

MY KENYA EXPERIENCE

Running in the Home of Champions

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Running the famous red-dirt roads around Iten with Kenyan runners.

There are some running trips where you come home with a few photographs and good memories. Then there are trips that change the way you think about running. My return to Iten, Kenya – the “Home of Champions” – in July 2026 was definitely the latter.

Why I went

I have always been fascinated by the Kenyan distance-running phenomenon. Why do so many of the world's greatest distance runners come from this part of Kenya? What can ordinary runners like us learn from them? And what is it actually like to run on the same roads and trails as Olympic and world champions?

I first visited Iten in 2023 and always knew I wanted to return. This time, travelling with Kenya Experience from Newcastle on 18 July and returning on 3 August, I wanted to do more than simply visit Kenya. I wanted to immerse myself in its running culture, learn from its coaches and runners, and bring some of that experience home to DH Runners.

There was also a wider purpose. I wanted to contribute to local communities by taking running equipment and school materials with me. The trip became about much more than my own running.



Arriving in Kenya – the adventure begins.



Welcome to Iten – the Home of Champions.

What preparation did I do?

The biggest preparation was probably mental rather than physical. Iten sits at roughly 2,400 metres above sea level, so I knew I couldn't arrive and expect to run at my normal sea-level pace. The altitude has to be respected.

I prepared by arriving fit but not trying to prove anything. One of the lessons of Kenya is that training isn't one heroic session. It is what you do consistently, week after week. You have to listen to your body, accept that pace may be slower at altitude, and allow yourself time to adapt.

How did I get there?

The journey started at Newcastle Airport. From the UK we travelled to Kenya and eventually reached Eldoret, before making the journey up into the Rift Valley to Iten. Then the landscape changes: red dirt roads, high-altitude air and runners everywhere.

You quickly realise that running here isn't something people do only for a Sunday morning club run. Running is part of the culture.

What did we do?

The Kenya Experience was much more than a running holiday. We trained, explored, learned and spent time with Kenyan runners and coaches. We ran on the famous red-dirt roads and trails around Iten, took part in coached sessions and ran alongside local pacers.

Away from the running, we experienced Kenyan food and everyday life, met local people, learned about the local running scene and saw more of the spectacular Rift Valley. The wider Kenya experience also provided opportunities to explore beyond Iten.



Learning from Kenyan runners and coaches – one of the highlights of the Kenya Experience.

The Kenya Experience group – runners from different backgrounds brought together by a shared love of running.

What did we learn?

This was perhaps the most valuable part of the trip. The first lesson was simplicity. There is much less fuss around running than we sometimes create for ourselves.

The second was consistency. Kenyan runners don't necessarily look for the perfect training session. They build their running around regular training, recovery, food and sleep.

The third was community. Running can become an individual pursuit, but in Iten groups of runners train together, support each other and share the experience.

And perhaps the biggest lesson for me was attitude. Some of the runners we met had achieved things most of us can only dream about, yet there was little ego. You just ran. You enjoyed it. You helped each other.

That made me think about DH Runners. We have runners of every ability, from people taking their first steps to those chasing PBs. The important thing isn't necessarily how fast you are. It's that you keep turning up.



The Rift Valley from above Iten – a spectacular backdrop to a remarkable running culture.

How has it affected my running – and life in general?

I came home wanting to simplify my running. I don't need every run to be a test, and I don't need to worry about whether every kilometre is at the 'right' pace. I want to enjoy running more, train consistently and appreciate the opportunity simply to put on my shoes and head out.

At 67, that feels more important than ever. Kenya also made me appreciate how fortunate we are. We have fantastic facilities, running shoes, watches, nutrition products, training plans and endless information. Yet watching Kenyan runners train reminded me that the fundamentals haven't changed: run consistently, work hard, recover, eat well, sleep, train with others and enjoy the journey.

Perhaps most importantly, Kenya reinforced that running connects people. During the trip I ran with people from different countries, ages and running backgrounds. Once you are running together, many of those differences disappear. You're just runners.



The wider Kenya experience: the trip was about people, culture and community as much as running.

Would I recommend it?

Absolutely. Before I went to Kenya for the first time, I wondered whether a trip like this was really for someone like me. The answer is yes. You don't have to be an elite athlete or a particularly fast runner. The Kenya Experience is designed to combine coached running, local pacers, cultural experiences and immersion in the running community.

If you have ever thought, 'I'd love to run in Kenya one day...', I'd say stop thinking about it and start investigating it.

Kenya Experience provides information about its camps and what is included at traininkenya.com. Current information describes full-board accommodation, structured coaching, guided runs with Kenyan pacers, cultural activities and airport transfers. Iten is at roughly 2,400m altitude. **Find out more: www.traininkenya.com**

RUN • LEARN • SHARE • LAUGH • REFLECT • RETURN

I went to Kenya looking to improve my running. I came home feeling that running had improved me. And I'm already thinking about the next time.

Click [here](#) to find out more about who organized and attended the trip.

If you missed Martin's write up from his first trip to Kenya, you can read it [here](#).