ATLAS OF RECORD-BREAKING ADVENTURES



WIDE EYED EDITIONS


North America
Central America
South America
Africa
Antarctica
WORLD MAP


Europe
Asia
Middle East
Australasia & Oceania
N
W
E
S

AFRICA

With 54 nations, Africa has the most countries of any continent on Earth. You'll have heard about Africa's record-breaking wildlife, from its huge elephants to its tall giraffes and super-speedy cheetahs. But you'll also find many other record-breakers, from natural marvels such as the world's biggest waterfall to lesser-known wonders like the largest mud building and the most enormous pink lake.



North Atlantic Ocean



South Atlantic Ocean

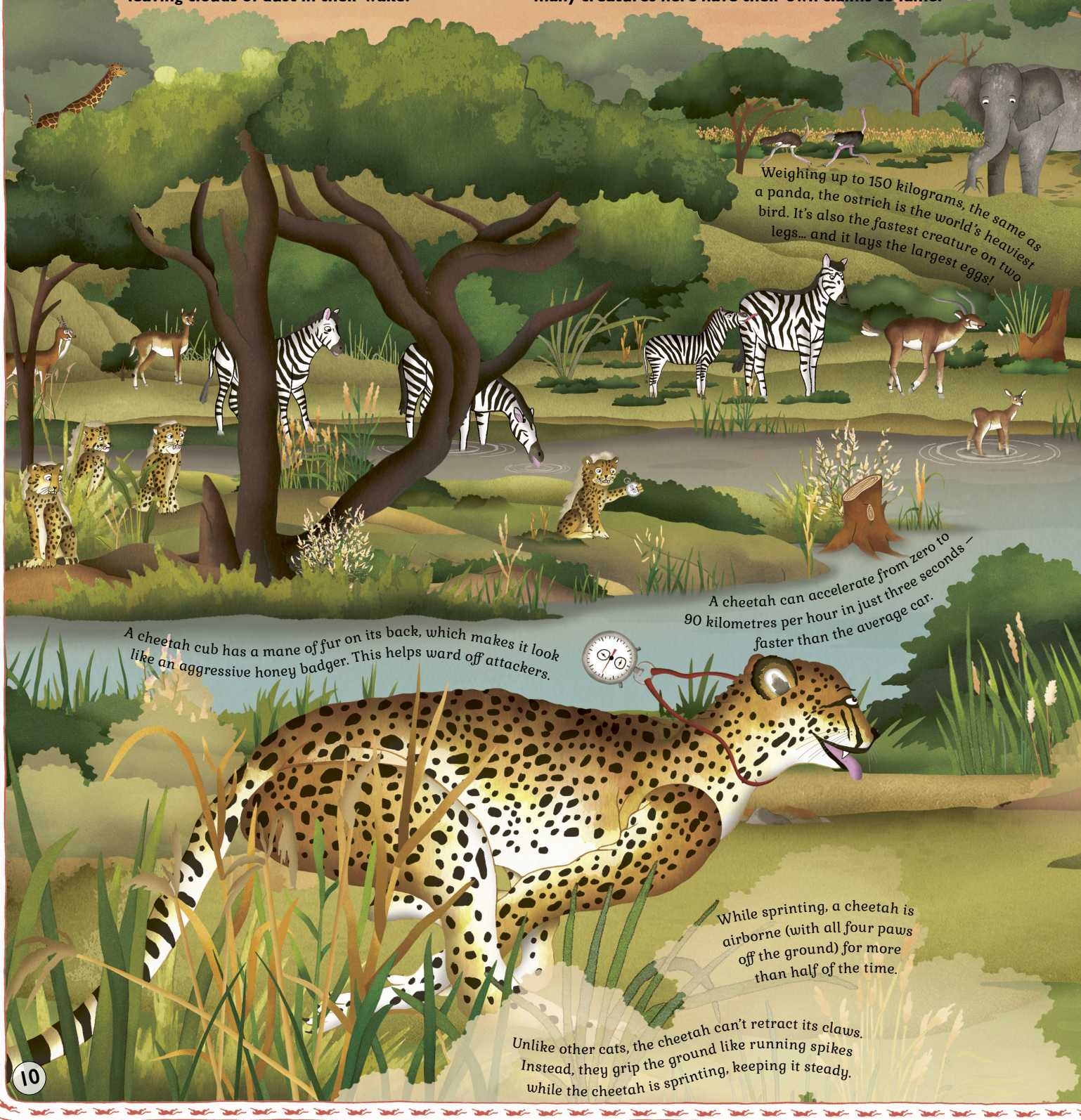

Tunisia
Survive the MOST EXTREME HUMAN ENDURANCE RUN (Marathon Des Sables, Morocco)
See the world's TALLEST PYRAMID (Pyramid of Khufu, Giza, Egypt)
Libya
Egypt
The Middle East
Algeria
Feel the heat in the BIGGEST HOT DESERT (The Sahara, North Africa)
Brave the HOTTEST PLACE On Earth (Danakil Desert, Ethiopia)
Eritrea
Arabian Sea
Niger
Sudan
Chad
Nigeria
South Sudan
Meet the world's LARGEST PRIMATE (Gorilla, Rwanda)
Central African Republic
Ethiopia
Somalia
Cameroon
Uganda
Kenya
Equatorial Guinea
Gabon
Congo
Rwanda
Burundi
Hold on tight along the WORLD'S DEEPEST RIVER (Congo River)
Look out for the LARGEST FRESHWATER MAMMAL (Hippo, Tanzania)
Seychelles
Tanzania
Democratic Republic of the Congo
Discover the world's LARGEST COBWEBS (Darwin's Bark Spider, Madagascar)
Don't upset the MOST SUCCESSFUL PREDATOR (African Hunting Dog, Zimbabwe)
Cool off at the world's BIGGEST WATERFALL (Victoria Falls, Zambia)
Angola
Comoros
Mayotte
Malawi
Zambia
Zimbabwe
Madagascar
