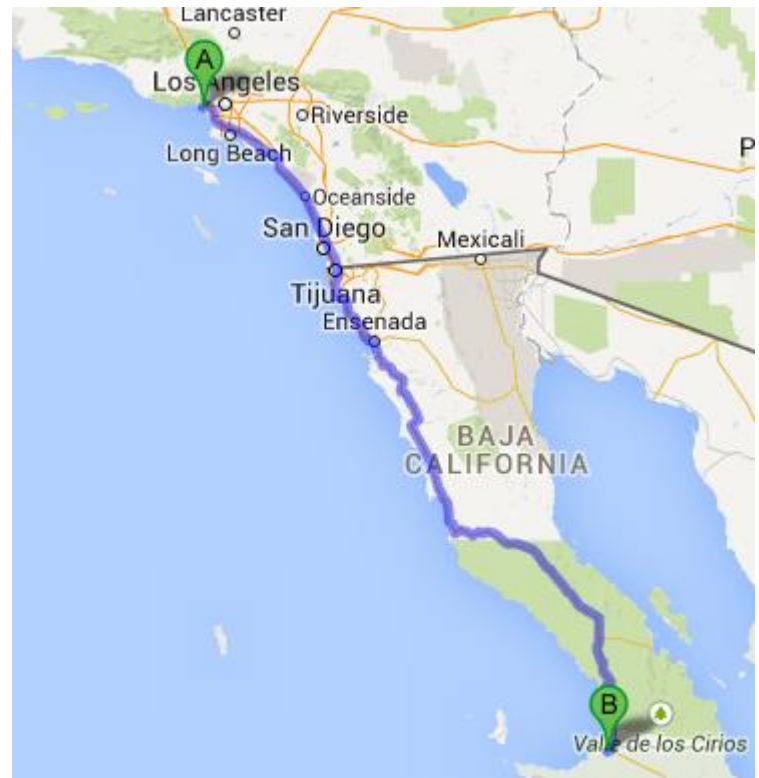
Have I had any injury worries? Not really but there is the potential of trouble ahead. When I was in the US I bought a new pair of trainers thinking they might last me to La Paz, just over 1000km south. The truth is my Adidas Response trainers have lasted 3 weeks or 680km and are in pieces! I have another 800km to go and unless I manage to find a solution I may start to suffer from some sore joints. The muscles in my right hip/thigh are starting to throb so fingers crossed a solution is found.

The Route:

This part of my expedition started in Santa Monica, Los Angeles and followed the coast south through Long Beach, Laguna Beach, Carlsbad, San Diego. I crossed the border into Mexico at Tijuana and then again followed the coast to Playas de Rosarito, Ensenada, El Rosario, Catavina ending up in Guerro Negro.

A Few Stats:

- Distance run in this 31 day period edition: c.1000km
- Total distance covered in 101 day period: c.3500km
- Longest day: 70km
- Daily average: 43.3km (excluding days off)
- Total days off: 20
- Longest time without a shower: 6 days and 280km
- New addiction – Hot Cakes!



A few events from along the route

Once again there are just so many different events and occasions that would qualify for inclusion but I have to be selective and pick just a few, so here goes.

Event 1: Valle de Los Cirios – If you read my blog you will know that I have slightly fallen in love with the Valle de los Cirios on the Baja peninsula. I loved America so much but was always looking forward to the more remote

parts of this expedition and Baja provided the first real feeling of Indiana Jones style adventure where the food, water and shelter would become unknowns.

The scenery has blown me away. During the course of a week the landscape changed dramatically on a near daily basis. There was desert, prairie, rolling hills, old sea beds and mountains. Due to the recent hurricanes in the area everything was even more green than normal and the flowers were out in force. The only down side being that with greenery comes flies – lots of flies!!!

Water was something that I needed to factor in everyday and while I have the capacity to carry up to 15 litres the idea of pushing an extra 15kg was less than appealing. Luckily the generosity of the Mexican (and American) drivers helped me deal with this as they continuously stop and ask if I needed anything.

During this week of adventure I also got to experience all kinds of accommodation from fine hotels to secluded cabins and a whole host of campsites.



Beautiful Cacti and Cirios trees on the Baja Peninsular

Event 2: Baja 1000 – I first heard of the Baja 1000 when I was in Ensenada and the thought of a 1275 miles motocross and off-road truck race was too much to miss. The only problem was that I needed to do six days of at least marathon distance without a break to make it to El Rosario in time to watch the event. Always up for a challenge I stocked up with food and raced down the coast, needless to say I made it on time.

