

FIRST TIME RUNNERS TAKE ON: SIX FOOT TRACK MARATHON

BY MELISSA ROBERTSON // PHOTOGRAPHY COURTESY OF SUPERSPORT IMAGES



“THE RACE DOESN'T
START UNTIL YOU
CROSS THE RIVER”

THE SIX FOOT TRACK MARATHON IS ONE OF THE ICONIC EVENTS ON THE TRAIL RUNNING CALENDAR. TAKING PLACE ON THE 45KM SIX FOOT TRACK FROM THE EXPLORER'S TREE AT KATOOMBA TO CAVES HOUSE JENOLAN CAVES AND FEATURES 1600M OF ELEVATION GAIN. RUNNERS HAVE JUST 7 HOURS TO COMPLETE WHAT WOULD NORMALLY BE A 3-DAY HIKE.

Six Foot Track Marathon began as a race in 1984 with just 7 runners taking on the course, it has since grown substantially and now has a strict 900 runner limit and strict entry criteria that must be met before you can enter. Even with those conditions in place it sells out within minutes after registrations open each and every year. The fact that the course is very accessible, has no required gear and has frequent aid stations hosted by the NSW Rural Fire Service along the way makes it attractive to trail and roadrunners alike.

The course consists mostly of fire trail style tracks, with some single trail and can be entirely run (no mountain hiking), although you won't necessarily finish it faster if you do run the entire course than you would if you walked some sections.

A LEGENDARY COURSE

The course is the stuff of legends starting with a steep descent into Nellies Glen before taking a deceptively gentle course along access roads and single trails to Cox's River. As the saying goes "the race doesn't start until you cross the river" from here it's climbing with a couple of short reprieves all the way to the Pluviometer before more climbing, but a little gentler, along the Black Range up to Deviation. Once across the road the next few kilometres are undulating before a very steep final 3km descent to Caves House.

It's not a matter of if you will cramp on the Six Foot Track marathon, but rather when. Seeing a runner desperately stretching on the side of the course anywhere from the Pluviometer to Caves House is quite common. Part of the attraction of the race is knowing when to run and when to walk.

Multiple "The North Face 100" finisher, Jason Freney, took part in the Six Foot Track marathon for the first time in 2015 and hoped to complete it in under 5 hours. After an early holdup behind some slower runners down Nellies Glen the remainder of the course was smooth sailing until he took a fall about 2km from the finish line.

After brushing himself off Jason crossed the line in 5 hours and 9 seconds. Jason said, "I was stoked! This is one of the best, if not the best race I have ever ran. The atmosphere, the finish, the people, the drink stations. All top quality. I will be back for sure. I loved every minute."

Another experienced ultra runner and Tarawera podium finisher Denise Maguire also took on the Six Foot Track marathon for the first time in 2015 and said, "I didn't train specifically for Six Foot. I went into Six foot with no expectations, no aspirations, I didn't look at the course profile or at the times people had run it in the past, although I'd run parts of the track at different times, I was going into it blind."

Denise said she particularly loved the ending of the Six Foot Track marathon, as a self described "throw caution to the wind down hill runner" Denise said she loved running into the Jenolan Caves as the huge crowd cheered everyone on. Denise says, "[it] was the most sensational finish of any race I have done". Denise finished in 4 hours, 51 minutes and 26 seconds and says "I'll be back just for the atmosphere."

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION ON THE SIX FOOT TRACK MARATHON VISIT WWW.SIXFOOT.COM



MELISSA ROBERTSON

Melissa is an experienced runner and obstacle racer. She started competing in obstacle races in 2010 achieving multiple podium finishes and represented Australia in 2013 at the Spartan World Championships. Her primary focus is now on trail running and she is the female record holder of the GNW100.

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