Spot one of the BIGGEST BIRDS' NESTS (Social Weaver Birds, Namibia)
Race against the FASTEST LAND ANIMAL (Cheetah, Botswana)
Mauritius
Reunion
Namibia
Botswana
Mozambique
Swim with the MOST ENORMOUS FISH (Whale Shark, Mozambique)
Indian Ocean
Swaziland
Enter the world's LARGEST CYCLING RACE (Cape Town Cycle Tour, South Africa)
Cross the WIDEST METEORITE CRATER (Vredefort Crater, South Africa)
Climb the OLDEST MOUNTAIN RANGE (Makhonjwa Mountains, Swaziland)
South Africa

RACE AGAINST THE

FASTEST LAND ANIMAL, BOTSWANA

All is quiet on the savannah. Under the glare of the hot sun, antelopes and zebras cool off by the waterhole, their tails gently flicking the flies away. But suddenly, the creatures are startled by a flash of movement. A hungry cheetah bounds from her hiding place in the long grass, scattering a herd of impalas. The cheetah has a young impala in her sights, and the pair streak across the landscape, leaving clouds of dust in their wake.

The impala is fast, but the cheetah is faster. In fact, the cheetah is the fastest land animal on the planet, able to reach a top speed of 98 kilometres per hour: more than twice as fast as the quickest human sprinter. When a cheetah is running at full pelt, it can cover seven metres (or the length of an elephant) in a single stride. But the cheetah is not the only record breaker on the African savannah: many creatures here have their own claims to fame.



Weighing up to 150 kilograms, the same as a panda, the ostrich is the world's heaviest bird. It's also the fastest creature on two legs... and it lays the largest eggs!

A cheetah can accelerate from zero to 90 kilometres per hour in just three seconds – faster than the average car.