Due to the race, accommodation was tricky to come by in El Rosario. Luckily I met the owner of the Baja Cactus just days before and he had kindly offered me a bed (if available) or a safe place to camp. With a place to sleep guaranteed I headed for the main viewing point, bought a couple of beers and found my spot to watch.

Sadly I had missed the motocross bikes but while I was waiting for the trucks to arrive I managed to get one of the pit teams to give my tyres a quick burst of air...

When the trucks arrived the atmosphere changed and everyone whooped and clapped as they came screaming down the short stretch of road before ducking back into the desert. It was really great to be in El Rosario on the night of the biggest sporting event of the year. Luckily my Spanish was at a level where I was able to chat with some of the locals which made the evening all the more enjoyable – Thank you [Michel Thomas](#).

Event 3: Surfing lesson – I planned the route of this expedition so that it followed the coastline wherever possible. There were many reasons for this including the scenery, the temperature and the friendly people but also because I wanted to learn to surf even if just a little. Sadly it took me all the way to Mexico to actually get in the water and give it a go. While staying at the Surf Dudes hostel at KM 59 (south of Tijuana) I seized the chance to have a lesson and at 7am I was all wet suited up with a massive Nurf board. If I was trying to look as cool as all the surfers we see in films then I failed dismally!!

We headed down to the sea and after a few tips on the beach we headed into the ocean. While to an experienced surfer the waves were pathetic, to me they were monsters. After a few attempts it became apparent that I was better on the bigger waves. I may not be able to call myself a surfer I did manage to stand on the board and even if it was only for a few seconds it still counts. James, my instructor, was very good and not once in the lesson did he use a patronising tone and I think he was impressed with my attacking style. I just hope there are lots of other occasions on the way south.



Event 4: USS Midway – Having never been on an aircraft carrier I thought I would take the opportunity in San Diego. Everyone who knows me well will know about my love of Topgun. On this trip I have managed to see a Tomcat, have run passed Miramar (sort of) and being on an aircraft carrier was the next step. Having visited a few museums in the US I have to admit they do it well and the prices are not extortionate for what you get. As with Alcatraz, the USS Midway comes with an audio tour included and even though I tried I couldn't get through all the tracks in the time I had allocated. Once again you are left to wonder around at your own free will and at no time do you feel you are being crowded or hurried. You can sit in cockpits, lie in the bunk beds and learn how to tie knots. One of the highlights for me was being able to watch Topgun in one of the flight prep rooms.

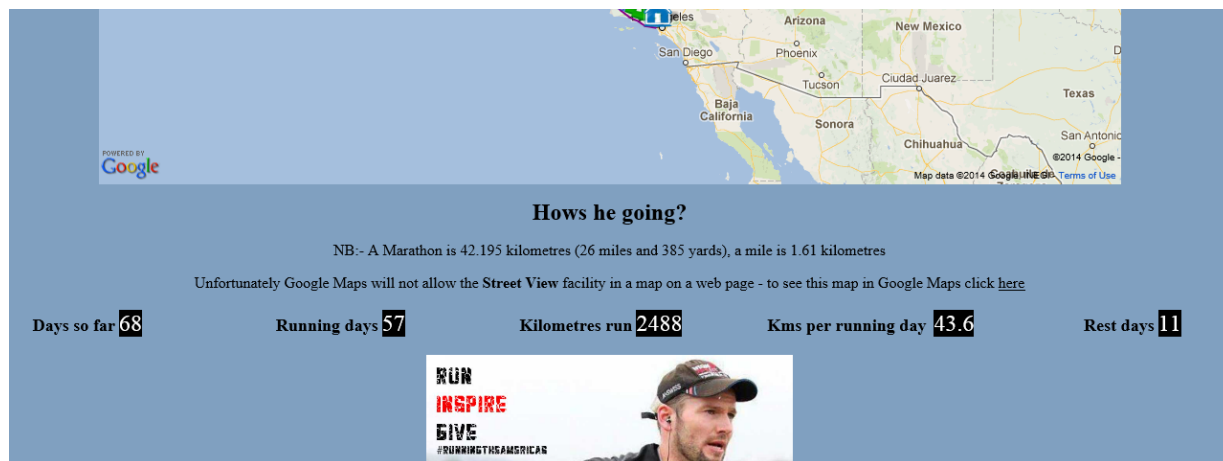
Life on an aircraft carrier seemed to be one that was hard for all those on board but one that everyone who had served felt proud about. Being used to the open road I am not sure I could have survived the long tours at sea, but it was great to experience it nonetheless.



