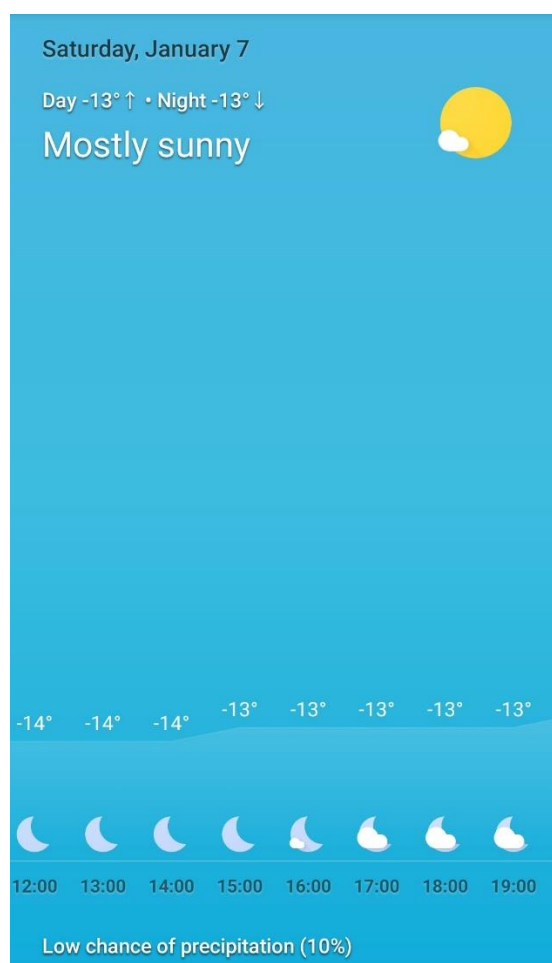


Polar Arctic Half Marathon.

I did this run in Norway's Arctic Circle three years ago with a group of Fountains Abbey Parkrunners. With runs, or visits, if I find them interesting, I generally like to do them a second time as I have then 'learnt the ropes' or the basics, and so relax and enjoy it more second time around.

So off I went again this year. And whilst it was the same course, lit up with the same sort of candles and run in the same level of darkness, it was a completely different run from last time.



Last time it had been around -1C and we ran on hard packed snow, and it snowed lightly during the run.

This time it was -14C with a bitter wind that according to the forecast made it 'feel like -18C'.

The only crumb of comfort was that as soon as the race started at 3pm, the temperature was set to rise by a degree!

And having looked at some of the course there were places where it was sheet ice – particularly in underpasses where water had run into and frozen, and also on some of the steepest sections (which don't seem that steep until you start running on ice).

And this bit about 'mostly sunny', that was a lie as the sun never comes up!

So spikes it was – I got to use my Yak-Trax (which I had forgotten to pack 3 years ago)

And they were actually very good – I was expecting them to be slightly awkward to wear, but I was pleasantly surprised; although I did find the combination of the Yak-Trax, trail shoes and ice was a little jarring on the soles of my feet.

I was also surprised at how warm I felt and that I didn't really feel the cold most of the time – I had a base layer, a merino wool top and Under Armour windproof and waterproof top and bottoms. The only time I felt the cold was when I was running by the sea and exposed to the wind, and it was just the tops of my legs where the windproofing wasn't quite

windproof enough – so much so that when I went for a shower afterwards, the tops of my legs ‘burned’ a little.



But overall it's a great run, and the sound of people running on snow and ice is a very pleasant one.

One new aspect to this year is that they had a full marathon too – this is the first time they have done this in winter (they have done one in summer for several years) and it looks a nice course – starting off in the snowy hills and running down into the town of Tromsø where both runs finish.

But one thing got me thinking

...

There was one guy who ran the Half Marathon in -13C bare-chested and without shoes.

I first noticed him when we were doubling back, and my wife noticed him at the finish line – and sure enough the pictures prove his 'feat'. Brave perhaps.



But as the saying goes, there is a thin line between that and stupidity. And it got me thinking – what is the bravest / most foolish thing you have ever seen at a race?

Paul Ackerley