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# AsiaTrail

Asia's first trail running magazine

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HKD 48

## MUST - DO

Ultras in Asia

# 20

Tips for trail  
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How to recover faster

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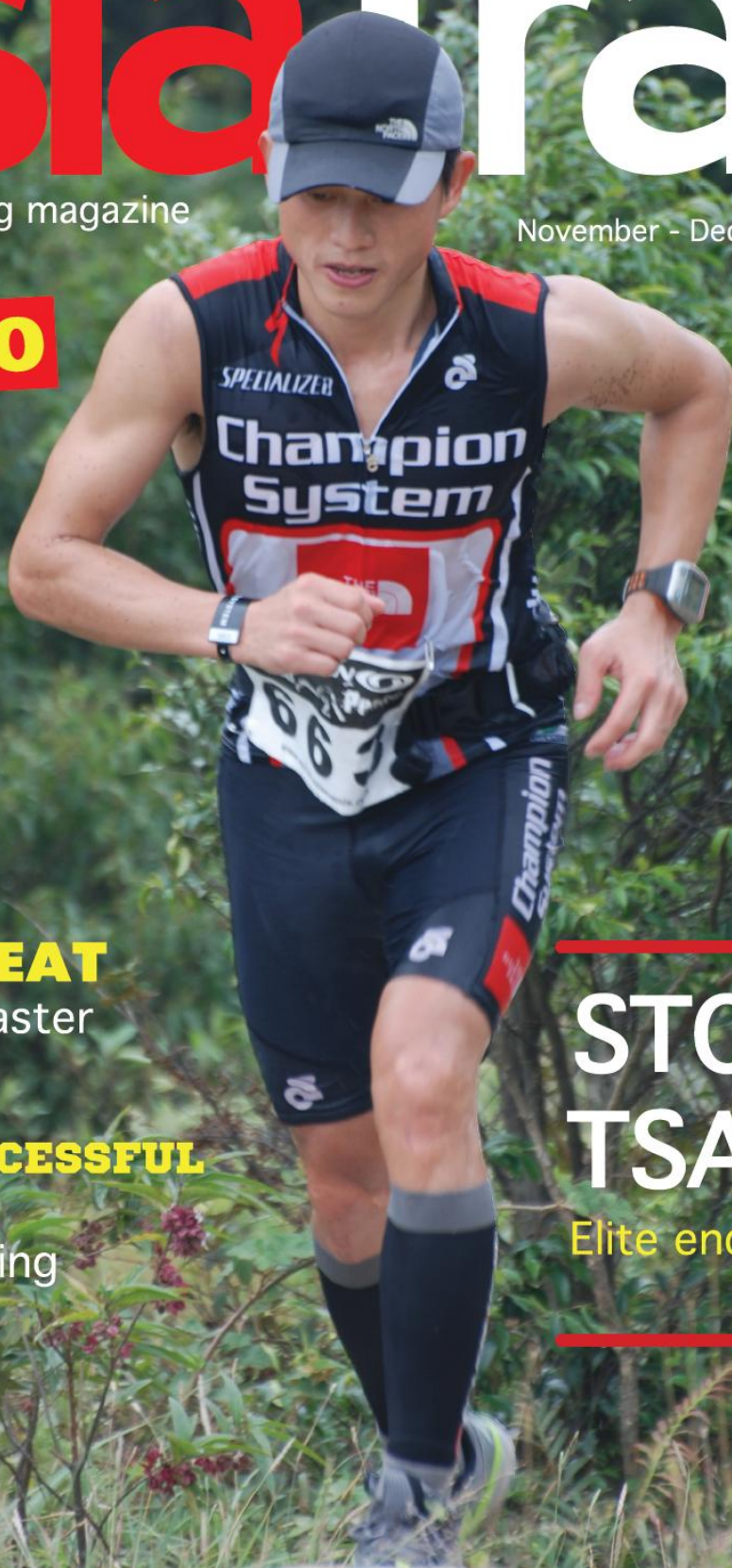
+ Tune your training

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From road to trail

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# ULTRAS IN ASIA

◀ HK100 Ham Tin and Sharp Peak . Photo: Janet Ng

Text: Andre Blumberg Table: Asia Trail contributors

Trail and ultra running has seen an exponential boom in popularity over the past couple of years on a global basis. Once having been on the mere fringes of endurance sports dominated by marathons or triathlons, ultra-trail running has come a long way, firmly establishing itself in its own right. While the history of the sport in the USA dates back around four decades with iconic events such as the Western States 100 Endurance Run, it has caught on in Asia-Pacific much later and initially mostly in Australia.

