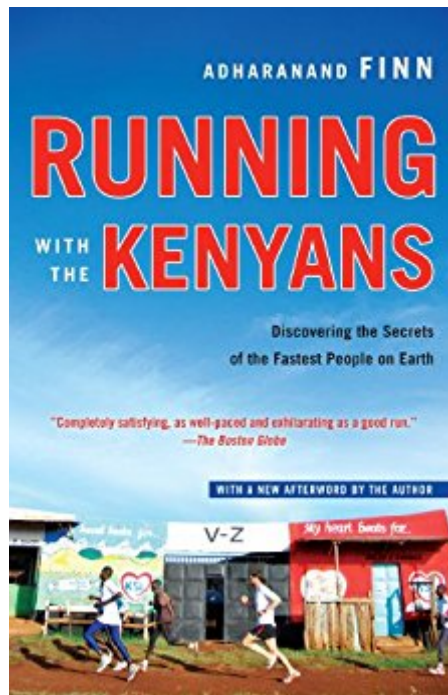


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Running With The Kenyans: Passion, Adventure, And The Secrets Of The Fastest People On Earth



Synopsis

âœ“ Completely satisfying, as well-paced and exhilarating as a good run.âœ“ ”The Boston Globe

Â Whether running is your recreation or your religion, Adharanand Finnâ€™s incredible journey to the elite training camps of Kenya will captivate and inspire you, as he ventures to uncover the secrets of the fastest people on earth. Finnâ€™s mesmerizing questÂ combines a fresh look at barefoot running,Â practical advice on the sport,Â and the fulfillment of a lifelong dream: to run with his heroes.Â Uprooting his family of five, Finn traveled to a small, chaotic town in the Rift Valley province of Kenyaâ€”a mecca for long-distance runners, thanks to its high altitude, endless paths, and some of the top training schools in the world. There Finn would run side by side with Olympic champions, young hopefuls, and barefoot schoolchildren, and meet a cast of unforgettable characters. Amid the daily challenges of training and of raising a family abroad, Finn would learn invaluable lessons about runningâ€”and about life. Â With a new Afterword by the author. Â âœ“ Not everyone gets to heaven in their lifetime. Adharanand Finn tried to run there, and succeeded. Running with the Kenyans is a great read.âœ“ ”Bernd Heinrich, author of *Why We Run* Â âœ“ Part scientific study, travel memoir, and tale of self-discovery, Finnâ€™s journey makes for a smart and entertaining read.âœ“ ”Publishers Weekly Â âœ“ A hymn to the spirit, to the heartbreaking beauty of tenacity, to the joy of movement.âœ“ ”The Plain Dealer

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Customer Reviews

To me, a great running book is not one that focuses on technique, training plans, diet, and form. A great running book is one that entertains me and makes we want to get out and run! Adharanand Finn has done just that with his new book, *Running with the Kenyans: Passion, Adventure, and the Secrets of the Fastest People on Earth*. Finn, a British journalist and a pretty good runner, moved to Kenya for several months (with his patient wife and flexible children). They lived in the Rift Valley town of Iten, one of the central training grounds for Kenyan runners. Finn jumped right into the running culture of Iten. To hear him tell it, there are runners everywhere. The roads get clogged with groups of runners, and there are numerous training camps. Virtually everyone Finn is introduced to has some kind of running credential: placed in a major marathon, world record holder for this distance, medalist in that Olympic Games, etc. That high concentration of success and speed is pretty intimidating, but Finn does his best to keep up. He even puts together a team to train for an upcoming marathon. Over the course of the book, Finn entertains us with the idiosyncrasies of life in rural Kenya (I loved his observation, which drew little comment, of the shepherd who delivered his charges one at a time in the basket of his bicycle. . . .) as well as with his reports of running with these world-class athletes (he often runs with the women. . . .). All the while, he asks the question that prompted his visit to Iten: why are the Kenyans so fast, dominating road racing the world over in recent years? My favorite explanation is tied to the tradition of cattle rustling.

Not too long ago, after a half-year of steady training for a 10K run, I started experiencing runner's knee, a painful condition often thought to result from bad running form or poor equipment (shoes). My doctor asked about my shoes, and when I told him I didn't wear any while running, he said simply, "You know, you're not a 110-pound Kenyan." My doctor, who is also a runner, was right of course, but I wish I had this book at the time, as it goes a long way to dispel some of the myths and misconceptions around running in general and barefoot running in specific. That said, let me add that you don't have to be a runner to enjoy Adharanand Finn's *"Running with the Kenyans"*. (Notice how the "the" suggests the selectivity of just who Finn is going to be running with - not just any Kenyans, the Kenyans.) It combines a bit of memoir, with a bit of journalism, a dash of travelogue, and a lot of running, making for a diverse and divergent read. (It reminded me a bit of *Boozehound: On the Trail of the Rare, the Obscure, and the Overrated in Spirits* in that respect.) Of course, if you are a runner, or more so, one of the growing legion of barefoot or minimal shoe runners (like me), I think you will find this book both challenging and enlightening. Enlightening for obvious reasons,

challenging as I will explain below. The author is a British journalist and running magazine writer whose family reached a crossroads at the same time as his running career/hobby did.

When I was in Basic Training we had to run two miles on a quarter-mile track. Eight daunting laps for some. For a thin, athletic 18-year old, it was an inner-challenge. An attempt to prove ability, speed, superiority over others. After getting lapped by a very thin guy - who I would later learn was from Kenya - on lap 3, humility sunk in. His feet barely touched the ground; his legs were sinewy pistons designed for running. When he lapped me a second time, I was amazed. In awe. I wanted to learn from this man, to be as fast as him. British journalist Adharanand Finn probably experienced some of the same urges when he decided to uproot his young family and actually make an attempt to run with Kenyans on their own turf. Throughout the course of this quickly paced book - a cross between running guide/journal and travel guide - self-discovery and a humility with which I could empathize ultimately washes over Finn, as he experiences the impossibility of what I once desired. One cannot simply run "with" the Kenyans. The book should probably have been "Running Beyond the Kenyans" to be more accurate. Those looking for the Holy Grail of Kenyan running will not find it within. Nearly no training secrets, no daily running regimen, no insight into a training calendar leading up to the event, no worthwhile hydration details, no detailed, analytical data of any kind. Maybe I was looking for something never intended. What Finn does provide, however, is the theoretical. Whether it's climate, diet, genetics, altitude, peer pressure, community pride, dedication, folklore, or a litany of other possibilities, his seemingly final statement is that Kenyans are fast because they are Kenyans.

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