

The hardcore four

The Shanghai Marathon – call that exercise? Pah!

Ironman China (April 2010)

Your mission – if you choose to accept it – is the full Ironman: swim 3.8km, bike 180km and run 42km. Did we mention the location? Haikou on Hainan Island. For the past 2 years it has been unseasonably hot (unseasonably hot for a tropical island...) making this the hottest race on record of any Ironman event. This. Is. Hardcore. You want some?

www.ironmanchina.com

The Great Wall Marathon (May 2010)

You hit a huge hill and run down the Wall for 10km and 2,500 steps: a thousand people around you, breathtaking surroundings; you're on top of the world. You then hit the valley for 20km and, just when you're starting to feel it, they send you back up those 2,500 steps of the Wall you will never want to see it again. Ever. Want to hit the wall yourself?

www.great-wall-marathon.com.cn

The Gobi March (June 2010)

Running 250km through the Gobi Desert in Xinjiang in 6 days, participants (mentalists?) carry all food, medical and clothing for the entire race, meaning backpacks weighing 7-16kg. Terrain includes river crossings, rocky terrain, gorges, mountains, donkey trails and long expanses of flat desert. Oh, and altitude reaching almost 10,000 feet. Want to join them next year?

www.4deserts.com/gobimarch

The Everest Marathon (November/December 2010)

You want to get high, so high? Check the *Guinness Book of Records* and you'll find this Nepalese event listed as the highest marathon in the world.

The start line is at Gorak Shep 5184m above sea level; the finish at the Sherpa town of Namche Bazaar at 3446m. The course rough mountain trails. Downhill? Boo hiss! Fear not, there are two steep uphill sections.

www.everestmarathon.org.uk

