

Saturday, February 21, 2009  
Paris, France

Dear Friends:

Thank you for your words of encouragement. Your support is tremendous.

In less than 24 hours we will leave for Libya, to take on what will undoubtedly be one of the most difficult challenges of our lives. Four of the five members of the American Team are now in Paris. We expected Isabella the fifth member of the team to arrive this morning but instead I awoke to an email from her, which said "Plane took off but returned to Philly several hours later, will catch another." We have no idea why her plane was turned back or where Isabella is now. But one of the lessons learned in preparing for this trip is you can't worry about how these things happen rather you have to have faith that they will.

Though the team has run crazy races across the globe, this ultra run in Libya feels like we are stepping into an unknown vortex of geography, culture, and history. Contemplating running 125 miles, with a 25-pound pack is difficult, but becomes even more daunting when one considers that we will be doing this in one of the most secluded areas of the Sahara. In a few hours we will leave the comforts of what we know and step in to the mystery of southern Libya. Our days will be filled either trekking through the Jebel Akakus Mountains, which are extraordinary rock formations shaped by the winds of time or stomping through an endless sea of sand. This race is literally a walking history lesson as we will pass rock paintings depicting thousands of years of Tuareg traditions and we will meet the Tuareg people one of the only matriarchal societies in the world. Though we are excited about the opportunity to see all of this our minds whirl with questions? Will we appreciate these sites 60 hours into a run? How will we be received in Libya? Last night between glasses of red wine and a stroll by the Eiffel Tower the team and I joked about all the apprehensions our family and friends have about our trip. So, many people associate Libya with terrorism and truly fear for our lives. Though I take their concerns seriously, I am in no way worried. Traveling has taught me not to stereotype. For me one of the most important aspects of this race is to understand Libya through a different lens and for Libyans to see Americans as the individuals we are. During the race our team will wear American flag patches on our shirts.

When I look at the American team I could not be more proud. Over the course of the last few months I have grown to love my teammates and appreciate their courage and outlooks on life. People think it takes a super athlete to do these kinds of races. This is funny to me as I am in mediocre shape and in no way trained for this kind of event. Though training is certainly important it is your attitude and mind set that gets you to the finish. If one allows negative thoughts to take hold then the race is over. One of the life lessons I learned a long time ago was that half the battle is simply having the courage to show up. After that you have to be present and flexible to the road bumps, which are sure to occur. The triumph is in the struggle.

Please keep the support and positive vibes coming. We are going to need it!!!!

I'll send another update before take off tomorrow morning at 6am.

Rebecca Byerly  
Paris, france  
@2009

Posted by Rebecca Byerly at [2/24/2009 9:42 PM](#) | [Add Comment](#)