

REVIEW: *Black Diamond Ultra Distance Z-Pole*

BY MELISSA ROBERTSON

// PHOTOGRAPHY MELISSA ROBERTSON



PRICE: \$200 AUD plus shipping.

AVAILABLE ONLINE FROM VARIOUS RETAILERS

OUR RATING:

FOR USEFULNESS



FOR EASE OF USE



FOR PRICE



MY EXPERIENCE WITH USING RUNNING POLES HAS BEEN FAIRLY LIMITED TO THIS POINT AND I ALWAYS SAW THEM AS SOMETHING FOR OLDER RUNNERS OR RUNNERS WITH BAD KNEES. ESSENTIALLY I VIEWED THEM AS "SISSY STICKS", BUT MY OPINION CHANGED AFTER LAST YEARS BUFFALO STAMPEDE MARATHON. DURING THE RACE I LEARNED THAT SOMETIMES YOU NEED A LITTLE EXTRA SUPPORT WHEN COVERING ULTRA DISTANCES, SO I THOUGHT IT WAS TIME TO GET SOME POLES TO TRY OUT AHEAD OF MY NEXT TEST: THE 75KM BUFFALO STAMPEDE ULTRA SKYMARATHON.

The Black Diamond Ultra Distance Z-Pole hiking poles come in a variety of fixed lengths from 100 - 130cm and are ultra lightweight at only 280 - 294gms. The poles are held together by an inner cord, which can be easily tightened or loosened. The poles come folded in three pieces, which are locked together and can be quickly assembled by pulling on the top of the pole. This action easily pulls the cord through the centre of the poles and locks each of the pieces into place. It did take me a few training runs and watching a YouTube video with demonstrations to see how to do it as quickly and efficiently as possible, but I had it down to only a few seconds by race day.

To disassemble the poles all you have to do is click a quick release button at the top of the pole, which allows the cord to go slack and the three sections can then be folded up and clicked into place for storage. I had more trouble disassembling them than I did putting them together. I found the button quite small and hard to press while running, so while I put them away once in an early section of the race, later on I just left them assembled and ran with them in my hands. That wasn't as annoying as it sounds, as they are very lightweight and easy to run with even when not in use.

Carrying them folded in my pack was easy, the extra weight wasn't noticeable and as I was racing with a proper running pack it had straps and pockets specifically designed for storing running poles.

The best part was putting them to use. There was one extremely steep climb that I don't think I would have been able to do if it wasn't for the poles, I wasn't so much hiking up it as I was digging the poles in for leverage and dragging myself up. They were equally as useful on a few of the more treacherous downhills and I became an insect with 4 limbs on the ground rather than just 2.

I have to say I am now a fan of running poles. If the race is steep enough the Black Diamond Ultra Distance Z-Poles are the poles I would go for.

