

ADVENTURE *Racing*

Feeling adventurous? Love the outdoors? Then you're spoilt for choice on the action front in South Africa. Read on to find out more about what adventure racing and geocaching can offer you.

Adventure Racing What is it?

According to Lisa de Speville, an adventure-racer and ultra-runner, adventure racing is a "multi-discipline, multi-day endurance sport where competitors compete in teams of four, navigating from checkpoint to checkpoint to cover vast areas in a number of disciplines." These can include running, trekking, paddling, mountain biking and many others, depending on the location and the duration of the event.

What do you need to get involved?

De Speville advises, "The fundamentals include a mountain bike, helmet, running shoes (road shoes are fine at first; trail shoes are key for longer races) and a teammate." As you progress to longer events, expect to add paddling equipment, technical gear, a support crew and so on. Local and international races may include exotic disciplines like canyoneering, glacier travel, white-water rafting, inline skating, abseiling, sea kayaking or mountaineering – depending on the season and location. Teams navigate with a compass and topographical maps – GPS-assisted navigation is not allowed.

Where to start?

De Speville recommends that beginners get involved in short,





summer events as they are less extreme and good for 'trial runs'. "See if the multi-discipline, off-road adventure is for you," she says. "Although most people like to start with short events, I'd rather see people jumping into the 100-150km events and having a proper adventure racing experience. 20-35 km sprint races are fun but they don't offer a true adventure-racing experience."

Sprint and short-course categories would suit the beginner, but those who want more of a challenge can try something more extreme. For information on races, visit www.AR.co.za and www.ndorfin.co.za.

Geocaching What is it?

Geocaching is an outdoor, high-tech treasure hunt, involving on-the-move team action and a GPS receiver. You and your team attempt to locate various containers, or 'geocaches', that have been hidden all over the planet. There are currently 836,844 active caches worldwide!

The 'hunts' can be easy (short distances) or difficult (long hikes with many caches that contain clues). A traditional 'cache' consists of a container and a logbook, in which you can log your experience. Themed caches range from event and mystery or puzzle caches, to earth, virtual or webcam caches.

What do you need to get involved?

Very little! You need willing teammates (your family, for starters – kids love the adventure) and a GPS device, though you may not even need that. "You can get away without a GPS," says veteran geocacher Bernard Voges. "Some caches are descriptive enough to allow a find without a GPS and others can be found with the help of Google Earth. A handheld GPS is best as it has the best battery time." If you undertake a more difficult geocache, you may need water, food, a map, a compass, extra clothing and batteries.

Where to start?

Start off with a reputable geocaching organisation that organises geocaching events around South Africa. Mazda Adventure Zone offers two events: The Mazda Adventure Zone Geocaching Challenge in Magaliesberg and the Bigger and Better event in Bela-Bela, Limpopo. You can also get started yourself by joining www.geocaching.com free – the site is comprehensive and offers a record of every geocaching site imaginable, worldwide. Also visit www.adventurezone.co.za/geocaching.asp for more information about the Mazda events. ✈