

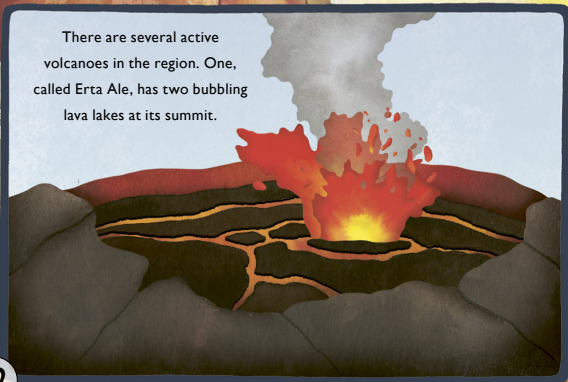
The hot springs are surrounded by miles of salt flats: plains of land covered in salt crystals, which gleam white under the baking sun.

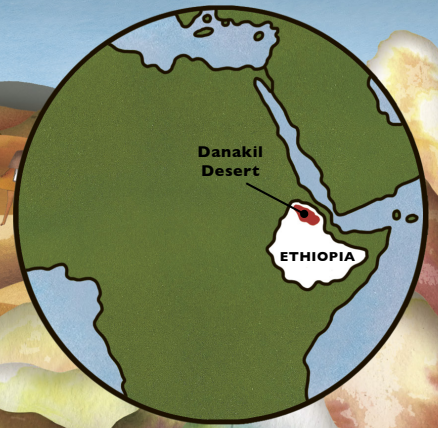
The local Afar people mine salt from this dry landscape, and carry it across the desert using camels.

This area is home to the saltiest lake in the world. The Gaetale Pond is 43.3% salt: that's 12 times as salty as the ocean.

These crusty splodges of bright yellow, orange and green are made from minerals, such as sulphur and iron, that are brought to the surface by bubbling spring water.

There are several active volcanoes in the region. One, called Erta Ale, has two bubbling lava lakes at its summit.





Scientists who study these hot springs sometimes wear gas masks to protect them from the toxic fumes.

Few plants or animals can survive among the boiling, acidic pools. However, scientists have discovered bacteria living here in what must be one of the most extreme environments on Earth.

Working out the hottest place is tricky. Another way of measuring it is to look at the highest single temperature ever recorded. One day in 2005, the ground in the Lut Desert, Iran, reached a whopping 70.7°C : hot enough to fry an egg!

The Danakil Desert is not only one of the hottest places on Earth, it is one of the driest too, with almost no rainfall.

BRAVE THE HOTTEST PLACE ON EARTH, ETHIOPIA

Nicknamed 'Hell on Earth' and a 'land of death', the Danakil Desert in north-east Ethiopia is not everyone's top choice for a holiday destination. The blistering sunshine and lack of rain make this scorching desert an uncomfortable spot to spend time in. It's the hottest place on Earth if you look at the average weather all year round. Here, temperatures normally hover around 34.4°C , but can soar to 55°C in summer.

Visiting Danakil is like arriving on another planet. It lies in an area of volcanic activity, so the landscape is strewn with bubbling lava lakes and neon rock formations. There are thermal springs here, but you wouldn't want to bathe in them: these bright-green pools are not only filled with acid, but are also scalding hot. Remember to pack your sunscreen, a hat and gallons of water... you're going to need them.



The dramatic spray from the falls rises 500 metres into the air and often creates rainbows.

The thundering roar from these plunging waters can be heard from nearly two kilometres away.

The Victoria Falls were formed hundreds of thousands of years ago by the flow of the Zambezi River slicing into the rocky plateau over which it runs.

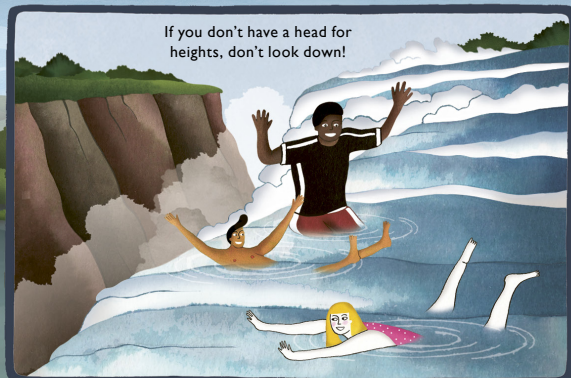
COOL OFF AT THE WORLD'S BIGGEST WATERFALL, ZAMBIA

With a span of 1,700 metres and a drop of more than 100 metres, the Victoria Falls is the most enormous waterfall in the world. This spectacular curtain of water, whose spray can be seen from 20 kilometres away, is known as Mosi-oa-Tunya by the locals, which means 'the smoke that thunders'. These falls bridge two countries: the border between Zimbabwe and Zambia lies in the middle.

