

‘HOW I  
BUILD MY  
BODY’

# Alison Walker



## MEET THE ELITE

Alison Walker, 33, holds the record solo time of 54 hours and 33 minutes for the Smog Graham Round – a 300K route that visits the highest points in all 32 boroughs of London – and has received the Malaysian Kotex She Universe award for her running achievements.



### CARDIO

'I work full-time but generally run every day, whatever the weather. Monday to Friday, I hit the hills of Yorkshire for around 90-100 minutes every morning before work, and on two of those days I'll also do a 40-minute evening recovery run. At the weekend, I go out for an 18- to 20-mile run but, when a race approaches, I can end up doing long back-to-back runs with 30 miles one day and 20 miles the next. Anything from 50K counts as an ultra race, but I prefer 100K distances for the added challenge (my best 100K time is 9 hours 40 minutes but that was over easier terrain). Ideally, I like to give myself four months to prepare for an ultra as it can take my body a long time to recover. Despite training every day, I keep my volume down to avoid overtraining, and any injuries I've sustained tend to come from accidents as I'm quite clumsy. I'm young for an ultra runner, so my focus

is on future longevity rather than quantity.'

### STRENGTH

'I do one dedicated 60-minute strength training session a week. I use a trap bar for exercises like Romanian deadlifts and squats, as running is powered a lot through the hips. I also do lots of single-leg exercises to strengthen each of my legs. Plus, I train my core and do some plyometric work, but not too much as running is very explosive and I experience enough impact!'

### RECOVERY

'It's all about good quality sleep, and I get around eight or nine hours a night. I work on my mobility and stability every day using a Mobo Board ([moboboard.com](http://moboboard.com)) and do lots of dynamic stretching. I think this approach helps keep niggles at bay, but if I do get any pains, I'll call my running physio straight

away to nip it in the bud rather than soldier on.'

### NUTRITION

'I eat three large meals a day and lots of snacks in between meals, so I'm never in a calorie deficit. I tend to eat what my body craves so I'm not anti-junk food – if I want it, I'll have it! Most of my meals are home-cooked so my nutrition is fairly balanced. Getting my fuelling right on ultra runs can be tricky, and I've tried various strategies. For the Smog Graham Round, I used a combination of Unived sports gels, Soreen bars, Percy Pigs, pork

## TRAINING SECRETS

scratchings and Lucho Dillitos energy bars.'

### VITAL KIT

'During the summer when trails are dried and hard, I need a more cushioned trainer, so I wear the Inov-8 Trailfly Ultra G 300 Max shoes, £170 (seen here; [inov-8.com](http://inov-8.com)), which deliver amazing comfort, grip and ventilation while still being very lightweight. When things are wetter, or the terrain is more technical, I use the Inov-8 X-Talon G 235, £140, as they are super grippy.'



## WHY TRY ULTRA RUNNING?

'Ultra races are challenging because they're so unpredictable! You can only prepare so much in advance, but the cut-off times are generous so if you get injured or feel unwell you can walk to the finish and still get that sense of achievement. I've made mistakes, but you learn from them for the next race.'

'I love running outside in the elements and find the fresh air addictive. Zoning out in nature and appreciating the changing landscape provides a great way to clear the mind. I've learnt lots of new skills and it's a real confidence-booster. 'You can make wonderful friends through the sport. Everyone chats at the start line and often through the race, too. I find that fellow ultra runners are generally very encouraging and supportive because we're all in it together.' 🏃‍♀️