

# 7 Headlamps and Salted Coke

by Ali Lopez



*The below is an excerpt from Ali's incredible account of her Vermont 100 experience, see the link below to continue reading!*

I did it! I ran my first 100 mile run at the [Vermont 100 Endurance Race](#) this past weekend. It was everything I expected and more. Truly “life in a day.”

A little background on the race. The Vermont 100 is one of the oldest ultramarathons in the country. It is run on the beautiful dirt roads, jeep roads and horse trails in Vermont. It has an elevation gain of 17,000 feet (which if you need a visualization a 100 story building would be approximately 1,000 feet tall so picture 17 of them!!! There were about 350 runners in the 100 mile distance (there is also a 100K (62 mile) distance. Another unique feature of the race is that there is also a 100 mile horse race going on simultaneously. We don't follow the exact same course but often see them out there. The race starts at 4 am on Saturday morning and you have until 10 am on Sunday to complete the distance (30 hours in total.)

To see why I chose to run this race check out my [Why I want to run 100 mile post](#). I have run a variety of distances and types of races with my longest distance being 60 miles so this was

a big jump up in distance and time on my feet. So many logistics are involved in the 100 mile distance and so I had avoided it as I tend to be a runner who likes to show up and just run. I was nervous about running at night, would my stomach cooperate, would I be tired running at 2 am or worse....get lost? All these thoughts floated through my brain. But I decided to approach the adventure with curiosity and not fear.

My training had gone really well, no major injuries or illnesses, getting in all the workouts and long runs, so I was feeling physically and mentally ready to do this thing. Although there are aid stations throughout the course (with AMAZING volunteers!) but it can be really helpful especially for a first timer to have a crew that can motivate and help you problem solve, resupply your nutrition, clothing changes. So I put together what I now call my "Stellar Crew" of Scott, Lisa and Cindy. They would drive to designated aid stations along the course and be there when I came through with whatever I needed. This a huge undertaking as they are also staying awake for 30 hours and driving 100 miles to keep me going.

Okay enough background. The night before the race I slept at Scott and Lisa's house about 1/2 hour from the start. I got there around noon and we sorted through all the gear I brought (you would have thought I was going on a weeklong vacation!!!!)

Lisa asked, "Do you have a backup headlamp."

So I told her, "well actually I have 7!"

Laughter ensued. I wasn't sure which I'd like since I haven't run much at night so I ordered a few new ones to try, figuring I can swap them out when I see my crew at night. Nothing new on race day, right?

I had a yummy pre-race dinner of pasta and fried eggs from their backyard chickens. Sounds weird but it usually sits well for me. Carbs, protein and nothing green! I went to bed around 9 pm but I think I may have slept for an hour or two before the alarm went off at 2 am. I had my traditional prerace Pop tart breakfast (brown sugar cinnamon for those curious), took a bottle of electrolyte drink to sip on the way, and all 4 of us got in the car at 2:45. (They all wanted to see me off... as I mentioned... stellar crew. Nibbled on a banana waiting for the start, clicked on my headlamp and then at 4am in the darkness we were off!!! The first few miles was a gentle downhill and I reminded myself to take it slow, it's easy to go too fast and I had a LONG way to go. We turned onto a rocky, rooty jeep road and headlamp choice was okay but not as bright as I hoped so I took it slow. No falling for this klutzy runner 5 miles into the race. Suddenly things began to lighten up a little and the birds started to sing. First sunrise!! It was so magical to be running in the darkness and suddenly the world is waking up...

If you want to read the rest of Ali's amazing account of the race, head to her Substack [here](#).  
Go Ali!

