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Welcome to Cabro Colorado's guide to the Copper Canyon Ultra Marathon

The information contained in this guide is from the experiences of Cabro Colorado. If the opinions or experiences of Animales Mas Loco that are not Cabro are used, every attempt to give credit where credit is due has been used.

What is the Copper Canyon Ultra Marathon?

This is a very big question ... ultimately the CCUM is an ultramarathon designed to celebrate and encourage the continued development of running as a central element in the culture of the Raramuri Indians of Central Mexico.

In a less philosophic sense, the CCUM is a mountain running festival with multiple days of hikes with the Raramuri, followed by a 48 mile race in the bottom of the Urique Canyon of the Copper Canyons in Chihuahua, Mexico.

Why should I run in the CCUM?

If your goal is to win more races, then you should not be running this race. You might win this race, but that is very much not the point of this event. This is a celebration of running. It is a celebration of the Raramuri. It is a celebration of Central Mexico. The CCUM is an event unlike any race you will find anywhere else.

How much is entry to the CCUM?

By Caballo's definition, it is "what you can afford" and "what the experience is worth to you". Caballo gets \$xxx per day for guiding groups through the Canyons. Keep in mind that this is an event guided by Korima ... Caballo does not check to make sure you have given what you should, or even what you said. No one will know what you individually have sent ... that is between you and Karma ... a strangely close word to Korima isn't it? Cabro will admit that he gave \$300 for himself and another \$200 for his companion hermano in 2007, plus bringing Caballo a pair of his favorite hooves -- Hi-Tec Vlite Sirocco size 12.

Give what you can ... Cabro can tell you that he pays > \$200 to enter Leadville and gets much more bang for his buck with the CCUM.

What's up with this Korima business?

Korima literally means "sharing without caring" ... put another way, give what you can

and do not expect any thanks for the giving. It's strange business for us Americanos. If you give something to a Raramuri they will take it. Sometimes they will acknowledge the gift ... most of the times, not. It's not an insult, it's the way they live. The reward is in the giving, right?

Who is this Caballo Blanco dude?

Find out for yourself by reading articles posted on web-site, and by googling "Micah True" and "copper canyon ultra marathon".

Who is Cabro Colorado?

Nobody. If you're hoping that these opinions and experiences come from someone important, be prepared to be disappointed. For that, you'll need to seek the wise counsel of worthy Mas Locos like the professional author El Oso, the professional photographer El Coyote, the professional athletes El Venado y Venada, the professional monkey El Mono, the professional guide/RD El Caballo Blanco ... these are truly special people and the reason that Cabro dreams about returning to this event.

Arrgh! I'm trying to plan my trip, but can't find any schedules or info!!!

It can be intimidating thinking about navigating through Mexico to find buses and trains that can't be arranged ahead of time. Cabro felt the same way last year. Now that he's been through it once, he can tell you that it's pretty easy as long as your willing to roll with whatever happens, think on your feet and have no shame for trying to use crappy Spanish in non-touristy places.

How much dinero should I bring?

You can probably eat & drink for < \$10 per day.

Hotels will run between \$10 & \$30 per night, but you will almost always have the opportunity to split room costs.

The extended plan is 7 nights and 8 days ... makes for around \$200 in food and lodging. Transportation into and out of the canyon towns will vary depending on your route choices. However, buses from train down and Urique up will be \$12 to \$20 each. Throw in a few other expenses (like paying a Raramuri to make you some huraches) and Cabro thinks \$300 would be a fair amount to bring.

Can I use traveler's checks or credit cards during the trip?

There is very little opportunity to use credit cards, especially in the canyon towns. There will be a cash machine in Creel and a bank that can advance cash against your CC. After that, no chance.

Traveler's checks are a similar story. The cambio de cheques in Creel or the bank in Creel can convert your checks. Past this point in the journey, it's basically a cash world. In general, you should convert enough \$\$\$ to pesos in one of the major cities (Mochis, Mazatlan, Chihuahua) and avoid the stress of being peso or cash limited. If you run out of pesos, many of the Mexicans will take \$\$\$ at a favorable exchange to them. Last year the normal exchange was around 11p / \$1 ... however, we could buy things with \$\$\$ at a simple rate of 10p / \$1.

I hear the course is unmarked. How will I know where to go?

There really is no way to get lost on the first spur. It's a road that leads up to Guadalupe City and back down. Then we run up another Canyon to a mile (each way) of single track. Last year Cabro had not even walked this section because of a knee injury ... side effect of too much Mexican moonshine ... but still managed to find his way up to the bridge, with nothing but an owl chasing him up the hill.

