

THE "JAMIE BRUNNING" NEWSLETTER

28th December – 31 JANUARY 2015



Welcome to the fifth instalment of my newsletter. We left off with me motoring across the Sea of Cortez on the Andante, excited about getting back onto the road and running again. The trip on Andante was an amazing break from the road and included secluded beaches, angry seas, catching fish to make fresh ceviche/tacos and exploring islands with deserted research centres. It was an adventure and I was so fortunate to be able to do this trip with two amazingly kind and generous people – Kevin and Zac. Despite there being no running during these few days it will remain one of the highlights of my trip. While a lot of fun was had by all there was a more serious part to this journey and it is something I want to share as it has such a profound connection to one of the charities that I am looking to help – CALM (Campaign Against Living Miserably).

Getting from Baja to the mainland was always going to be a challenge. There are the obvious modes of transport such as ferries and planes but they didn't hold the sense of adventure that I am trying to seek on this expedition. On my second day in Mexico I met a chap call Roberto and he very kindly gave me somewhere to hang my hammock and tips for how best to travel through Mexico. One of these was to visit the Marina in La Paz and hitch a lift to the mainland on a private boat. This immediately grabbed my adventurous side and became my firm intention. When I arrived in La Paz I asked around and found out how best to make this happen. It transpired that I had to visit the marina each morning, join the local boating community radio broadcast, advertise myself and then wait for a response. I talked about my adventure and the charities involved and hoped and prayed someone was going to be making the crossing soon. On my second morning Kevin came forward and introduced himself. I am not going to bore you with the specifics apart from to say that he very kindly agreed to escort me to the mainland.

Kevin is a commanding chap (at least 6 foot 3" and all muscle) from Seattle and with his son Zac (24 and also huge) they had motored down to La Paz over the same time period that it had taken me to run! While Zac was soon to return home Kevin was aiming to settle in Puerto Vallarta for a few months while he decided what he wanted from life. Kevin is a remarkable man with so many stories to tell. He held a senior position in the Seattle fire service, started a coffee franchise, learnt how to fly (and for a time owned his own plane) and had qualifications for pretty much everything. However, there was one thing that you wouldn't immediately know when you met him and that was in December 2013 things all got too much for him and he got to a place where he thought suicide was the only option available. While this is obviously a very personal thing for Kevin he has said he is happy for

me to share the story because he has "nothing to hide or be ashamed of. [He is] proud of what [he has] done in life, and got these "scars" in a very admirable way. The more people know, the more it is real and the more they may learn or listen."

Kevin's job in the fire service was intense to say the least and submitted him to things that I can't even fathom how one deals with. His team was present at 9/11 and they had the horrendous task of burying the firefighters who lost their lives during that tragic time. On a day to day basis he was on standby to take care of countless calls from people who needed his help and expertise just to survive. He has literally dedicated his life to helping people. When he talked about his time in the fire service he referred to it as a way of life, a family, more than just a job. So when he turned and asked for help you can imagine his utter disappointment at being pushed away. After everything he had done and given he looked for help and support but that could not have been further from what he received. Instead he was put under review and everything he had worked for was in jeopardy.

We never got to the nitty gritty of what actually happened in December 2013 but when Kevin made his call for help there was no one there and that amazed me. It seemed that the very organisation, or family as he referred to it, that he had given so much to merely turned its back on him. It was as if the powers that be were ashamed despite the fact that Kevin actually received calls from fellow workers giving him support and in some cases sharing their own struggles.