USS Midway – Closest I will get to Topgun

Reminder about my Dad's webpage:

As you know my father is tracking my expedition and has created a website where you can see where I have been. We are devising new enhancements so keep an eye on it. Please check it out by clicking [HERE](#)



Acts of kindness:

The thing that has been the most amazing part of this trip is the number of people who have gone out of their way to make my life that little bit easier. These include, and this is by no means definitive:

- Dom – Dom is a friend from university and when he found out I was coming through LA offered to help in any way he could. He may have regretted that when he became my LA postal address. Thank you so much for getting everything to me and taking me out for lunch
- Justin - This guy has been amazing from the moment I met him and continues to be a legend. Justin is an introduction from my friend Jon who I met in Fernbridge and has been a massive supporter of my trip – Another legend! Jon put us in touch and we first met for (birthday) beers in Ocean Beach, San Diego. Since then he has sorted out places to stay, given me recommendations of place to visit, taken me out for a night in Ensenada and acted as a post office for supplies. If that wasn't enough he organised a supply drop of new equipment on the Baja Peninsula. Completely indebted to this man (picture below)
- Kimberly – Kimberly was someone I met through Matt who I met in the Redwood Forest. Without knowing me she acted as yet another postal address and gave me an excellent tour round the craft beer pubs of San Diego. To add to this she organised somewhere for me to stay in Tijuana, Mexico.
- Matthew – Matthew is the chap who I stayed with in Tijuana. Having only met me very briefly in San Diego he took me in and looked after me on my first day in Mexico. It wasn't just a bed for the night... Matthew gave me an amazing tour of the bars in Tijuana including the red light district and the transvestite community! Matthew is also a journalist and after my departure he put pen to paper and wrote the following article: Click [here](#)
- Hop – My friend Rachel was coincidentally visiting LA at the same time as I was passing through and as luck would have it she had managed to find a place for me to crash in Long Beach. After a brief run through the Port of LA, not the most beautiful part of my expedition, I met Rachel and her friend Hop in a bar. After a couple of glasses of wine and some fantastic pizza we ventured back to her apartment. I have stayed in places with amazing views but that from the 31st floor of an apparent block certainly rivals them. The next morning we all ventured out for brunch and I got to learn more about Hop. She is a remarkable woman who has done so much in her life and you need to meet to appreciate all her stories. Thank you for looking after me Hop, you will be getting emails with questions about Central America.
- The Patchens – I never actually met the Patchens but unknown to them they let me stay in their cabin just outside Catavina. I was very fortunate to have met a few people while at breakfast and once they had heard what I was doing offered to make sure I had somewhere comfortable to sleep. The cabin was set in a secluded spot away from the road and with the most amazing views. The cabin itself was simple with a bed, chair, bookcase and table. To add to that it also had an outdoor loo with the most amazing view. This cabin seems to be open to lots of people to use on a first come first served basis and includes Graham Macintosh, an explorer and author. This was a perfect place for me to relax and reflect on my trip and while there I managed to compile a list of everything I had done on this trip – wow I have been spoilt!

