



### WHAT IT TAKES TO...

## SEE NO LIMITS

A vision-impaired marathoner takes on the epically challenging Inca Trail.

→ **The Inca Trail** is one of the toughest 26-mile treks in the world. Because its steep climbs (as high as 13,780 feet) and treacherous descents are so physically demanding and often trigger altitude sickness, hikers usually take four days to cover the distance.

But Dan Berlin, a blind marathoner, wanted to do it in a single day. Local authorities said it couldn't be done. To which his friend and guide Charles Scott replied, "You have never met Dan Berlin." In October, Berlin and his guides reached the finish at the legendary

Machu Picchu 13 hours after they started. As far as anyone is aware, he is the first blind athlete to complete the trail in a straight shot.

The 45-year-old cofounder of a vanilla extract company in Fort Collins, Colorado, lost his vision at age 32 due to a condition called cone-rod retinal dystrophy. He took up running at 39 and has since completed 12 marathons, two half Ironman, and the 46-mile Rim-to-Rim-to-Rim crossing of the Grand Canyon. Here's what it took to accomplish his latest feat.

—CHERYL LOCK

### THE TEAM

**CHARLES SCOTT, 48** (far left) "I constantly worried Dan (second from left) might snap an ankle. I finally stopped watching his feet because it was stressing me out too much."

**ALISON QUALTER BERNA, 44**

The yogi did a handstand atop the tallest peak to celebrate making it. "On the way up, I could barely breathe. I wasn't sure I could do it."

**BRAD GRAFF, 48** (far right) Did the trail despite having a heel fracture. "Anxious is an understatement about how I felt for the entire run."

### THE OBSTACLES THEY FACED

**Time Limit** The gate at the final trail checkpoint (mile 23.6) closed at 4 p.m. If they didn't make it, they'd be required to camp and finish the trail the next day. The team relied on local guide Elias Maxdeo's time-keeping: He knew when they needed to be where to make the cutoff. "We ran as hard as we could for the last three miles to that gate," Berlin says. "Every word out of Elias's mouth was *vámonos*." The hustle worked: They arrived at 3:58 p.m.

**Altitude** "It was like trying to breathe through a straw, trying to get enough oxygen to keep the body moving forward," Berlin says.

**Footing** Rocky terrain posed a constant challenge. But the vertical drop down the highest peak caused them to fall an hour behind schedule. They improvised a new guiding system (two guides went in front of Berlin as he held onto their backpacks for support). It enabled them to pick up the pace.

**THE FINISH** "As we drew close to Machu Picchu, I could feel the mist in the air, which heightened my anticipation and excitement of getting to the top," Berlin says. "It's something I'll never forget."



"I want my kids to grow up with a vision that challenges are meant to be overcome," says Berlin, who has an 11- and a 15-year-old.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY LUCY PIPER/INTREPID TRAVEL; TEAM, BERLIN: ARON OBERLANDER/GETTY IMAGES; (LANDSCAPE)

### RUNNING THE NUMBERS

**13,780; 13,035; 12,598**  
HEIGHT, IN FEET, OF THE THREE LARGEST PEAKS ON THE INCA TRAIL

**500**

PEOPLE ALLOWED TO BE ON THE INCA TRAIL PER DAY, DUE TO CONCERN ABOUT OVERUSE THAT COULD LEAD TO EROSION

**Thousands**

Steps on the trail. There is no official recorded number.

**4:30 a.m.**

TIME THE TEAM BEGAN THEIR JOURNEY

**5:30 p.m.**

TIME THEY REACHED MACHU PICCHU

**6 hours, 24 minutes**

Course record of the Inca Trail, completed by sighted athlete Michael Hewitt in 2014

**\$23,651**

MONEY BERLIN HAS RAISED SINCE 2012 FOR ORGANIZATIONS INCLUDING THE BLIND INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY AND FOUNDATION FIGHTING BLINDNESS

**3:35**

Berlin's marathon PR, set in 2013

### THEIR NEXT STEPS

The foursome will be together again to run the Boston Marathon on April 18. By then, they may have settled on their next big adventure. They are considering Mount Kilimanjaro, Torres del Paine in Patagonia, and the Great Wall of China.

## THE INTERSECTION

Where running and culture collide

### MOMENTOUS



A thief posing as a customer runs off with a runner's purse in a New Orleans specialty running store.

Adrienne Haslet-Davis, who lost most of her left leg in the Boston attacks, plans to run the Boston Marathon this year.



Production begins this month on Jake Gyllenhaal's *Stronger*, a film about Boston bombing survivor Jeff Bauman.

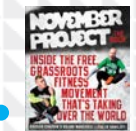


Former NBA star Yao Ming partners with Hood to Coast to bring the Oregon relay to China.



Oral Roberts puts Fitbits on its incoming students so they'll avoid the Freshmen 15. If they don't reach 10,000 steps a day and 150 minutes of exercise a week, their PE grades suffer.

Get Mark Remy's *Runners of North America: A Definitive Guide to the Species* on April 5.



And *November Project: The Book* on April 12.



STOP!

Bernie Sanders says he's got endurance that traces back to his days as a "very good distance runner" in high school. Indeed—he ran a 4:36 mile.



Mark Zuckerberg's dog, a 5-year-old Puli named Beast, is helping him stick to his goal of running 365 miles in 2016.



NYC Marathon is sued by two runners who claim that the use of a lottery to decide who gets in the race is illegal.



Brad Pitt looks rather un-Brad-Pitt-like as he runs through Paris while filming *War Machine*, a Netflix satire about the Afghanistan War.



How long does it take to pull a 3,200-pound Mini Cooper 26.2 miles through rain and wind? This Brit found out: 19 hours, 36 minutes.



Heinz's Super Bowl ad features wiener dogs racing as hot dogs. (Check out RW's own world-class hot dog on page 82.)

### FRIVOLOUS

GO!

ILLUSTRATION BY NAME GOES HERE

ILLUSTRATION BY NAME GOES HERE