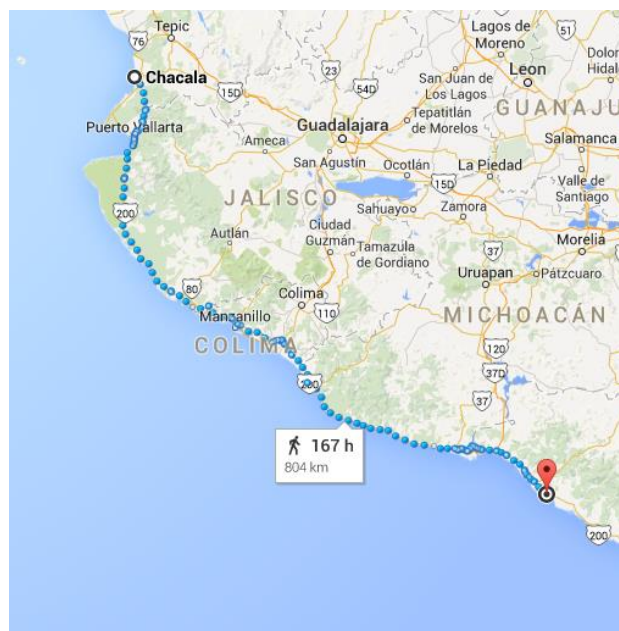
Being perceived to be strong is one of the big obstacles that needs to be confronted in dealing with male depression and suicide. There is a perception that as a man you should not be susceptible to weakness. While this needs to be addressed on a global scale it is worrying that organisations who employ and support so many people who are in "authority" positions don't appear to be able to give the necessary support needed to assist those who need it most. I don't have the statistics to hand it is not surprising that people I have met along this journey all immediately link male suicides to bankers, police, fire fighters, doctors and soldiers. If these organisations could openly engage then just maybe people may pay a little more attention to something that is so obviously greater than we are aware. While we can count those who sadly take their lives there are an unknown number of people, both men and women, who need support and hopefully together we can help make that a reality. Read more about CALM at www.thecalmzone.net

The Route:

This section of my expedition started in Chacala on the mainland of Mexico and has seen me run south to Petatlan. Nearly all of my running has been on Highway 200 and I have passed through Puerto Vallarta, Manzanillo, Lazaro Cardenas and Zihuatanejo. In contrast to largely flat Baja this section has been very up and down and that is reflected in the number of km I have managed to cover. It is not just the hills that have been a killer, it's the heat and humidity. All that said it has been a very beautiful and rewarding section.

A Few Stats:

- Distance run in this 33 day period edition: c.840km
- Total distance covered in 167 day period: c.5213km
- Longest day: 70km
- Daily average: 42.4km (excluding days off)
- Total days off: 45
- Longest time without a shower: remains 6 days and 280km
- New addiction – coconuts



A few events from along the route

There are literally so many different events and scenarios that would qualify for inclusion but I have to be selective and pick just a few, so here goes.

Event 1: Isla Isabel – My trip across the Sea of Cortez is not just a highlight for this period but for the whole expedition. Rather than sum up the whole trip and not do it justice I am going to pick one of my favourite experiences. Isla Isabel is often described as the Galapagos of Mexico and as someone who has been fortunate to have visited the real Galapagos I can confirm that this little island definitely deserves the comparison. Originally we were only going to visit the island for one afternoon and then continue to Puerto Vallarta. However, it only took one snorkelling trip to change our minds!

There was small chance we were never going to get to experience Isla Isabel. On our approach there was a lot of chatter on the radio about the swell and the poor anchorage etc. A couple of the boats ahead of us actually changed course and sailed by. We decided to take our chances and check it out for ourselves and thank god we did. The anchorage was tight and there was a little swell but with about 40m visibility it didn't take long to plant our anchor on a nice patch of sand.

With everything ship shape and in order we all grabbed our snorkels and set off to explore the underwater world. The visibility was amazing and the array of fish just phenomenal including sea snakes and Moray Eels. When we got back to the boat we all decided that we had to give this island more time and within moments it was agreed we would stay the night and explore the island the next morning before leaving for Puerto Vallarta.

The next morning we all jumped in the tender and made our way to the island. There were two landing areas on the island. The first was where the local fisherman had set up camp and the second was on a beach below a disused research centre. We opted for the latter. Our first call was to explore the research centre. The building had not been used for its original purpose for some time but the local fisherman had adapted it to a kitchen and shower room. There were also some new tenants including iguanas and roosting Frigate birds. If ever anything was going to feel like a scene from Jurassic park then this was it. After snooping around for a while we set off on one of the trails that headed to the lighthouse. It was staggering how many birds and reptiles were around and how they didn't seem to mind our presence. The stars of the show were the Blue Footed Boobies and Frigate Birds.

