

## **WORLD ROGAINING CHAMPIONSHIPS 2015, FINLAND**

The following comments were taken from a report by the IRF Event Advisor, who visited the competition area in September, just as the first snows of the Winter began to fall:

### **Event Location**

Kiilopää is the event centre – a small all year round resort in the far north of Finland. It has a moderate quantity of accommodation, to suit a variety of budgets, but is adequately supplemented by a large selection of holiday accommodation in Saariselkä, just 16km drive away, the town which also plays host to the model area.

The model area is adjacent to the main competition area but without any overlap but it is of comparable terrain.

### **Travel Arrangements**

There are lots of travel options, using road (car or bus service), a combination of road and rail or, the most likely for most, by flight into Ivalo. There is one daily flight to/from Helsinki with Finnair. A bus service links Kiilopää & Saariselkä with every incoming/outgoing Finnair flight for a small fee. Ivalo Airport offers free wifi.

The website offers good advice on the best options.

### **Terrain**

A very enjoyable area. The area consists of open tundra fell and undulating native coniferous forest. This terrain is quite unique and although something similar has been used for rogaining before, including a recent European Championships, it will be an exciting new challenge for most.

The area is fast, very fast! There are few obstacles to impede the progress for competitors. The forest floor & the open fell are covered in short grass, with no significant undergrowth, but there are a few exceptions.

Marshland covers some large sections of the map and here speed can be significantly reduced by tussock. Other minor obstacles are rocky areas plus small areas of birch trees which border the open tundra areas. Undoubtedly, for those interested in winning this World Championships, there will be a need to cover more distance than at any previous World Championships.

There will be some larger slopes to negotiate but over most of the area, changes in relief are often very subtle. There are areas of contour complexity, especially areas associated with former gold mining, but the chosen map contour interval of 5m adequately captures all of that.

## **The Course**

The terrain & control placement combine to provide some good navigation challenges. Whilst it is possible to move fast over the terrain, there are plenty of places out there where the less-careful, faster rogainer will have problems. There are few tracks to simplify navigation and much of the area requires a careful approach because of the subtle changes in relief. Compass navigation will be important but so will the ability to switch techniques to reading complex contours. As ever, night navigation will significantly increase the challenge.

Whilst I was a little unlucky with weather, I am reliably told by the locals that it is usually pleasant & more stable in August. So, whilst there may not be any snow then, rain and showers may come through, and it is possible to get low cloud on the hills. As with night navigation, finding your way through low visibility cloud can be a big challenge and one competitor should be prepared for.

## **The Map**

1:40 000 with 5m contours. The map was very reliable to use with the most significant information included - some new deer fences the main exception to the rule. Hopefully there will be little change after the printing occurs.

The choice of contour interval enables all the complex terrain to be adequately shown. Five metre (5m) contours do give the illusion that the area is steeper than it is – 10m or 15m contours are more common at this scale – but in order to adequately represent the complex areas, it is the best choice.

## **Water Points**

The organisers do not intend to provide any water containers on the course, just like in previous rogaines they have held. Water quality though is good and there are many flowing streams throughout the area. I was happy with the water quality and the amount of useable streams. It seems reasonable therefore to place the responsibility onto competitors to collect water as needed along their route. Whilst the water quality is good, a recommendation to carry water purification is advised.

## **Summary**

This part of Finnish Lapland is absolutely stunning and will present a very attractive but unique venue for such an important event. The organisers have successfully held a European Championships in similar terrain nearby and I am confident that their plans are sufficiently well advanced to ensure it will be another excellent event.

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