A cheetah cub has a mane of fur on its back, which makes it look like an aggressive honey badger. This helps ward off attackers.

While sprinting, a cheetah is airborne (with all four paws off the ground) for more than half of the time.

Unlike other cats, the cheetah can't retract its claws. Instead, they grip the ground like running spikes while the cheetah is sprinting, keeping it steady.

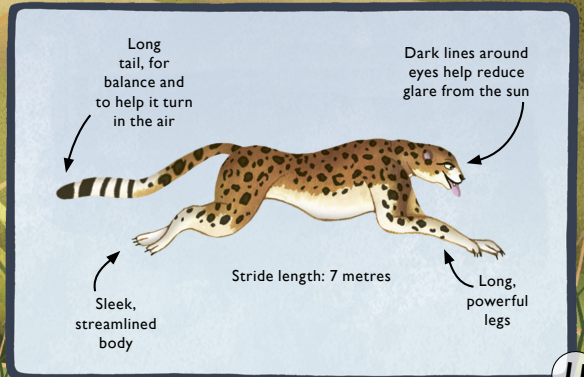
Giraffes are the tallest land animals on Earth, with males reaching a lofty 5.8 metres. And their black tongues are huge as well, at lengths of up to 50 centimetres.

The African elephant is the world's heaviest land animal, weighing in at six tonnes, which is about the same as three family cars.



At over a metre long, an elephant's ears are the largest on the planet. Also, with a two-metre trunk, it scoops the prize for the longest nose of any animal.

The cheetah's long tail whips from side to side as it zig-zags through the grass in pursuit of prey. This helps counterbalance the cat, so it doesn't topple over.



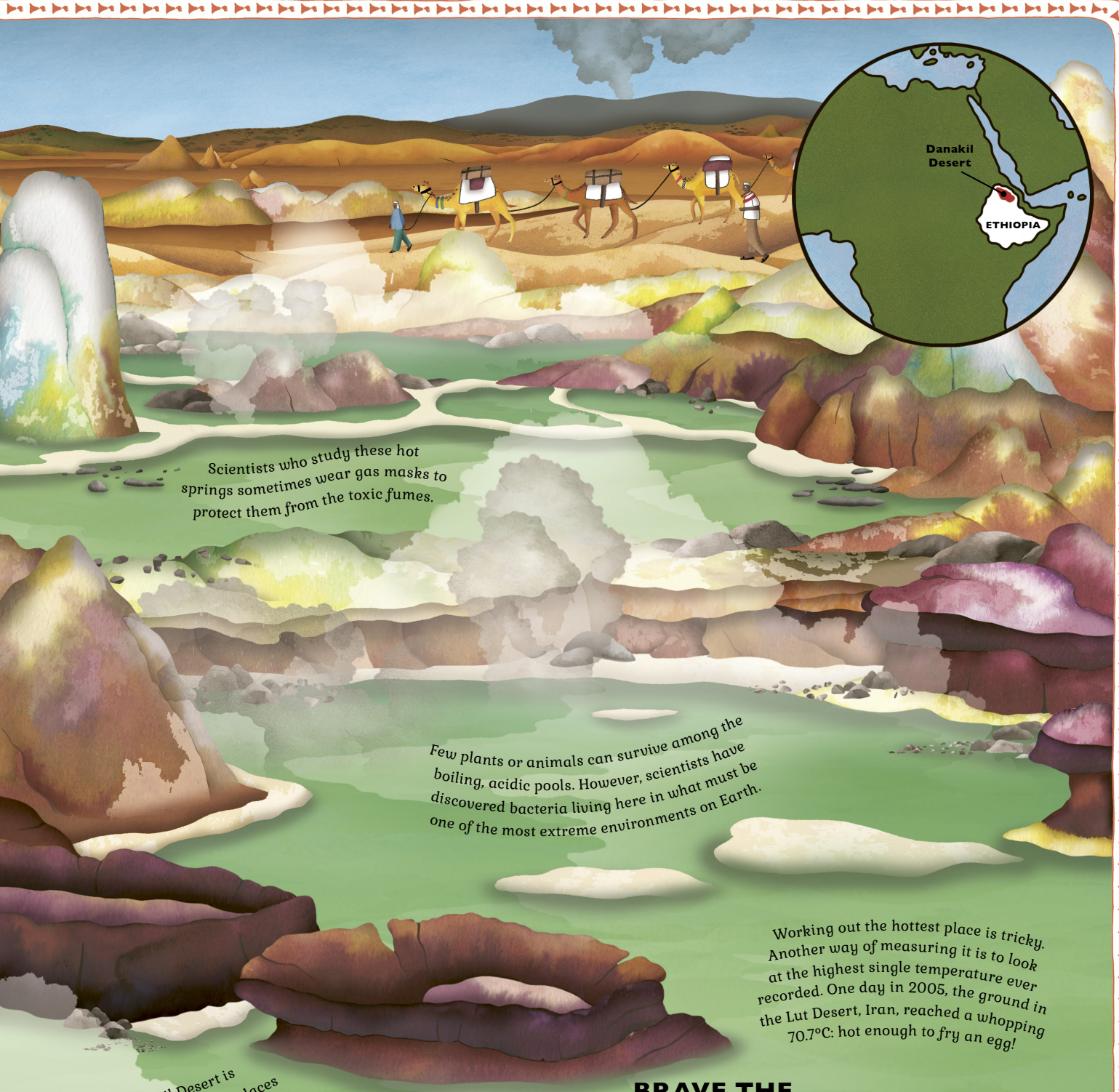
The hot springs are surrounded by miles of salt flats: plains of land covered in salt crystals, which gleam white under the baking sun.

