

Run Lootie Run: A Former Softballer's Audacious Trot Around The Globe



Lootie is on the trip of a lifetime (Image credit: Bertrand Hauger)

NÎMES — Marie Leautey — “Lootie” for short — has always been, in her words, “a girl with a lot of energy.”

It's a basic aspect of her being, and goes a long way to explaining the 42-year-old's current undertaking, which would seem to defy the limits of human capacity except for the fact that when I met her in the southern city of Nîmes — shortly after she'd completed the equivalent of her 63rd marathon in 73 days — she seemed perfectly fine.

More than fine actually. Lootie was... well... bursting with energy.

Since then the French woman has logged 14 more runs of 40-plus kilometers, all while pushing along her clothes, GPS devices and water, of course, in a three-wheeled buggy nicknamed “BoB.”

And all of that, believe it or not, is just the beginning, relatively speaking, of her quest, which is to trot her way literally across the globe. Lootie expects that to complete the epic adventure she'll need to do approximately 650 such runs — a marathon a day, in other words — over the course of two years.

To date, just six people (five of them men) have ever accomplished such a journey. On her website, www.lootie-run.com, Lootie explains that to be “official,” a round-the-world run needs to be validated by the World Runners Association, cover at least 26,232 kilometers, end in the same place it began, and cross at least four continents — ocean-to-ocean.

The runner also uses her website to publish daily updates on her progress and experiences along the way — it's definitely worth checking out! — and keeps a Facebook page: '[Lootie's Run Around The World](#).'

Breaking new ground

Interestingly, the affable, multilingual athlete is *already* quite the world traveler, having lived in a number of different countries, including Singapore — her most recent port of call — where she spent seven years working as a finance consultant and CFO.

Still, she always dreamed of some day seeing the WHOLE world, and so, starting on Dec. 6 of last year, Lootie took off running from Lisbon, Portugal on a mission to do just that. I guess that's the thing about being such an amazingly active person: There's always a way to do more.



On the road in Spain, country #2 on Lootie's long journey (Credit: Marie Leautey)

Her boundless energy might also be why Lootie sometimes finds herself a bit... ahead of her time. In Greece, for example — another of the countries the runner has called home — she blazed a trail, so to speak, by creating a private company that organized triathlons and other sporting events. Until then, she explained to me, only the public sector managed events of that kind.

"[Greece] is one of those countries where you can be a pioneer at something that already exists everywhere else in the world," she said.

Playing with the boys

Lootie was also very much ahead of the curve when, as a teenager in the Norman city of Rouen, she decided to throw herself into a very different sport, one that even now — nearly 30 years later — remains confidential, as they say in France.

The sport was baseball, which has been played in France in one form or another for more than a century but still flies very much below the radar, albeit less so in Rouen than anywhere else in the country. That's because the city's baseball and softball club, Rouen Baseball 76, is a powerhouse in the sport, having won five straight national titles in the top-division (D1) men's circuit and 15 of the last 17, dating back to 2003.

Lootie's tenure with the club predated all of that, however. And girl's softball — her only option back then — was even less developed. "We had a team that was just forming," she recalled. "None of us knew anything."

In many ways, though, softball was a natural fit for the then 14-year-old, who loved the combination of team play and individual performance. Soon she was asking to practice hardball too — with the boys — just to get the extra workouts, improve her skills and yes, burn off some of that prodigious energy. And at one point the club even agreed to let her play in a baseball game.

"I think I was the first girl to ever compete in a baseball game with the boys team in France," she recalled. "They let me because I was a strange girl who has so much energy, and I could just go on forever. I was just really obsessed with it. I loved it."



*Lootie
was a
pioneer
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club
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Rouen*

That was back in the 1990s, two decades still before [female players like Mélissa Mayeux](#) helped put women's baseball on the map in France, and before the sport's governing body, the Fédération Française de Baseball & Softball, decided to finally organize [the first women's national team](#) — just last year.

Lootie didn't know about any of those recent developments, and took a keen interest as I explained that the [first Women's European Baseball Championship](#) also took place in 2019 — in Rouen, no less — and that the French team won!