For the 2nd leg, 6+ miles of road is the main part, then cross and follow the river. Trickiest part will be finding the path up, which is obvious once you see it. After this, the path is wide and obvious all the way to Los Alisos because of the sponsored trail maintenance.

For the 3rd leg, all road back to Guadalupe City and back to Urique.

Do I need camping equipment?

No. Unless you intend to deviate from the basic plan, you will not need any sleeping equipment. You will be "pampered" by central Mexico standards.

Do I need to speak Spanish to survive this trip?

Cabro's experience says that the Mexican people truly appreciate anyone trying to speak Spanish. Many of them can speak English and will respond quicker after a feeble attempt

by an Americano to speak Espanol. However, there will be many people in the group that are either fluent, or can hack their way through. Spanish language is NOT a requirement for joining this adventure.

Can we talk to the Raramuri in Spanish or English?

Maybe ... some of the Raramuri will also speak Spanish. They speak a unique language that is not rooted in the latin derivatives. There is an online translator you can use to entertain yourself here → <http://aulex.ohui.net/es-tar/>

Where do we stay in Creel?

Most of the Mas Locos will stay in Casa Perez. This is a nice little hotel off of the main street of Creel. There are other options in town that you can arrange if you'd prefer.

Where do we stay in Batopilas?

The main spot for Mas Locos is right next to Caballo's house. This is a very small dormitory style hotel with an attached shop for water and beer. The town is small, so it's easy to walk for food when needed.

There are other higher priced options.

Where do we stay in Urique?

Sponsored event lodging is at Estrella del Rio. The Rio is nice enough by Mexico standards, but these are not even as nice as cheap hotels here in the US. A bed and a basic bathroom is what you should expect. Cost should be \$30 per room with space for 1-3.

Hotel Canon on the street, nice enough old place for about \$15 for 1, or \$25 for two will be an option.

Campers may pitch tents at Entre Amigos, about 5 bucks....Nice piece of land, good shower, ect...

Los Barrancas at \$40 is available, as well. This is apparently the only business NOT contributing to the race nor helping to buy the Ranchero Band that will be playing for us all day and night. Treat them accordingly. Remember that Karma/Korima business?

How do I get to the race start?

Seriously tight budget (from Caballo Blanco)

- Bus to El Paso
- Get to the Americanos bus station on El Paso street on the El Paso side of the international bridge.
- Buy a ticket on the next bus to Juarez bus terminal -- earlier the better
- AMERICANOS bus will stop at the border while Mexican passengers are having their luggage inspected by Mexican customs, you go into the migra office and get your tourist card...tell the bus driver what you are doing so he waits. This ride will cost ya about \$7.
- When you get to the Juarez bus terminal, buy ticket on next bus to Chi city--about \$25. 4 1/2 hours later you will be in Chi city bus terminal.
- There will be a direct bus to Creel--about \$18 leaving at 2 and 4pm---4 1/2 hour ride.
- If you miss all rides to Creel -- in CHI city, there is a really nice hostel, with rooms right next to the train station...his link is one of the first links listed at bottom scroll of www.caballoblanco.com. Hostel is owned by a French guy, called Casa De Chihuahua. Then, next day get on the early second class train to Bahuichivo, or first class if ya want to spend twice as much money and leave earlier. ALL transpo from Bahuichivo station to Urique will wait on the 2nd class trains to arrive....so.....hurry up and wait, or wait and hurry up? Your choice.
- Train from Creel to Bahuichivo station is about \$12

Semi-tight budget

Fly to El Paso, follow instructions above

Less-tight and I want to ride the train through the lower canyons

- Fly to Mazatlan
- Bus to Los Mochis
- If you get to Mochis < 7 pm, bus to El Fuerte
- Catch train to Creel or Bahuichivo

More \$\$\$ less buses

- Fly to Los Mochis
- Train to Creel or Bahuichivo

or

- Fly to Chihuahua
- Train to Creel or Bahuichivo

Creel to Batopilas

There is an early morning bus that takes people down to Batopilas.

Creel to Urique

Catch first or second class train to Bahuichivo for \$12 to \$24. Then catch public bus to Urique for \$12.

Official race plan vs. Extended plan

Regular race plan

This is the basic event. You will want to be in Urique by Wednesday. It is possible to show up later, but you will miss much of the beauty of this event. Part of the purpose is to hang around in Urique with the Raramuri, fellow Gringos and Mexicans.

Arrive in Urique Wednesday. Celebrate the arrival of the hikers and Raramuri at Tita & Jose's restaurant with dinner

Thursday – hike the 1st 18 miles of the course. This will be a running optional hike. Great opportunity to practice the words you learned from the Spanish to Raramuri translator

Friday – hike the 2nd 18 miles of the course. This is NOT to be missed. The first 6 miles are road following the river ... after this it's up, up, up for 3 miles to Los Alimos. This is a very special place the needs to be visited. The views along the way are spectacular. The owner is a true Vaqueiro and gracious host named Prospero. His grapefruit gardens are magical and will not be enjoyed on race day.