The local Afar people mine salt from this dry landscape, and carry it across the desert using camels.

This area is home to the saltiest lake in the world. The Gaet'ale Pond is 43.3% salt: that's 12 times as salty as the ocean.

These crusty splodges of bright yellow, orange and green are made from minerals, such as sulphur and iron, that are brought to the surface by bubbling spring water.

There are several active volcanoes in the region. One, called Erta Ale, has two bubbling lava lakes at its summit.



Scientists who study these hot springs sometimes wear gas masks to protect them from the toxic fumes.

Few plants or animals can survive among the boiling, acidic pools. However, scientists have discovered bacteria living here in what must be one of the most extreme environments on Earth.

Working out the hottest place is tricky. Another way of measuring it is to look at the highest single temperature ever recorded. One day in 2005, the ground in the Lut Desert, Iran, reached a whopping 70.7°C: hot enough to fry an egg!

The Danakil Desert is not only one of the hottest places on Earth, it is one of the driest too, with almost no rainfall.

BRAVE THE

HOTTEST PLACE ON EARTH, ETHIOPIA

Nicknamed 'Hell on Earth' and a 'land of death', the Danakil Desert in north-east Ethiopia is not everyone's top choice for a holiday destination. The blistering sunshine and lack of rain make this scorching desert an uncomfortable spot to spend time in. It's the hottest place on Earth if you look at the average weather all year round. Here, temperatures normally hover around 34.4°C, but can soar to 55°C in summer.

Visiting Danakil is like arriving on another planet. It lies in an area of volcanic activity, so the landscape is strewn with bubbling lava lakes and neon rock formations. There are thermal springs here, but you wouldn't want to bathe in them: these bright-green pools are not only filled with acid, but are also scalding hot. Remember to pack your sunscreen, a hat and gallons of water... you're going to need them.



COOL OFF AT THE WORLD'S

BIGGEST WATERFALL, ZAMBIA

With a span of 1,700 metres and a drop of more than 100 metres, the Victoria Falls is the most enormous waterfall in the world. This spectacular curtain of water, whose spray can be seen from 20 kilometres away, is known as Mosi-oa-Tunya by the locals, which means 'the smoke that thunders'. These falls bridge two countries: the border between Zimbabwe and Zambia lies in the middle.