At the top of this natural wonder, just before the water plummets into the gaping canyon below, is the Devil's Swimming Pool. Believe it or not, when the water level is just right, brave swimmers can go for a dip here! Although it looks terrifying, there is a natural barrier of rock just below the surface, which stops people from being washed over the edge. The view from the brink into the gorge beneath is dizzying.

In 2014, two daredevils
crossed the Victoria Falls on a
three-centimetre wide slackline!

You can only swim in the Devil's Pool
with experienced guides, during the dry season
(usually from September to December)
when the water level isn't too high.



This waterfall breaks the record
for being the world's largest sheet
of falling water. Angel Falls in
Venezuela is the world's highest
waterfall, at 979 metres.

The drop from the top of the
falls is taller than London's Big
Ben clock tower, and spans
over 17 football pitches in width.

In the rainy season, when the flow is
strongest, almost 600,000 gallons – or an
Olympic swimming pool of water – surges over
the edge of the falls every two seconds!



Desert hat to protect against sun

Goggles in case of sandstorms

Neckerchief can be pulled over mouth to stop runners breathing in sand

Bottle holders

Gaiters to stop sand getting inside shoes

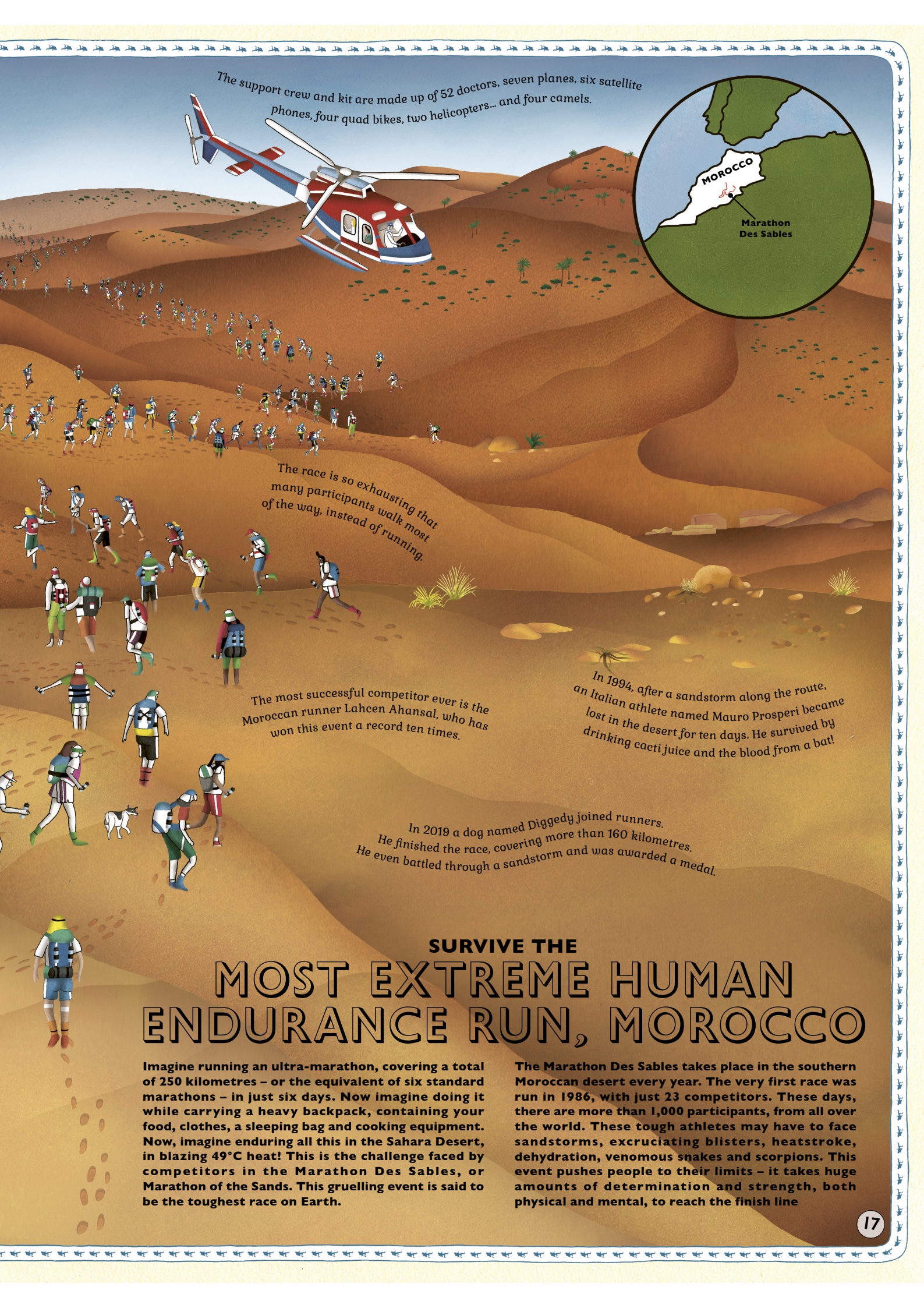
The Sahara Desert, which stretches across North Africa, is the largest hot desert in the world.

