

# WINTERMAN

## CZECH XTREME TRIATHLON

### Top Ten Tips & Tricks for Winterman`s “virgins”

...and not just for them.

*The best tips from experienced racers.*

#### 1. Choose the best Support!

Pick wisely who will share your Winterman debut with. If you choose a partner under the influence of alcohol or drugs at a club for your first sexual experience, the outcome may be intense, but not necessarily positive. For Winterman, this is doubly true. Having the right support is key to a successful race.

##### What makes the ideal support

- It's someone who knows you well and can keep smiling when things go wrong.
- They should be able to "teleport" you from the Elbe River on the road to Hřensko without much fuss (and without your mental involvement).
- They'll hand you the right water bottle and warm jacket at the perfect moment.
- They'll get coffee from the gas station when needed.
- They're willing to help other racers too.
- They'll happily eat whatever crumbs you drop all day.
- While you're cycling 180km, they'll find joy in following you by car.
- They'll look forward to the final climb to Ještěd under the cable car, eager to stretch after a day in the car.

You'll often find former or future Wintermen, elite athletes, runners, triathletes, ultramarathoners, adventurers, and inspiring personalities in support teams. The race often turns into a unique family team-building experience or a special moment with a partner. Your support becomes your alter ego, believing in you more than you believe in yourself.

Without them, you wouldn't be there.

It doesn't matter if it's your best friend, your partner, your child, or your mother-in-law.

## 2. "Respect the race, but don't fear it"

...wrote one multi-time finisher to us. These words should be etched in stone.

Don't sign up for Winterman under the influence of alcohol or based on a bar bet. It's a beautiful race, but approach it with humility, while still maintaining the enthusiasm that brought you to the start.

We won't tell you how to train, but be responsible in your preparation – this isn't a Sunday stroll in the park. You're about to take on a full Ironman in challenging conditions. Physical preparation is necessary but not sufficient. Winterman is a race where motivation and mindset are key.

**Crisis may come.** You might face hunger, cramps, blisters, or mechanical failure. You may feel like you can't pedal anymore. You might feel sick, miss a turn, face headwinds, and have to climb. You might even consider quitting and heading to a pub.

But remember what you've already accomplished: the training, the anticipation, the early mornings, jumping into the cold and dark Elbe, the climbs you barely managed, the slippery descents. You've made it this far, and you'll finish.

What keeps you going isn't the desire to beat others or impress anyone. You're here for yourself. You're doing what you love, from morning till night, with the people you care about.

You'll fulfill your dream – so go for it!

## 3. Prepare the right gear!

A triathlon suit and reliance on aid stations won't cut it. Let's go straight to tips from the racers:

- It's not a bad idea, especially for your first time, to make a list, check what you have and what you need, and then cross off each item.

- Start packing your gear in boxes early to avoid (or at least minimize) pre-race jitters. Plastic boxes (like those from IKEA) work well for organizing everything. Keep in mind that by the end of the race, these boxes may turn into a smelly mess, but that's normal, not a failure of the system.
- **Swimming:** 1-2 wetsuits (for less cold resistant athletes, Helix Thermal is recommended by Petr Vabroušek), clear goggles or a swim mask, a neoprene cap or hood, 1-2 pairs of neoprene socks, and other extras like classic socks with plastic bags and NASA tape.
- **T1:** Chair, warming bag or a canister of warm water, possibly a sink, a large towel, or a poncho.
- **Cycling, running:** Plenty of appropriate clothing for all weather conditions. It's better to have too much than too little, and organize everything clearly. Shoe covers, a cap, a neck warmer, warm gloves, reflective elements, and lights as per the manual.
- For running, consider using trekking poles for the last 10 - 13 km of the race.
- Don't forget dry, warm clothes for the finish – it gets freezing quickly up on Ještěd!

#### 4. How to Swim – from Jakuby to Děčín Easily and Quickly

Don't be afraid of swimming! As the experienced say – it's a challenge, but also a beautiful experience. Acclimate yourself in advance, and it's a good idea to try night swimming beforehand.

As Petr Vabroušek says – the current will carry even weaker swimmers to the finish with minimal time lost to the race leaders. Just lay down in the current, keep an eye on the buoys, and swim along the outer curve of the river. While swimming, watch where the other swimmers are and don't swim too close to the shore – the current is weak there, and you risk being pushed onto a shallow bank.

It's worth trying to swim to the T1 in Děčín beforehand, so you're not surprised by the strong current during the race.

Depending on your level of cold tolerance, choose 1-2 wetsuits. Options include a short and long one or both long (with the second one being larger). A neoprene hood or cap as a second layer under a silicone cap will help retain valuable heat. Neoprene socks are basically a "must-have." You can use two pairs, and as the second (inner) layer, warm socks combined with a plastic bag and taped with NASA tape or food wrap work as well.

And take clear goggles so you can see something – adds Lukáš Plocek, who hasn't missed a single start in the nine years and will be racing for the tenth time this year.