Saturday is a great day for hanging around town and enjoying the river basin. Veteran Mas Locos know of a fantastic beach about a mile from town.

Saturday night is a terrific celebration in the town plaza. The town wonders why the runners leave and try to get some sleep ☺

Sunday is the race, of course

Sunday night is an even greater celebration with traditional Mexican dancers and awards. The entire town will show up for this event.

Monday is a whole day of traveling by bus and train to Chihuahua or Los Mochis.

Extended event

Arrive in Creel on Sunday night to meet with Caballo and other Mas Locos

Monday morning, catch a bus down to Batopilas ... visit the home stable

Tuesday is likely a light run to see some local feature (mission, canyon, etc)

Wednesday starts very early with the hike from Batopilas to Urique

Extended + and ++ and +++

These are new event ideas for 2008

Basically, hang around after the race

+ is generally used to describe hiking back to Batopilas over two days

++ & +++ are for hanging out in the canyons with Caballo and helping to deliver the prizes of corn to the Raramuri. Sounds like a great way to really get to know the people.

Wouldn't I run better in the race if I did not participate in the Batopilas to Urique hike

Probably ... 66 miles of mountain hiking in 3 days is not exactly a taper. However, if you're coming to CCUM because you want to win, you're heading down for the wrong reasons. This is an event that defies resting. If you're not out walking the town, swimming in the river and dancing in the Plaza on Saturday night, then you're going to miss most of the beauty of the people and culture of the Los Barancas del Cobre. Bottom line, if you have to choose one event to participate in, the hike over is more memorable than the race itself. That's the day were you will meet many of the Raramuri for the first time as they come down from their homes and the Raramuri will become comfortable hanging around you. The runners that just show up in Urique will not be viewed the same. Be prepared to remain quiet for a lot of the hike. The Raramuri are a demure people and start chatting after they get comfortable around someone.

Can I keep up in the hike to Urique?

You will not be running by yourself. The Wednesday event is not a run. It is a hike and it's important that we stay together for most of the event and let the Raramuri sort of settle in with the new faces. They are a very shy people.

We will hike out of Batopilas with early morning energy for about 7 miles to Sierra Colorado (?), a tiny little village where you can buy a candy bar and get more water. This is where we'll meet the first group of Raramuri. Caballo will ask the newcomers to stay up close with him. Veteran mas locos that are familiar to the Raramuri will drop back with the indians and behind them. Some Raramuri will tail us by quite a ways before they get more comfortable.

After this, we will climb, descend and climb. I remember jogging at times, hiking a lot, running to "challenge" a couple of speedy Raramuri so I could watch them run through the woods like deer!!! This is not an event that encourages or rewards running fast. It will take around 12 hours to get all the way to Urique with probably 10 of those hours in forward motion to cover the 28+ miles.

What should I bring to the race?

As little as possible. You can rinse/wash stuff in the river or showers. There will be no need to dress up for anything we will do. Everyone will be wearing t-shirts and running shirts. Running shoes and a pair of hiking sandals is enough. If you have more than a big backpack and a small hiking type pack, you are probably over packing.

The Raramuri will graciously accept any small gifts or tokens you might bring. There are several great pictures of La Brujita sharing Clif gels with them. This is a sweet treat they are not accustomed to.

For running fuel, you can BYO or embrace the local products. Pinole is a very finely ground form of roasted corn and mixes well in water. It makes for a terrific carbohydrate source. Last year Cabro used this and some gel packs as his only fuel source. You should buy pinole in Creel before heading down into the canyons.

How much does it all cost?

Notes from Carnero

Travel

I flew out of Phoenix in the morning and arrived into El Paso early afternoon. I was supposed to meet up with some other mas locos, but they were delayed somewhere else in Texas. I set out from the airport solo. From the El Paso airport the goal is to get to the Juarez bus station in order to hop a bus to Chihuahua. The cab ride across the border and to the bus station costs \$50 per taxi. Since I was alone and had no one to share the cost, I decided to walk to the border. I walked about 3 miles and caught a cab in Mexico that still cost me \$25 to get to the bus station.

There are plenty of buses leaving from Juarez to Chihuahua all day long. I am not sure when the first/last are but I caught mine somewhere around 6pm. The bus ride to Chihuahua set me back \$25 and it took 5 hours. We stopped once along the way at a taco stand and I ate some delicious bean burritos. I arrived in Chihuahua at 11pm to find the next bus to Creel was to leave the next morning at 6 or 7am. I had a dilemma: either sleep in the nasty bus station or find a hotel/hostel. I ended up talking to this cab driver with my broken Spanish and got a ride into town and a night in a trashy hotel. This ride to and from the hotel cost me \$14.

