



Long-distance running in Japan

- Simon Bray (イギリス)
- Andrew Flynn (アメリカ)
- Ron Choi (韓国・アメリカ)

Spring is the perfect season to step outside to stretch those rusty legs and get back in shape before summer. Whatever sport you do, you'll always need either specific gears, tools, a ground, a pool or a partner. However, running is the only sport that needs none of those. You just go out and you run. But running long distances in fast times takes some shape et mostly takes some guts! Japan has a particular love for running. Would it be for marathons or relays, people travel the country to go cheer runners. Schools have compulsory marathon days. TV channels have their 24h running challenges. But how is it for foreigners to run in this country? JQR has met with three hard-core adrenaline-addicted men...

JQR: How did you get into running?

Ron: I was running when I was at high school but stopped when I started working and 25 years later, that would be 3 years ago, a friend of mine invited me back to it. I turned up injured after 2km so I realized it was time for me to take care of myself. So I have been running since and today I now weigh less than my high school days.

Andrew: I was playing soccer at high school but me too, I didn't do anything for 25 years and 4 years ago, I thought I should be as well taking care of myself and I asked my brother about it. I discovered then that he was running a marathon a year for years!

ALL: Really ?!!!

Andrew: Yep. Big family and we don't tell each other everything! But he taught me the bare-foot running technique.

Simon: I used to play soccer and tennis too when I was younger. I kept running for years but not seriously. Mostly at the weekend around the park near the place I was living. But it's about three years ago that I got more into running in high mountains and it was actually here in Japan.

JQR: Where?

Simon: The first time was with an OXFAM charity trail event. You have to walk-up 100km from Odawara through Mt. Hakone to Yamanakako at Mt. Fuji within 48hrs. I started to get into that but then in the trails I saw trail-runners and found myself very attracted to that and tried it out. I can still remember my first time coming down a mountain and being very scared and excited at the same time! And ever since then I've been addicted to the trails.

JQR: But why running out of any other sport?

Andrew: It's the most natural thing that a human can do!

JQR: Walking is!

Andrew: But it is not as exciting!

Ron: You can't go as far!

Simon: There is something about running that you can't get when you walk. It's a trance. It's almost hypnotic for me. Your blood runs faster obviously so there must be something caused by that.

JQR: You guys are talking about "runner's high" right?

ALL: Yes.

Ron: There is a beat when your feet touch the ground continuously for... we run long-distances. I run more than 30km every saturday morning. That's about 2 or 3 hours of that beat and adrenaline.

JQR: But you can get that when you do any kind of sport...

Andrew: You are more isolated when you run.

Ron: There's something primitive about running. But it is also a great way to cut out from your daily stress. Mentally it is helping me. I have a very complicated job and three kids when I come home. So when I run, I just focus on running and take a break from all those complicated factors of my life.

Andrew: Some people take that time to do some sort of meditation, others work out problems while they run. No-one's going to be bothering you.

Ron: And it takes nothing to run. You just put on shoes and get out of the door.

Talking to foreign residents in Japan

Meet our three interviewees!!!



Simon Bray
From London, UK, and living in Japan since 10 years ago, he has been running all his life but really got into trail-running in thanks to Japan.



Andrew Flynn
From NY, USA, he has lived 3 years in Tokyo 10 years ago and has been back here for 6 months. He started to run to get fit again 4 years ago.



Ron Choi
From Alabama, USA, Ron has lived in Japan for 8 years. He started to run seriously 3 years ago.