## **5. How to "Teleport" from the Elbe to Your Bike – T1 Tips**

Successfully managing the first depot is a big task and a responsibility for your support crew. Experienced extremists, adventurers, and seasoned cold-water swimmers continue smoothly in freezing weather in their wetsuits, but they can be counted on fingers of one hand.

For first-timers, we recommend a more defensive strategy.

Keep in mind that you're in for a long day, so it's better to lose a few minutes to dress properly, and finish the race successfully, rather than shiver to the bone while trying to put on shoes and fight for seconds.

We recommend to change entirely into cycling gear. If you're taking a wise sailor's approach, you can prepare warm water in a thermos in the T1 or bring a plastic basin to warm your feet or rinse them.

Most racers bring a folding chair – it's a pretty practical gadget.

In Děčín before 7 a.m., we follow the saying, "one bare bottom doesn't make spring," but a poncho or grandpa's oversized robe will provide privacy from curious onlookers and ensure a good dry-off.

## **6. Enjoy All Shades of Cycling!**

Carefully consider whether to use a triathlon bike or a road bike. Both have their pros and cons.

Since the only truly flat section on the course is from Děčín to Hřensko and the profile is quite demanding, we recommend appropriate gears and reliable brakes. If you don't have disc brakes, it's better to go for aluminum wheels – carbon rims and wet fallen leaves don't mix well.

If you choose a road bike, we suggest to keep the aerobars on it – there are enough sections where you'll appreciate the rest in the bars, especially if a mountain wind hits you.

Be prepared for varying weather conditions through the race. In one year, helmets had to be scraped free of frost in the T1, and the 14-degree water felt like a warm bath compared to the outside temperature, but later you could ride in a short jersey. Last year (2023), the conditions worsened so much during the race that fresh snow fell on Ještěd.

Don't worry about stopping to change clothes, adding or removing layers.

## **7. Run with Ease!**

Everyone looks forward to T2 at Malevil! You'll be greeted by a large fan club, you can finally put down your bike, enjoy some good food, and change in peace.

In past years, some participants even took a shower in their room to freshen up for the next leg... While it's not a dance party, if you're not in a rush and have accommodation at Malevil, why not? It's not against the rules.

Anyway, once you're ready to go, don't linger too long in the T2 – head out to meet the adventure and make sure to reach Ještěd before midnight! When you leave T2, look far ahead and up – you'll see it right before you. Don't panic. It's going to be amazing, you'll see.

You can run alone, with a buddy in running shoes, or even with someone on a mountain bike – it's up to you.

Pay attention to your footwear. The initial part is a trail, and the final stretch climbs under the cable car to Ještěd – for these sections, we recommend reliable shoes, and you can even change if needed.

It's a good idea to carry a trail vest with water and gels, and for the final climb, you might also use running poles.

Important note: The race manual details how and when to use reflective elements, so study that section carefully!!!

## 8. Stay Hydrated and Energized!

Regularly replenishing the energy is key to completing a long race. In extreme triathlons, there are no refreshment stations, meaning your support team handles all catering. Since it will be a long day, it's worth carefully planning your WM menu in advance.

Try out the sports nutrition you choose beforehand, calculate how much you'll need, and plan how you'll refuel with the help of your support.

Refuel regularly and in advance, don't wait until you're starving – by then, it's too late to pull out a gel.

Always keep a "reserve" in your jersey pocket or running vest, just in case your support team gets stuck somewhere, and think about having enough fluids. If you plan to eat regular snacks, think ahead about what they'll be, and test them in training.

In T2, you can get hot broth and a snack, but otherwise, it's all up to you.

Most racers find it helpful to have all their food in one place (a box or plastic container), and when the support vehicle stops, they can "refuel" according to their current preferences.

Remember, "winter" means cold. You might find your gel frozen in the tube or ice slush in your bottle. It's not a bad idea to have warm tea or broth in a thermos, available even in the first depot.

## 9. Don't Underestimate Your Health!

A very important rule: Everyone participates in the race at their own risk. However, we strongly encourage you to be truly responsible when taking on such a demanding race.

Practically speaking:

- Know your health status, go for regular check-ups
- If you're in the "masters" category, have a basic understanding of your heart health, blood pressure, and EKG
- Don't race if you're sick – we all know what that means!
- No medications, painkillers, or "magic pink pills" are recommended on the course
- If you have chronic conditions, consult with your doctor before participating.

## **10. Go into the race with an open heart, a clear mind, and humility.**

You'll take away an incredible experience from WM. Enjoy the whole race and every moment, even the tough ones, and the pain. This is a beautiful race on a beautiful course, with amazing people on the same journey.

It's a celebration of sport, friendship, and the lifestyle you've chosen. It's the cherry on top of your hard preparation and love for movement. You're not here for the results or an Instagram photo. You're here for yourself, your happiness, and to share it with others.

And when you reach the Ještěd transmitter and Adélka puts a medal around your neck, you'll understand.

It's a unique moment for your heart.