We could have spent a lot longer here but unfortunately our schedule meant that we had to continue our journey. A beautiful place and so worth the detour to visit.



Blue-footed Boobies

Event 2: New Challenges – Running through America and Baja now seems a breeze compared to running on the Mexican mainland. The conditions here are so much harder and with that bring a number of new challenges. The coastline here is very up and down and with a 30kg+ stroller that can get quite tiring. The heat is oppressive and after 10am it can become unbearable. It is also humid which means that everything you are wearing is dripping in sweat as soon as you start and once it is wet it is not going to get dry until they are washed. This means that every morning the same wet kit is pulled on and sadly damp kit equals smelly kit. But these new challenges make sure that there is no monotony. I have to constantly adapt how I am doing things, alter my routine and it tests me mentally. All these new challenges also mean that the downtime is much more appreciated and enjoyed.



Relaxing on Punta Perula

Event 3: The Turtle Release – Earlier in the month I ran passed a turtle sanctuary without stopping. I regretted this and kept kicking myself for passing up an opportunity to stop in and see what goes on. So when another sign pointed to a sanctuary I made sure that I popped in to investigate. I met with Hector and he explained that I could camp for 50pesos and if I wanted I could help work with the local volunteers for an extra 33pesos. Needless to say the decision was a quick one. No much goes on in the day because it is too hot and dangerous for baby turtles. When the night rolled round I was introduced to the team and without much direction set up my post in the main sanctuary. The basic principal is that the volunteers collect the turtle eggs and then bury them in a protected zone. Then each night they set up a bright light above a collecting container and wait for the turtles to hatch and collect round the light. Once they have the turtles they then record the numbers and release them into the ocean.

Nothing much happened for the first three hours and I sat eagle eyed starring into the darkness. At 1am nothing had happened and my companion decided that he was going to leave without any words of instruction. My first thought was that there weren't going to be any turtles on this particular evening. Just as the disappointment started to set in there was a movement in the darkness and then a little turtle emerged making a desperate dash for the light. Then there were two, then ten and then a constant stream of turtles. The first wave contained about 70 turtles and by the end of the night we had about 200 ready for release. We made our way to the Pacific Ocean and let the little babies free while constantly making sure the hungry birds that were swarming were denied an easy meal.

On our way back to the camp we stumbled across a huge turtle that had pulled itself out of the ocean and was in the process of laying the next generation of turtle eggs. All in all it was a highly exciting and rewarding evening. Two hours sleep may not have been the best preparation for what turned out to be a 45km run the next day but it was worth it.



Little turtle dudes

Scenery



The sunset at the turtle sanctuary



The beautiful Playa Sola where I hung my hammock and ate lobster



The beautiful Mexican coast. Earlier this day I stood on the opposite headland!!

A focus on a sponsor – Force Ten, Trangia and Vango

For an expedition of this scale and uncertainty it is essential that you cover some pretty important basics or it would be a short-lived adventure. This includes somewhere to sleep, something to sleep in/on and something to cook on! I was very fortunate to get the support of AMG Group and through their brands ([Force Ten](#), [Trangia](#) and [Vango](#)) managed to not only cover all these essentials in one go but also get some of the best kit available. I am not going to run through everything because due to their generosity it would just take too long but I would like to focus on a few main products that are essential to my expedition.

[Nitrolite 2+ tent](#) – My tent is essentially my home for the 18 months that this expedition is expected to last. I needed a tent that was going to be light enough to push around, compact enough not to take up too much room, spacious enough not to be constrictive and durable enough to last a lot of use in some pretty rough conditions. The Nitrolite fulfils all these criteria to perfection and has given me the shelter I need. I can erect the tent in a matter of minutes and without any fuss and importantly can pack it away in no time at all. At some campsites when other campers have abandoned their tents due to bad weather I have been snug (or smug!) and dry in mine. The added bonus of this tent is the porch area at the entrance which is the perfect size to fit my running stroller and gives me added security when camping.