- The Van Overs – Fiona and I were at Pony Club Camp together and we haven't seen each other for about 15 years. When she heard I was running down the coast she very kindly offered to look after me for a night. They were amazing hosts and within minutes of being in their home I had a beer in my hand and had been pointed to the shower (hopefully not because I smelt!). We spent a lovely evening reminiscing about the past and jogging memories. The next morning everyone mucked in and helped with maintenance of my stroller and sleep map and then I was back on the road with cereal bars and M&Ms tucked into my bag!
- Antonio – While I was on my mad dash to El Rosario I stopped for a night at a farm shop called Rancho Buenos Aires. Here I met Antonio and I am so glad I did. We got talking and it transpired that he owned a hotel in El Rosario and he said that if I made it that far and needed a place to stay then just to ask at reception and say he had sent me. When I made it to the Baja Cactus (highly recommended) it was fully booked due to the Baja 1000. However I met with Antonio and he said I could camp in the secure car park and the next night I could have a room. And sure as anything the next night I was in a nice comfortable bed after a hot shower. Antonio is another remarkable chap. He has a not for profit organisation that runs the local ambulance and fire engine and if that's not enough he also organises activities for the local children. It was a shame the Baja 1000 was in full swing as it meant I didn't get much time to speak to him.
- The Rangers at Crystal Cove – On this particular day I had run just over a marathon and arrived at the campground just after dark. When I made it to the registration booth it transpired that there was no hiker biker sites and the plots were \$50 – slightly out of my budget. Rather than just turning me away the rangers tried to find a way to accommodate me and in the end they put their hands in own pockets and paid for a site for me. A real act of generosity guys – thank you!
- Allyson – Allyson is the daughter of Ben and Paula who I met in San Simeon. We had been in touch via email and she had kindly offered to help when I made it south to Carlsbad. I had no idea that I would be treated to a night in a Hilton Hotel. An amazingly generous gift. Thank you Allyson!
- Tassia and Evan – This brave couple offered me a place to stay in San Diego without ever having met me and only hearing about me from Ben. I arrived to a lovely hot shower and a beautiful home cooked meal. If that was not enough Tassia and Evan came down to Ocean Beach on my birthday and brought a ridiculous amount of protein bars, equipment and cupcakes!!
- A few nameless ones:
 - The family who stopped and gave me a huge bottle of water just outside El Rosario
 - The chap who placed water bottles on the road in the Valle de Los Cirios – I hope they were for me!
 - The man who gave me money in Catavina to tide me over till Guerro Negro – I made it!
 - The camp host at San Clemente who let me camp on his plot – check out his book [here](#)



Justin and I sinking some beers on my birthday in Ocean Beach

TV interview:

When I was in San Diego I was lucky enough to do a TV interview – you can watch it [here](#)

A Quick Beard Update:

As many of you know I am trying not to cut my beard while on this expedition. Here is the latest on its progress:



Some photos from the road:



A typical camping scene



My card on the wall of fame in a restaurant in Neuvo El Rosarito, Baja



A loo/toilet in San Augustin, Baja California



One of the days when I had three punctures all at the same time!!



The consequence of not looking where you are going!



Gives a good idea of just how remote I am!



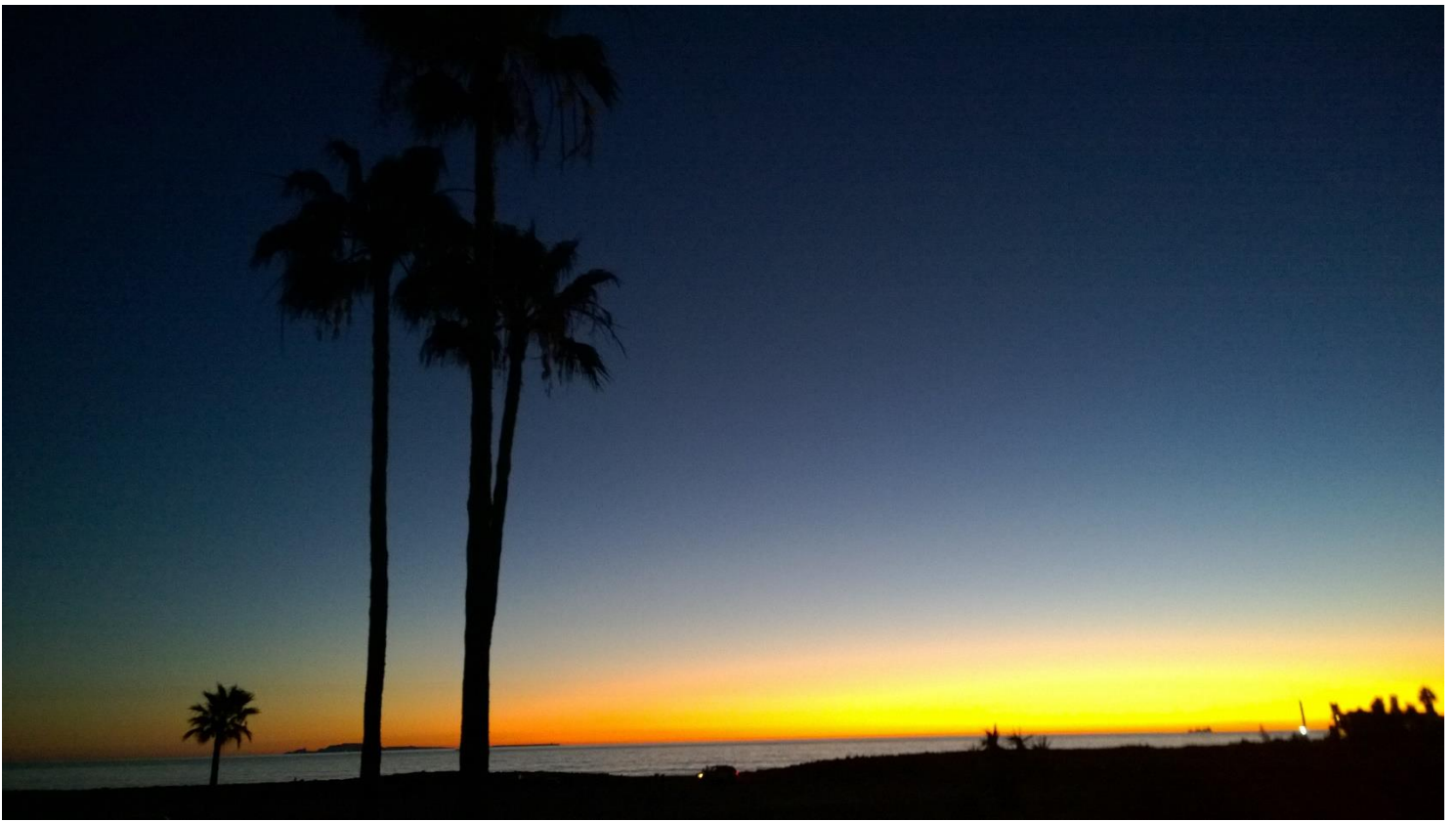
One of my favourite views so far – reminds me of Star Wars



