

The Last Great Race on Earth

The Iditarod starts this year on March 2nd, 2019.



How does it compare?

The Iditarod is a grueling race that takes participants at least 9 days to complete and as much as 32 days for the last competitors to cross the finish line.

Mushers and their dog teams race across Alaska for the 1,000 mile trip from Anchorage to Nome in the cold and dark of March and with conditions including deep snow, ice, rocky bare ground, frigid temperatures, melting fissures in the ice, and blizzards.

We've heard of other extreme races and wondered how the Iditarod compares.

- A Marathon race is a 26-mile running race done in one day.
- The Hawaiian Iron Man Challenge requires participants to complete a 2.4 mile swim (3.86km), 112 miles bicycle race (180.25km) and a 26.2 mile (42.2 km) run all in one day.
- The Tour de France is a cycle race that lasts for 23 days with 21 daylong stages and covering about 2,200 miles (3,500 km).

I'm sure that there are other extreme races but lets compare these three extraordinary events.

1. What are some of the elements of the Iditarod that you think would be valuable to compare with these other races?

Let's set up a comparison table among these three races. We've entered some of the comparison topics and left places for descriptors or events that you think should be compared.

Race name	Least number of days or hours required to win this competition	Total miles covered by racers	Rest opportunities and duration	Total race's average rate of speed	Typical difficulties encountered by participants
Alaskan Iditarod Sled Dog Race	8 days, 3 hours, 40 minutes, and 13 seconds =	1,000 miles	One 24-hour layover, taken at any checkpoint. One eight-hour layover, taken at any checkpoint on the Yukon River An eight-hour stop at White Mountain.		
The Hawaiian Ironman Challenge			No rest periods		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Run on lava beds in 90° heat with intense humidity • Open water swim with large waves. 2nd half of swim is against current. • Bike 12 miles uphill to reach

					the turn around town of Hawi. • Bike 2 more huge hills. Strong crosswinds on a road that is bordered by hardened black lava beds radiating heat. Strong headwinds in the last 20 miles.
The Tour de France			Rest after every day's stage ride. There are 21 days of racing within 23 days of the contest.		Route passes through the Pyrenees and Alps mountains. Besides the exertion required for the up hill sections, the downhill sections are dangerously fast.

So here is what we know. Try to fill in this table of comparison data as you read.

The Iditarod will ceremonially begin in Anchorage, Alaska at 10:00am on Saturday, March 2, 2019. The actual start of the race will begin the next day in Willow, Alaska. The 52 mushers with their 16-dog teams will be driven from Anchorage to Willow to begin again the next morning.

There will be 24 checkpoints along the route to Nome, Alaska. Days before the race begins, mushers prepare by packing food for themselves and their dogs, extra booties for their dogs, headlamps for night travel, batteries, tools, sled parts for repairs, and even a lightweight sled for the final dash to Nome. These supplies are airlifted by the Iditarod Air Force to the 24 checkpoints.

There are three mandatory rests that each team must take during the Iditarod: one 24-hour layover, to be taken at any checkpoint; one eight-hour layover, taken at any checkpoint on the Yukon River; and an eight-hour stop at White Mountain.

Mitch Seavey set the current fastest winning time record in 2017 with a **time** of 8 days, 3 hours, 40 minutes, and 13 seconds. In 1974, Carl Huntington won the race with the slowest winning time on record ... 20 days, 15 hours, two minutes and seven seconds

Hawaii's Ironman Triathlon is completed in only one day. There are mandatory cut off times for each of the three events. Athletes must complete the 2.4-mile swim section in 2 hours and 20 minutes. They must complete the bike portion of the race in 8 hours and 10 minutes. And they must finish the marathon portion in 6 hours and 30 minutes. There are no mandatory or scheduled rests. No contestant is allowed to compete for more than 17 hours.

The current Ironman course record was set in 2017 by Patrick Lange (of Germany) whose winning time was 8 hours 1 minutes 40 seconds.

The **Tour de France** is a cycle race across much of France. Held in July, teams of 9 cyclists protect each other and take turns leading. All of the team rides the entire race up and down the Alps and the Pyrenees mountains. Some of the downhill sections are the most dangerous to ride. After each day's section is completed, riders get to rest until the next morning. But then the race goes on for 3 weeks covering 2,200 miles (3,500 km).

2. Calculate each race's average daily speed from the information that we've given and add those rates to your table.
3. From the reading or through your own experience or research, add descriptors and facts to the table.
4. So do you think that the Iditarod (as compared to these two other races) is accurately named as the **Last Great Race on Earth**? Please explain.

Sources: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ironman_Triathlon
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tour_de_France