Over the course of three short years, the scene in Asia has literally exploded. New races are launched almost on a weekly basis. Most of them sell out, some within a matter of a few days with hundreds of eager applicants on a waiting list. In Hong Kong, during the October to April race season, there is hardly a weekend without an event. The Philippines counts over 40 ultras this calendar year, many on trail. Whether you live in Singapore, Malaysia, Vietnam, Indonesia, Thailand, China or Japan – there is at least one ultra-trail race available in your country to choose from. At the same time, there is a massive ultra travel boom, participants heading overseas with the sole purpose of racing. Distances grow longer as well, with 100 miles single-stage events being the new frontier. Who would have thought that the Philippines now sport their own version of the Grand Slam with four 100 milers, two on road and two on trail, that are to be completed within a short 4-month

season. New stores, both brick-and-mortar and online, appear in the region and cater to the trail runner's every needs. Blogs, online forums, Facebook timelines and Twitter feeds are abuzz.

The Asia-Pacific North Face 100 series has certainly been a trendsetter dating back five years for the initial countries. This year, the series is comprised of eight countries, the highest number yet, although strictly speaking the Japan event is shorter than the 100km (62 miles) distance. Although they share the same brand image, the individual events are as varied as the culture and customs of the countries that host them. When joining all five races on the TNF100 calendar back in 2011, I was surprised to learn that they don't share much more than the brand name of their title sponsor. In Taiwan for example, there were no aid stations. Instead each of the thirty odd runners had an organiser-provided dedicated motorbike with two support staff each to follow their runner along the course, mostly on roads and along highways, and to provide them with water, food and other supplies. In Australia, on the other hand, the Blue Mountain course, has outstanding views but is rather commercialized. In China, you will find course markings almost every 100m, while in Singapore and the Philippines, it's not uncommon to go off course due to the lack thereof. Each of the races is organised locally by a different company in a franchise fashion and it is quite apparent that there is little

sharing or standardisation – which of course is certainly a good thing. This year will see the long-awaited addition of the Hong Kong leg, which promises challenging terrain and the biggest cumulative elevation gain at over 6,000m (20,000ft) – quite the opposite of the relatively flattish cousins in Singapore and Thailand.

It's no longer just the top sports fashion brands that are the driving force behind races. Increasingly, accomplished trail and ultra runners themselves make race-directing their own agenda. Whether it's the Vibram Hong Kong 100km, the TransLantau 50/100km, the Clark-Miyamit 50km Philippines or the Vietnam Mountain Marathon 70km – the race directors of these "by runners for runners" events have a wealth of personal racing experiences gained in top international events like UTMB and Western States. They often incorporate what they have learned there, and that can only benefit the rapidly evolving ultra-trail scene in Asia.

What lies in the future is anyone's guess, but you don't need a crystal ball to see that at this stage, the boom in ultra-trail running in Asia is set to continue.

So which event to enter, given the broad array on offer? We have highlighted a few top regional events in the table to help with your selection. But of course, you may just decide to race them all.

## RACING

### Annapurna100, Nepal

### TNF100 Philippines

Information	<a href="http://www.annapurna100.com">www.annapurna100.com</a>	<a href="http://www.thrillofthetrail.ph">www.thrillofthetrail.ph</a>
Established in	2009	2009
Race date	1 March 2014	April 2014
Distance(s)	50km, 70km, 100km	50km, 100km
Elevation gain		5,200m for the 100km
Number of participants	125	300

Entry qualifications	Trail running experience recommended	Successful completion of at least a marathon, trail running experience recommended
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Qualifying event for	3 points UTMB	3 points UTMB
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#### Reason to join

A great way to race at the foot of the incredible Annapurna range with friendly organisers and a warm welcome from the local people. The race has a small field of international and local runners.

