

Mexican journey a ‘moving’ experience for Kelowna runner

Dan Crockett and three other runners from the Okanagan run in the Copper Canyon Ultra, a 50-mile endurance event

- [WARREN HENDERSON](#)
- Mar. 28, 2012 4:00 p.m.
- [SPORTS](#)

Running 50 miles in scorching temperatures over mountainous terrain doesn't conjure up

positive thoughts for everyone.

But for Kelowna's Dan Crockett just such a journey turned out to be an unforgettable experience—socially, culturally and athletically.

Crockett, 65, and three other Okanagan runners—Chris Wilson, Ellen Boelcke and Ellis Andrews—recently returned from Mexico where they took part in the Copper Canyon Ultra.

Held in the Sierra Madre mountain range in the north central part of the country, the 50-mile endurance run features 10,000 feet of elevation, and was founded by Micah True, a caucasian known to the locals as Caballo Blanco (White Horse).

Everyone who takes part in the run is given food vouchers, a particularly welcome reward for the locals and indigenous peoples of the region, many of whom lead relatively primitive lives.

With the small village of Urique serving as home base, close to 500 runners took part in the run on March 4, including 80 from 16 different countries outside of Mexico.

The remainder of the participants were the indigenous peoples, called the Tarahumara, from throughout the massive Copper Canyon region, as well as the locals known as Raramuri.

"It was very moving being there, to see the Tarahumara come to town from all parts of the canyon the week before the race, very brightly dressed, wearing their loin cloths and sandals," said Crockett. "I had a hat, a water bottle, and running shoes for the run. They didn't have any of that and it was 90 degrees. It was amazing and humbling to watch them.

"The running was one thing, but it was so much about the culture of the area, and spending time with the locals."

As he does on all of his adventures, [Crockett](#) documented the Copper Canyon Ultra experience, both on video and with still photos.

Because of the time spent early in the run using his cameras, Crockett fell well back into the pack. Still, as competitive as he admits he can be, Crockett wasn't all that concerned with his positioning.

"When I got to the first aid station at 8 K, I was in about 330th place," said Crockett, a winner of several ultra runs, including the Fat Dog in 2010. "I've never felt so good about being so far back. It was just neat to be there."

Despite struggling with the oppressive heat over the last 30 kilometres, Crockett was able to meet his goal of finishing in under 10 hours—nine hours 57 minutes.

And while no official final standings are kept, Crockett suspects he placed about 50th among 180 finishers.

"All in all I was very happy," he said. "It was a wonderful experience. For me it used to be just about the run and only the result, but these need to be more meaningful for me now."

Crockett isn't certain of the destination of his next adventure, but is pondering a trip to Italy in 2013 for the Tor Des Geants, a 200-mile race over four days with 65,000 feet of elevation.