



Atacama Desert Marathon

On July 1, 2008 I ran (hobbled, walked, and/or crawled) the Atacama Desert Marathon in Chile with 16 other hearty souls from the Andes Adventures Tours www.andesadventures.com

guided by Devy Reinstein. The start of the marathon was called Valley of Death. It should have been a sign for me that what was ahead was tough and then some. The path was guided by pink ribbons to help us decipher where we were going (hopefully a beer tent). I finished in 8:09:20 by my watch. We had some nice Chilean drivers at the end, and I remember babbling is it finito. I would like to add some views from my fellow marathoners and hikers (they thought they were going on a 7 mile hike but it was 12.5). “Lovely view, multi terrain, tunnel, and cave. Cold start and hot finish.” from Paul. “Lovely view, fantastic weather, smashing company...” Helen. “The marathon today was one of the most challenging trail runs that I’ve run, mostly because of the sand! The country was spectacular, especially the salty-covered hillsides and the stark peaks against the bright blue sky. The Valley of the Moon really did look like the moon, without a blade of grass or any indication of wildlife. ...Overall, this was a great marathon in a remote, stark environment,” Shelly Rush “My expectations were certainly surpassed- I originally expected “typical desert-like” scenery, but the views and landforms, were absolutely stunning. ...My favorite portions included the tunnel and the rocky canyon at the end of the race” “It never came. The scorching, blistering heat I expected never came. Instead, a cool breeze unexpectedly accompanied the ever present sunshine. Although a desert run, each step differed in height, obstacles, firmness, and texture. From the fabulous descent into the Valley of Death; through the 100 yard tunnel carved through a mountain originally built for cattle; the awesome surprises on this run never ceased. ... Finally, after scaling “The great Dune” of sand we wound our way through a labyrinth of a mini canyon that was spectacular with runs through caves and over salt. ...” Vince. ...For me, my music is the photography during my runs-certain songs I heard at certain times will bring back the memories when ever I hear them again....” Nancy. “The Atacama hike started very cold at sunrise with almost solid ice at the river crossings. We climbed up a dirt road through a landscape similar to some areas in Death Valley or Utah....” Barb and Dave Sholle
To summarize, the Atacama marathon was a day to remember, and I always will. Pam Penfield 50 state finisher and 4 continent finisher