A no-frills race that is as hard as they can get over the 100km distance. After roving different course locations, the race is now set in the mountainous region around Baguio City. Steep, long climbs, tough descends, as well as the sweltering heat add to the challenge. Be mentally ready as the race director is known to "like it tough".

Mongolia Sunrise to Sunset. Photo Darko Todorovic

## THE BEST ULTRAS IN ASIA

### Ultra-Trail Mt. Fuji, Japan

[www.ultratrailmtfuji.com](http://www.ultratrailmtfuji.com)

2012

25-27 April 2014

84km, 161km

9,150m

1,200 (161km),  
1,800 (84km)

Point system similar to  
UTMB

4 points UTMB  
Western States 100  
Hardrock 100

Japanese hospitality on a loop course around the gorgeous Mt. Fuji. As the UTMB sister race, this is without a doubt the premier 100 miler in Asia. The organisation is flawless and witnessing the final finishers arrive just prior to the event closing ceremony makes for some very emotional ultra trail camaraderie.

### Vibram Hong Kong 100

[www.hk100-ultra.com](http://www.hk100-ultra.com)

2011

18-19 January 2014

100km

4,500m

1,200

Trail running experience  
recommended

3 points UTMB  
Western States 100

Explore Hong Kong's New Territories along the MacLehose trail and experience great aid station support by highly motivated scout volunteers. Reaching the peak of Tai Mo Shan, and overlooking the brightly lit Hong Kong is the reward before descending to the finish line.

### TransLantau, Hong Kong

[www.translantau.com](http://www.translantau.com)

2012

14-16 March 2014

15km, 50km, 100km

5,500m

1,400

Completion of a 100km (or  
50km in <12h)

3 points UTMB

Held on the mountainous island of Lantau, the TransLantau takes you through pristine natural environments, while going through popular tourist beaches, traditional Chinese fishing villages, popular Buddhist temples, and several of Hong Kong's tallest peaks. Over 95% of this beautiful course is on technical trails and include a steep elevation profile.

### The Most Beautiful Thing, Malaysia

[sabahadventurechallenge.com](http://sabahadventurechallenge.com)

2011

August 2014

50km, 100km

5,200m

900

Completion of a marathon,  
trail running experience  
recommended

3 points UTMB

Beautiful natural trails in Mt. Kinabalu National Park. Gorgeous sceneries with a river crossing. Dedicated organisers make this event to grow in popularity. A good reason to escape the hustle and bustle of the city life and travel to Sabah, and challenge yourself in sublime but demanding surroundings.

## RACING

### Information

Established in

Race date

Distance(s)

Elevation gain

Number of participants

Entry qualifications

Qualifying event for

Reason to join

### Mt Rinjani Ultra Trail, Indonesia

[www.mtrinjaniultra.com](http://www.mtrinjaniultra.com)

2013

9 August 2014

5km, 21km

5,600m

< 100

Trail experience strongly recommended

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Very steep, technical and exhausting race. Expect a mere 2,000m elevation gain over just 22km to reach the summit of the majestic and beastly Mt. Rinjani. Running in the Ring of Fire is a unique experience with an incredible sunrise on the volcano ascent. Extreme hardship, few people make it to the finish line as the cut-off times are rather tight and the overall difficulty of the course lead many to surrender. Local people constantly encourage the runners, smiling and offering mental support, which is more than needed.

### Mongolia Sunrise to Sunset

[www.ms2s.org](http://www.ms2s.org)

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6 August 2014

42km, 100km

3,365m

<100

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Located in the stunning Hovsgol National Park in Northern Mongolia this unique race is truly spectacular. Runners encounter diverse environments as they pass over mountains, through forest, along the lake shore and past the yurts of nomadic families. Established to support local environmental charities this relaxed and family friendly event has great camaraderie as participants enjoy a fun week camping together on the shores of Lake Hovsgol.

TM/MT: Photo Abdul Rahim