In the morning the owner of the hotel gave me a ride to the bus station and I was off on another 5 hour bus ride to Creel. This cost me \$19 and had a lot of little stops along the way. There were plenty of places to buy food along the way as food vendors boarded the bus at every stop. I will note that another option from Chihuahua is to hop on the Chepe (train), but this is much more expensive. There is also supposedly a nice hostel right next to the train station. So in summary, I left on the morning of day one from Phoenix and arrived in the early afternoon in Creel. I believe if I caught the earliest flight possible out of Phoenix, took the taxi from El Paso and two 5 hour bus rides, I could have made it to Creel in only one day.

I met up with Caballo and some other mas locos in Creel and we traveled down to Batopilas together. In 2006 they all took a large bus together but due to some of the Texas weather delays we waited for a couple other members to arrive and chartered a van from Creel. This was a 6 to 7 hour "adventure" that cost a cool \$20.

Batopilas is where Caballo's house is and where we began our hike to Urique (the race

town). In order to get our gear there we each paid \$50 to hire a private mule train. I suppose if you packed light you could pack it all on your back (But be warned this is a brutally tough hike!!!) and avoid this extra expense (check with Caballo).

On the day after the race, we left Urique by an early morning bus that left at 8am. This cost \$10.50 and took 2 hours to reach Beauchivo where you can catch the Chepe to either Los Mochis (heading West) or Creel/Chihuahua (if you head East). We took the 3 hour train ride to Creel which set us back \$25 and immediately hopped a 4pm bus to Chihuahua for \$19. We arrived in Chihuahua at 10pm, immediately caught another bus ride (\$25) into Juarez where we arrived at 1am. A \$15 taxi ride brought us to the El Paso airport by 2am and we slept until morning. This method would allow you to catch the earliest flight possible out of El Paso and to your final destination.

In total I spent \$365.50 on transportation which included my \$118 plane ticket from Phoenix and all costs above.

Lodging

I thought I would also provide a quick note on lodging. Here is a breakdown of what I spent. This by no means guarantees what it will cost this year but may provide a rough idea:

- 1 night in Chihuahua at cheap motel \$14
- 1 night in Creel at Casa Perez \$10
- 2 nights in Batopilas Local Motel \$6/night
- 5 nights in Urique at Estrella del Rio \$15/night

Grand total = \$110

Estimates from Cabro

	From	To		
Flight	Denver	Mazatlan		\$180
Shuttle	Airport	La Central	150	\$15
Bus	Mazatlan	Los Mochis	400	\$40
Taxi	Mochis	Hotel	100	\$10
Chepe	Mochis	Creel	800	\$80
Bus	Creel	Batopilas	200	\$20
Mule	Batopilas	Urique	500	\$50
Bus	Urique	Bauichivo	200	\$20
Train	Bauichivo	Mochis	600	\$60
Bus	Mochis	Mazatlan	500	\$50

Taxi	La Central	Airport	100	\$10
Flight	Mazatlan	Denver		\$180
			3550	\$715
Hotels				
Los Mochis	1 night	600	600	\$60
Creel	1 night	100	100	\$10
Batopilas	2 nights	100	200	\$20
Urique	5 nights	150	750	\$75
			1650	\$165
Food				
Sat	2	50	100	\$10
Sunday	2	50	100	\$10
Monday	2	50	100	\$10
Tuesday	2	50	100	\$10
Wednesday	2	50	100	\$10
Thursday	2	50	100	\$10
Friday	2	50	100	\$10
Saturday	2	50	100	\$10
Sunday	2	50	100	\$10
Monday	3	50	150	\$15
Tuesday	1	50	50	\$5
			1100	\$110
			6,300	\$990

Can I drive down to the race?

Driving info from Caballo

It is an awesome drive and fast----there is a shortcut over the mountains halfway down the freeway--thats right--between Juarez and Chihuahua, that avoids chihuahua and brings you out at Cautemoc....2 1/2 hours to Creel. Takes about 9 hours.....11 real easy.

www.mexicohorse.com -- has links to getting here, and road logs, ect.....

I would leave my car in creel, but, not such a bad drive down from Bahuichivo....Creel to San Rafael is paved, then gets pretty rough, but beautiful...that is on the way to Bahuichivo--5 hour drive.

When driving, I personally prefer crossing the border at Colunbus/Palomas new mexico----real pretty routh after Casa Grande, and small, easy border crossing----ole Mexico almost immediately upon crossing.

Still need more info?

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