At the top of this natural wonder, just before the water plummets into the gaping canyon below, is the Devil's Swimming Pool. Believe it or not, when the water level is just right, brave swimmers can go for a dip here! Although it looks terrifying, there is a natural barrier of rock just below the surface, which stops people from being washed over the edge. The view from the brink into the gorge beneath is dizzying.

In 2014, two daredevils crossed the Victoria Falls on a three-centimetre wide slackline!

If you don't have a head for heights, don't look down!

You can only swim in the Devil's Pool with experienced guides, during the dry season (usually from September to December) when the water level isn't too high.

This waterfall breaks the record for being the world's largest sheet of falling water. Angel Falls in Venezuela is the world's highest waterfall, at 979 metres.

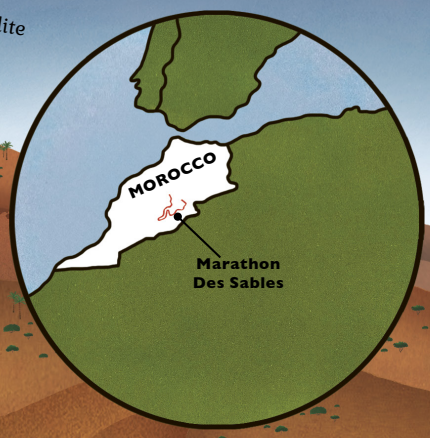
The drop from the top of the falls is taller than London's Big Ben clock tower, and spans over 17 football pitches in width.



In the rainy season, when the flow is strongest, almost 600,000 gallons – or an Olympic swimming pool of water – surges over the edge of the falls every two seconds!


Desert hat to protect against sun
Goggles in case of sandstorms
Neckerchief can be pulled over mouth to stop runners breathing in sand
Bottle holders
Gaiters to stop sand getting inside shoes
The Sahara Desert, which stretches across North Africa, is the largest hot desert in the world.
Runners are advised to wear extra-large trainers, because people's feet swell up in the heat.
The youngest competitor ever to take part was 16... the oldest was 78.
The marathon route varies from year to year. The longest stage, which is usually about 90 kilometres, can involve running through the night.
Runners have to carry everything they need excluding water, which is handed out along the route. Packs must contain emergency equipment, including an anti-venom pump for snakebites.

The support crew and kit are made up of 52 doctors, seven planes, six satellite phones, four quad bikes, two helicopters... and four camels.



The race is so exhausting that many participants walk most of the way, instead of running.

The most successful competitor ever is the Moroccan runner Lahcen Ahansal, who has won this event a record ten times.

In 1994, after a sandstorm along the route, an Italian athlete named Mauro Prosperi became lost in the desert for ten days. He survived by drinking cacti juice and the blood from a bat!

In 2019 a dog named Diggedy joined runners. He finished the race, covering more than 160 kilometres. He even battled through a sandstorm and was awarded a medal.

SURVIVE THE

MOST EXTREME HUMAN ENDURANCE RUN, MOROCCO

Imagine running an ultra-marathon, covering a total of 250 kilometres – or the equivalent of six standard marathons – in just six days. Now imagine doing it while carrying a heavy backpack, containing your food, clothes, a sleeping bag and cooking equipment. Now, imagine enduring all this in the Sahara Desert, in blazing 49°C heat! This is the challenge faced by competitors in the Marathon Des Sables, or Marathon of the Sands. This gruelling event is said to be the toughest race on Earth.

The Marathon Des Sables takes place in the southern Moroccan desert every year. The very first race was run in 1986, with just 23 competitors. These days, there are more than 1,000 participants, from all over the world. These tough athletes may have to face sandstorms, excruciating blisters, heatstroke, dehydration, venomous snakes and scorpions. This event pushes people to their limits – it takes huge amounts of determination and strength, both physical and mental, to reach the finish line



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