[Trangia stove](#) – Cooking is obviously very important especially when you need to eat as many calories as I do on a daily basis. There are many options on the market but if you want a compact all in one kitchen then there really is only the Trangia. I remember my older brother having one and using them at school. Charlie Boorman and Ewan McGregor also used one on their trips around the world and down through Africa. They are so well thought out and take no time to assemble and pack away. My favourite meal so far remains pasta, pesto, chili and tuna – sorry not very adventurous!



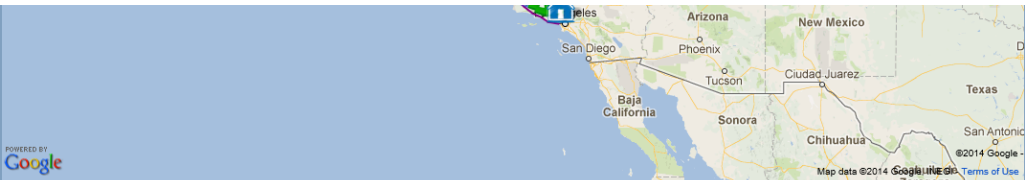
[Catalyst 250 sleeping bag](#) and [Aero Mat \(standard\)](#) – Getting a good night sleep is really important and with the shelter provided by the Nitrolite and the food prepared on the Trangia the last thing I need is a comfortable bed. The Catalyst sleeping bag is amazingly lightweight, soft and compact. No matter what the weather it has managed to keep me snug and warm each night and combined with the Aero Mat makes for a very comfortable evening no matter what the ground is like.

Other Vango kit – Rucksack (Alto 40), head torch, water bladder, water bottles, cutlery

Thank you to everyone at Force Ten, Trangia and Vango!!!

Reminder about dad's webpage:

Add text Please check it out by clicking [HERE](#)




POWERED BY Google

Hows he going?

NB:- A Marathon is 42.195 kilometres (26 miles and 385 yards), a mile is 1.61 kilometres

Unfortunately Google Maps will not allow the Street View facility in a map on a web page - to see this map in Google Maps click [here](#)

Days so far **68** Running days **57** Kilometres run **2488** Kms per running day **43.6** Rest days **11**



Map data ©2014 Google, Terms of Use

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:

- Kevin and Zac – I know I mentioned them in the last newsletter and above but just want to say thank you once again for everything you guys have done for me!!!
- Antonio from [Gambusino Resort](#) who look pity on weary traveller and let me stay in his beautiful hotel for free and even included all my food and drink! Amazing generosity.
- The owner of Los Mangos Restaurant in Boca de Tomatlan for locking up all my equipment and letting me tie my hammock up in your restaurant.
- The lady who let me sleep on the floor of her husband's garage. Nice to have a roof over my head.
- The friendly farmers in El Tuito who stocked me up with fruit.
- Francisco who let me camp behind his property in El Cumbe.
- Kevin from Joluta who let me camp next to his house and take a shower in his garden.

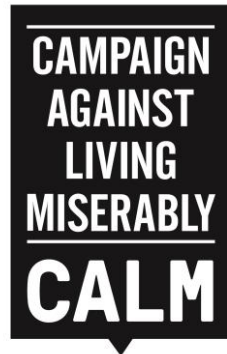


Sleeping on the floor of a mechanic's garage

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 over **£8500** for all the charities. 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

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:



Found this lady turtle laying eggs on the beach



El Tuito



The Turtle Sanctuary



A typical roadside lunch



A car covered in hats...



Frigate Birds on Isla Isabel



A wee lizard on Isla Isabel



Friendly Coppers!



Sleeping on Playa Sola



Goodbye faithful Adidas!!

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

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!

