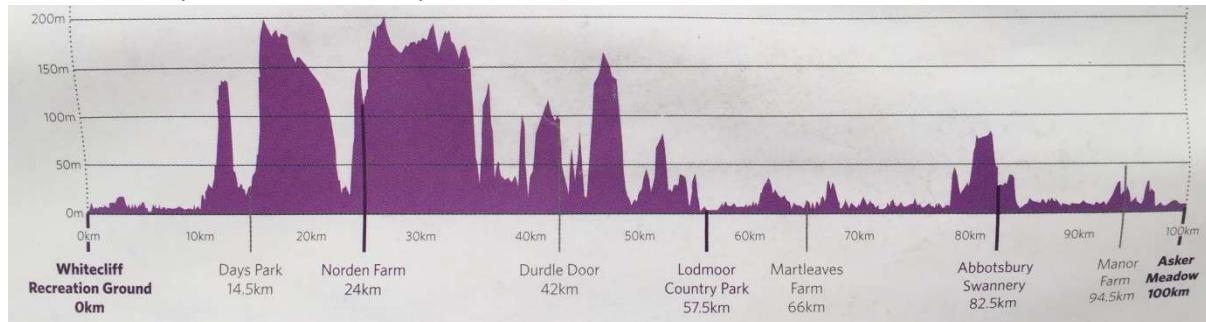


Jurassic Coast Challenge Review

by Anna Burns

The Jurassic Coast Challenge, organised by Action Challenge took place this weekend (21-22 July). It was their first ever event along this route and saw 2,200 walkers (including me) and 100 runners make their way from Poole to Bridport 100k later.



As well as choosing their pace, participants also choose what distance they would like to cover: the Full 100km continuous; the 100k as a 2 day challenge with camping overnight; the 1st Quarter; the 1st Half or the 2nd Half. In true Action Challenge style the first 'Half' of the event at 57.5km was lengthier than the second (42.5km), but this made it mentally and physically much easier for Full 100km continuous participants like me, to tackle the second section after a decent hot meal at their half way point. Each participant gets a timing chip and an event flyer which details the route elevation and the distance to each rest stop.



Action Challenge are REALLY GOOD at their rest stops! Several marquees, lots of tables and chairs (yes, you get a proper sit down and don't have to find space on the floor!), plenty of toilets so there's hardly ever any queuing, free hot drinks, canned drinks, fruit, pastries, pick n mix (yay!), baguettes at the quarter, hot food at the half and three quarter stops and a further hot meal provided at the end.

Their events cost a little more to enter but you certainly feel like you get your money's worth and are well looked after. As the Full 100k participants go through the night, glow sticks and reflective arm bands are provided and the way marked every few meters with glow sticks and arrows so you can't go wrong. For the overnight leg they send participants out in small groups every 15 mins and usually assign a Trek Master for that group just to make sure everyone is safe and happy.



The bulk of the cliffs were covered in the first half of the walk and although tackling them early on whilst we still had more energy and the daylight to admire the views (and mind out for the cliff edge!) was a good idea, it did mean that unlike other Action Challenge 100k events (e.g. London2Brighton, Thames Path), participants found that the first section took them several hours longer than they predicted. This then meant that rather than arriving at the midway point for their hot meal around dinner time, many arrived in the early hours of the morning (we arrived

at 2am). The heat was also very much against us this weekend making the climbs and descents much harder and the route offered little shade. Other challenges with the terrain were the earth being dry as a bone, cracked and uneven for much of the way round making it tough on the feet and ankles and after a route of 3k across Chesil Beach's shingles, oh and an earlier walk through Studland's nudist beach (!), we concluded that the planners had perhaps been too ambitious in trying to offer a route with something to suit everyone.

That said, with it being the first year they've tried this challenge, there's bound to be a certain amount of trial and error and the company will no doubt act on with participants' feedback to offer a improved route next year. For me walking the Purbeck Way, passing by Corfe Castle and the mighty ascent and descent of cliffs into Lulworth Cove were other unforgettable highlights of this walk. I would certainly recommend looking into Action Challenge and their unparalleled support if you aren't aware of the company but are considering running or walking a 100k or other endurance length.