The proud chef



They do like a selfie down here – here is just one at random!



The view in San Miguel, Ensenada



Enjoying a night in my hammock



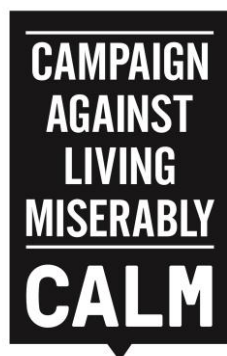
This is a GOOD SIGN – a good energy movement which is breaking down invisible barriers – one good sign at a time! – check it out [here](#)

To see more visit my Microsoft OneDrive photo page by clicking [here](#)

Charities:

There is obviously a serious aspect to this trip and that is to raise money and awareness for the charities I have chosen. So far we have together raised about £7000 for all the charities. While this may not all show up on the Justgiving page it is sitting in a paypal account. As stated on my website a small proportion of monies may be used to help fund the cost of the expedition. I am pleased to say that at this time it is looking increasingly likely that none of the monies will be used for this and will all go to charity. Thank you for all your donations so far. Hopefully by the end of the expedition we will have got closer to the £20,000 I would like to raise.

Click on the logos for a reminder of the charities:



To donate please click [here](#)

Thank you to my sponsors:

I'd also like to thank all those who are making my trip possible by providing equipment and support. Thank you for your patience in dealing with my requests. Your involvement is key to me getting through each day.

[Rollei](#) – For the amazing video cameras that help me capture this expedition. I've just received the [7s](#) and really excited about using it

[Powertraveller](#) – For providing me with all the power I could possible use through my [SolarGorilla](#), [PowerGorilla](#) and [SpiderMonkey](#)

[OverBoard](#) – For keeping everything I have dry all the time.

Microsoft/Nokia – For my [Lumia 1020](#). All my photos have been taken with this phone...

[Force Ten](#) – I love my [tent](#) and my [sleeping bag](#). I spend so much time in both that to have the best is very important. I want one of their new [rucksacks](#) that are released next year. They look awesome!!!

[Trangia](#) – We all lovingly remember the [Trangia stove](#) and no matter what new cooking set ups come along nothing beats one of these!

[Rudy Project Sunglasses](#) – I think this was the first bit of kit I received and despite being an idiot and scratching them on day one I still wear them every day – even when it's raining (but as a hairband!)

Where you can follow:

- I am trying to update my blog as often as possible: www.jamieisrunning.com
- Photos can be found [here](#)
- Video can be found at www.youtube.com/jamieisrunning
- GPS tracking can be found [here](#)
- I am on [Twitter](#), Instagram and [Facebook](#) with the name jamieisrunning

THANK YOU EVERYONE FOR YOUR CONTINUED SUPPORT

And sorry for typos and grammatical errors – I am always very tired when I write this and my blog!