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Adventure Racing 101: What NOT To Do in AR

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Adventure Racing is a multi-sport race where teams of 4, 3, 2 or even 1 compete to find a series of 'check points' as quickly as possible. Every race is unique and the distances can range from 30K sprints to 500KM plus expedition races similar to the original 'Eco-Challenge'. Disciplines usually include mountain biking, trail running, trekking, paddling, ropes and a mystery event or two. All done with a map and compass.

The best part about Adventure Racing has to be the 'adventure'. This challenging sport takes you to amazing locations with 'breath-taking' scenery, pushes your body & mind to the outer limit and introduces you to excellent people along the way. Until you get your map before the race start you have no idea where you are going or what sort of adventures you will get up to.

Adventure Racing has a steep learning curve. Since my first race in 2002 I am sure I have made every mistake in the book. Now I teach new racers how to train and complete an AR - sharing my training tips and racing techniques. Learning what to do to prepare and race well is important. But learning what NOT to do seems to be more popular!

Here is my TOP 10 LIST of What NOT To Do in AR. And yes, I have done them all...more than once.

#10 Never Try Something New on Race Day

Practice the skills you need before the race to avoid going ass over tea-kettle! And, of course, never try new equipment or new food on race day! Your guts will thank you:)

#9 Don't Be Afraid of the Sleep Monster's

What are your sleep monsters? Ever gone without sleep for 24 hours or more? Ever done shift work? Sleep deprivation is part of expedition racing and something that can have dramatic effects on your race. Chickens or cats on the side of the road, lights in the distance, hallucinations...they aren't real so don't be afraid!

#8 Never Go Without Good Support

Longer races require a 'support crew' and these guys are just as much a part of the team as the racers are. Not only do they get your gear to you and serve up a steaming hot brew just when you need it...but they are there to give you a smile, a hug and the words of encouragement you need to keep on truckin. A good support crew is priceless in AR.

#7 Never Stop Moving

Adventure Racers learn to do things on the move. You eat on the move. You drink on the move. You navigate on the move. If one person on the team stops- you all stop.



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Group pee breaks are the norm. By continuing to put one foot in front of the other you will get closer and closer to the finish line (hopefully:)

#6 Don't Keep a Loose Kit

Not only do you have to make sure you get all of your mandatory gear to the race start (which could be 2 pages long). But you also have to ensure that you hold onto all your gear during the race itself. Lost passports, maps, water bottles, or any mandatory gear for that matter can cost you a race (and your pride:).

#5 Never Follow Other Racers

Seriously! You need to have navigation and orienteering skills to complete an AR. Following other racers is not a good strategy. If you are lost - chances are they are WAY more lost than you! Do your homework, plan your route and stick to your course.

#4 Don't Invite Your Friends 'Bonk & Wall'

Fueling for endurance sports is a science. Getting the right mix worked out in training and sticking to your plan during the race are key. Check out my ['fueling articles'](#) for more info.

Bonk - not a good guy to have on the team. Low blood sugar leads to dizziness, unco-ordination and poor decision making.

Wall- you don't want him around. Lead legs means you are OUT of muscle glycogen and you must stop. Do not pass 'go'. You are out of the game. Don't skimp out on your fuel plan!

#3 Don't Forget the First Word in 'Teamwork'

The best teams work together seamlessly to reach their common goal. They are good communicators, supportive of each other and they share the same goals. This is KEY to a happy team and a great experience regardless of outcome!

#2 Don't Take Yourself Too Seriously

AR is supposed to be FUN! Take in the scenery, including the unreal costumes that turn up in a race...Wonderwoman? Here I am trying to survive in my hi-tech streamline wicking gear...and Wonderwoman is hauling through the bush beside me. These are the real athletes!

#1 Never, Ever, Ever, Give Up!

Anything can happen in an AR...and usually does. Chances are if you have had some bad luck (flat tire, mechanical, wrong turn, lost map, injury, cramping...you name it!) other teams have as well. Just keep on moving towards the finish line and you may be suprised at how things turn out in the end!



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Sarah Seeds B.A. Kinesiology, is the owner of Equilibrium Lifestyle Management, based in the Comox Valley. ELM provides fitness and recreational services including injury rehabilitation, personal fitness training, fitness and lifestyle assessments, Fitness Bootcamp, ELM Women Only clinics and other Fitness Adventures. For more information please contact ELM at 338-8998 or check out www.elmhealth.com.

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