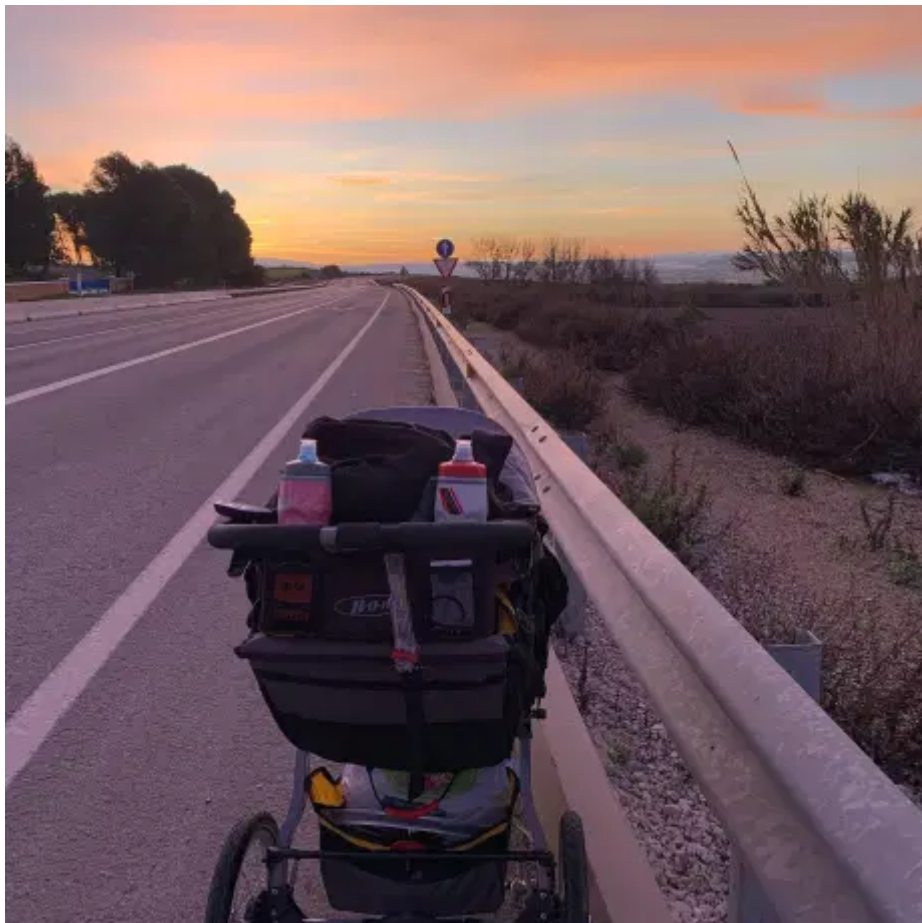
But I also got the feeling that all the baseball talk prompted a pang of nostalgia for the former player, and even a bit of frustration that those same opportunities didn't exist when she was a member of the club.

"I think I was too early," she told me. "I wish the time had been a bit further along when I joined softball, because however good you were back then, it was still non-existent, so whatever your talent you couldn't express it in a meaningful level of competition."

Smelling the flowers

The issue of time came up again in our conversation, curiously, when I asked Lootie to explain how and why she decided to embark on her grueling, two-year globe trot. Where, I wanted to know, does the motivation come from?

Lootie clearly loves to run, and is phenomenally strong and resilient. But the running part of it, she suggested, is in many ways a means to an end. And the end — her goal — isn't so much to be the next entry on the short list of people who've accomplished the improbable task, as it is to finally fulfill her dream of traveling around the entire world.



*The runner's
trusty*

*companion:
"BoB" the
buggy
(Credit: Marie
Leautey)*

In fact, her original idea was to cycle across the continents, she told me. But on a bike, Lootie realized, she'd end up moving too fast; she wouldn't be able to resist the temptation to just fly down the road, and for this particular adventure what she wanted more than anything is to take her time.

"Right now I'm seeing the change of seasons," she explained. "I'm smelling it. I'm seeing the trees day after day. I'm seeing them blooming — with my own eyes. Today I saw... I can't tell you how many rabbits I saw jumping around the fields right and left. I see it, and that's the beauty of it. That's what's important."

Roads less traveled

Less important, apparently, was the fact that it was raining that day. More of a drizzle, Lootie specified, but a reminder that conditions haven't and won't always be ideal for her daily marathons.

In Spain, which Lootie traversed after leaving Portugal and before making her way across the Pyrenees mountains into France, she got caught in a named storm: Gloria, which pummeled her with gale-force winds. Looking ahead, though, Lootie is more concerned about conditions in the next continent she'll cross — Australia — where she's scheduled to arrive in August.



*Feeling
confident
and
committed
(Credit:
B. Witte)*

For this first leg of the journey, in Europe, she has spent every night in a hotel. There are parts of Australia, though, where Lootie will have to run for a several days on end between settlements, and in desert terrain. That means having to load down her buggy even more — with camping gear, food and especially water.

After that she'll still have to cross North America, from west to east, and then a sizeable chunk of South America, before flying across the Atlantic to North Africa and running the last leg back toward Portugal, her starting point. That's assuming, of course, that her body can withstand the pounding day after day.

Lootie seems pretty confident that she'll make it, especially if she remembers to change into new running shoes every 1,000 kilometers or so. But if she does end up with an injury? She'll just hoof it the rest of the way, she told me.

"I've always said I want to see the world no matter what, so if I can't run, forget about running. I'll just walk," she said. "I'm not doing it to be the seventh person, or the second woman. It's not important. That's why I say if it doesn't work, I'll still do it, because what is really at the core of me is that I want to do this trip around the world and I want to see. I want to have the time."

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