

## Cyprus 4 Day Challenge

AKAMAS, CYPRUS, NOVEMBER 24-27, 2011



FIRST MAN	MICHEL BUTTER 2:54:36
FIRST WOMAN	INGE DE JONG 3:26:58
SLOWEST FINISHER	7:49:23
NO. OF FINISHERS	330
PB POTENTIAL	N/A*
OVERALL RATING	N/A*

**C**yprus. Land of Aphrodite, sparkling beaches, ouzo that'll strip the lining from your oesophagus...and one of the most varied multi-stage races on the international race calendar.

The CFDC will this year celebrate its eighth anniversary and, while it has yet to achieve the status of bigger European races, it deserves more than a 'hidden gem' tag. Gem, yes; hidden, no. In 2006 fewer than 30 runners turned up for the inaugural event, but last year saw over 400 destination runners toe the start line on day one.

The format will be a familiar one to anyone who has run more established multi-day events on the islands of Lanzarote and Malta: a series of short, sharp races used as an excuse for afternoons by the pool and evenings in the bar. In this case it was four races on four consecutive days: a 6K road time trial, an 11K hill race, a stunning trail half marathon and a fast, flat 10K in and around the nearby town of Paphos.

Event base is at the sprawling five-star Coral Beach hotel, used by the British team before every Olympic Games as a winter training retreat - which explains the 50m outdoor pool and the well-equipped gym and running track.

After the time trial (where everybody sized up the competition), the 11K run was

**ROCKY ROAD**  
Day three's 13.1-miler skirted the coastline



a bittersweet slog through the rugged Avakas Gorge, which must be the only extended stretch of land in Cyprus where you won't find a half-built concrete villa somewhere on the horizon. Its steep, rolling hills are a magnet for recreational walkers, but we didn't spot too many non-event runners prepared to tackle the route, which included a brutal 300m climb halfway through.

After the moderately challenging trail half marathon on day three, which ended at Toxeftra beach (perfect for cooling aching muscles in the sea), all that remained was the final day's 10K, where the field is normally swelled by a large number of local runners.

Despite screaming legs all round, there was definitely an end-of-term feel to the early

morning gathering in Paphos, as runners realised that just 10 more kilometres lay between them and a celebratory breakfast beer. The fast course went out and back past the tourist bars and hotels of Paphos via the surrounding countryside, and the harbourside finish by the town's medieval fortress could not have been better planned.

Next time you're drawing up your winter break shortlist, put the CFDC on it - you won't be disappointed. **Alice Palmer**

 *The next event is on November 22-25. To enter, visit [cypruschallenge.com](http://cypruschallenge.com).*

### THE LOWDOWN CORAL BAY, CYPRUS

#### GET THERE

**Cyprus Airlines** ([cyprusair.com](http://cyprusair.com)) flies from London Heathrow to Paphos and Larnaca from £120

return. Flight time is approximately four hours.

**STAY** The base for the 4 Day Challenge is the **Coral Beach Hotel & Resort**. Half-board accommodation is included in the package deal offered by 2:09 Events ([209events.com](http://209events.com)).

**SIGHTSEE** Hire a car or bike and head out to the **Grotto of Aphrodite**, said to be where the Goddess of Love met Adonis.

**FUEL** Take a trip to the charming **Araouzou** restaurant ([cyprus-eating.com](http://cyprus-eating.com)) in the nearby village of Kathikas for a banquet of mezze.

**WARM UP** Follow the coastline in either direction from the hotel, or try the steep trails through the woods around the **Cave of Aphrodite**.



**CYPRUS HILL**  
The 11K and half marathon had plenty of highs and lows

