ULTRA TRAIL LARRE®

SELF-SUFFICIENCY GUIDE

How to prepare for and run an ultra-trail without assistance: water, food, sleep, gear and navigation.

1st Edition · autumn 2027 · Version: 3 November 2026

WHAT A SELF-SUPPORTED ULTRA-TRAIL IS

A self-supported ultra-trail is a race in which every runner carries everything they will need. There are no aid stations every fifteen kilometres, no drop bags, no crew car waiting at the top of the climb. There are controls, yes, but they are check and stamp points: they confirm you were there, they do not feed you.

The difference from a classic ultra is not only logistical. It changes what you decide. In an ultra with support, the key decision is pace. In self-sufficiency, the key decision is resource management: how much weight you carry, where you refill water, when you eat, when you sleep. Almost nobody drops out of a race like this for lack of legs; they drop out because they miscalculated water, food or cold.

ASPECT	ULTRA WITH SUPPORT	SELF-SUPPORTED
Aid stations	Every 10–20 km	None
Drop bag	Common	Does not exist
Outside assistance	Allowed in marked zones	No
Critical decision	Pace	Resources

WATER IS THE FIRST PROBLEM

Water weighs a kilo per litre and you cannot carry all of it. So planning is done not by kilometres but by the stretches between reliable water points: village fountains, bars, cemeteries, sports centres. Mark them on the map before you leave, with an alternative in case one is dry or closed at night.

As a working reference, in mid-mountain terrain people drink around 400–500 ml per hour in mild weather and 600–800 ml per hour in heat. Between two points five hours apart, that is more than two litres. A water filter or purification tablets weigh very little and turn a stream into an option; cattle troughs do not.

In autumn, in the Álava ranges, the trap is the opposite of what everyone expects: it is cool, you drink less than you think, and you arrive dehydrated without ever having felt hot.

FOOD: CALCULATE BY HOURS, NOT BY KILOMETRES

In long races most runners sustain between 200 and 300 kcal per hour, and almost never more. In an event lasting more than a day, that is many thousands of calories: more than fit in a reasonable pack. So the question is not “how much food do I carry” but “how much do I carry on me, and where does the rest come from”.

What works: alternating sweet and savoury before your stomach shuts down, combining solids with liquids, carrying something warm or salty for the small hours, and having two or three options you know go down even when nauseous. What does not work: trying a new gel, bar or flavour in the race that you have not tested on long training days.

Each race sets out in its rules whether you may buy in shops along the route or refill at public fountains, and that completely changes the food plan. It is the first thing to read.

TO SLEEP, OR NOT TO SLEEP

An event of more than a day crosses at least one full night, and probably two. For most runners, many hours without sleep means reaching the second small hours with hallucinations, disorientation and bad decisions on terrain where decisions matter.

The three strategies people really use: not sleeping (only if you have tried it in training and know how your head responds), ten-to-twenty-minute micro-naps when the first serious low appears, or a planned one-to-two-hour stop at a point decided in advance. The difference between it working and not is having decided before the start, not at four in the morning lying in a ditch.

THE GEAR THAT REALLY MATTERS

Beyond whatever each organisation requires, there is a core that is not up for debate in self-sufficiency:

- A headlamp with good battery life and a spare set of batteries or battery pack. A long night is many hours of light.
- A waterproof layer with a hood and a dry thermal layer kept for the night or for a stop.
- A charged phone, a power bank and cables. It is the map, the emergency phone and the backup light.
- Water capacity of 1.5–2 litres, plus a filter or tablets.
- A survival blanket and a whistle. They weigh nothing and keep you safe while help arrives.
- A minimal foot kit: tape, small scissors, a needle, something for blisters. A badly treated blister retires more people than a climb.
- Gloves and a hat or buff. The cold of the small hours on a ridge is nothing like the cold at the start.

The mandatory gear list for Ultra Trail Larre® will be published with the final rules of the 1st Edition.

NAVIGATING WITH A GPS TRACK

In self-supported races the route is not marked with ribbons: you follow a GPS track. That means navigation is part of the event and is trained like a climb.

In practice: load the track on your watch and on your phone, with the area maps downloaded for use without coverage; mark the controls as points of interest; know what to do when the watch tells you you are off course (stop, go back to the last safe point, do not improvise shortcuts at night); and do not depend on a single battery for the one thing that tells you where you are.

ZERO WASTE: RUNNING WITHOUT LEAVING ANYTHING

A route through mountains and villages is looked after as you run it. In practice it comes down to three habits: your own rubbish bag in a fixed pocket, always the same one; gel and bar tabs tied or pocketed the moment you open them, never “later”; and decanting what you can into reusable bags before the start, so you carry less packaging from the beginning.

HOW TO PREPARE FOR A DISTANCE OF OVER 200 KM

With a year ahead, preparation falls into three blocks. It is not a personalised training plan —that depends on your history and, if there are health doubts, on a professional— but it is the structure shared by almost everyone who reaches the finish.

> **Base · months 1 to 4**
> Volume and accumulated climbing at a comfortable pace. Lots of time on your feet, little intensity. This is where you build the ability to endure hours, not speed.

> **Specific · months 5 to 8**
> Long back-to-back outings (Saturday and Sunday in a row), at least two full night outings, all with the pack loaded to real race weight. You train your stomach by eating on the move what you will eat on race day.

> **Sharpening · months 9 to 10**
> A long 12-to-24-hour simulation with the final kit, the last food and footwear test, and then real rest. Whatever has not been tested by now is not debuted in the race.

Two sessions are non-negotiable: running at night, for several hours, until losing clear sight is normal; and chaining two long days in a row, to learn how the body responds when it starts with loaded legs. And two parts that almost nobody trains decide races: the stomach and the feet.

TEN MISTAKES THAT KEEP REPEATING

1. Starting too fast in the first hours because the pack does not weigh anything yet.
2. Debuting kit, footwear or food on race day.
3. Calculating water by kilometres instead of by time between reliable points.
4. Having no sleep plan and deciding it in the small hours, with no judgement left.
5. Carrying a single headlamp, or half-used spare batteries.
6. Stopping eating as soon as nausea appears, instead of changing texture or flavour.
7. Not treating the first foot problem to avoid losing ten minutes.
8. Relying on a single battery for the GPS.
9. Going with the bare minimum of warm clothing because it was nice at the start.
10. Not having read the rules until the week before.

WHAT THIS MEANS AT ULTRA TRAIL LARRE®

ITEM	DETAIL
Distance and climbing	227 km · +5,290 m
Format	Self-supported loop: just you, a tracker and your brevet
Start and finish	Kiosk in Parque de La Florida, Vitoria-Gasteiz
Confirmed controls	Agurain, Santa Cruz de Campezo, Laguardia and Peñacerrada (two still to be defined)
Places	300, by order of arrival of the pre-registration
Edition	1st Edition, autumn 2027

Not yet published: start date and time, time limit, mandatory gear, insurance and withdrawal procedure. They will appear in the final rules and on the website.

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