Runners are advised to wear extra-large trainers, because people's feet swell up in the heat.

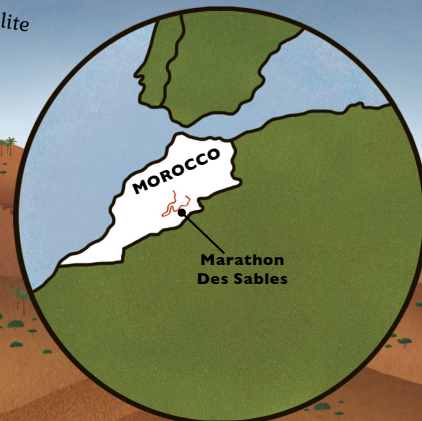
The youngest competitor ever to take part was 16... the oldest was 78.

The marathon route varies from year to year. The longest stage, which is usually about 90 kilometres, can involve running through the night.

Runners have to carry everything they need excluding water, which is handed out along the route. Packs must contain emergency equipment, including an anti-venom pump for snakebites.



The support crew and kit are made up of 52 doctors, seven planes, six satellite phones, four quad bikes, two helicopters... and four camels.



The race is so exhausting that many participants walk most of the way, instead of running.

The most successful competitor ever is the Moroccan runner Lahcen Ahansal, who has won this event a record ten times.

In 1994, after a sandstorm along the route, an Italian athlete named Mauro Prosperi became lost in the desert for ten days. He survived by drinking cacti juice and the blood from a bat!

In 2019 a dog named Diggedy joined runners. He finished the race, covering more than 160 kilometres. He even battled through a sandstorm and was awarded a medal.

SURVIVE THE MOST EXTREME HUMAN ENDURANCE RUN, MOROCCO

Imagine running an ultra-marathon, covering a total of 250 kilometres – or the equivalent of six standard marathons – in just six days. Now imagine doing it while carrying a heavy backpack, containing your food, clothes, a sleeping bag and cooking equipment. Now, imagine enduring all this in the Sahara Desert, in blazing 49°C heat! This is the challenge faced by competitors in the Marathon Des Sables, or Marathon of the Sands. This gruelling event is said to be the toughest race on Earth.

The Marathon Des Sables takes place in the southern Moroccan desert every year. The very first race was run in 1986, with just 23 competitors. These days, there are more than 1,000 participants, from all over the world. These tough athletes may have to face sandstorms, excruciating blisters, heatstroke, dehydration, venomous snakes and scorpions. This event pushes people to their limits – it takes huge amounts of determination and strength, both physical and mental, to reach the finish line



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First Published in 2020 by Wide Eyed Editions, an imprint of The Quarto Group.
The Old Brewery, 6 Blundell Street, London N7 9BH, United Kingdom.
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ISBN 978-0-7112-5563-0
eISBN 978-0-7112-5566-1

Illustrated with coloured inks
Set in Festivo, Gabriela and Gill Sans Shadow

Designed by Myrto Dimitrakoulia
Edited by Lucy Brownridge
Published by Georgia Amson-Bradshaw
Production by Dawn Cameron

Manufactured in Rawang, Malaysia VV072020

1 3 5 7 9 8 6 4 2