

# Girls Weekend Trip - Mud Run Fun

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**D**By the time I reach the Mud 'n Guts obstacle, I no longer care about the dirt or the smell or the threat of being kicked in the face. I hit the deck, covered in mud, and crawl my way 100 feet under the low-hanging barbed wire toward the other side. I am dirty. I am sweating. I am exhilarated.

I'm smack in the middle of a Savage Race, one that is 7.5 miles long and features 25 heart-pounding obstacles. It will challenge my resolve, my fear of heights and my need to avoid germs at all costs. For me, it's not about winning, not about a solid time or even a medal - it's about simply finishing and crushing my own personal goals.

So just how do I find myself in Charlotte, N.C. on a perfectly beautiful Saturday, covered in mud and in desperate need of a clean pair of underwear? I blame it on my "good" friend Kate who thought a girls' weekend should include a mud run. So instead of sipping mimosas or shopping for shoes, we're picking up our Toyota RAV4 from the EZ Rent-A-Car counter at the airport, slathering on some sunscreen and preparing to get dirty. Together, we conquer the Colossus rope climb, race

through the Swamp Ass and wade across Thor's Grundle. We jump over fire and swim through freezing cold water, but I hear there's a T-shirt at the end so I guess it's not all bad.

## Go Team!

Kate's not the only one who loves to get a little dirty. My friend Linda is a seasoned trail runner who often plans her vacations around the next race. She tells me the key to a successful race is teamwork.

"This is not like a road race where you are going all-out to P.R. (achieve a personal record)," she says. "This is about being able to finish and accomplish a goal and the only way you can do that is with help. I'm in pretty good shape and there are still obstacles I can't do alone. I rely on others to hoist me up the wall, steady the rope and cheer me on."

That's why most entrants sign up with a team. Obstacle races are not just about having fun or wearing coordinating superhero outfits; they're about having each other's back. You'll always encounter that obstacle that stumps you, the one



that you just can't overcome. That's when a teammate shows up to give you a boost or simply stop and wait a beat while you catch your breath.

So, if you find yourself in a situation like mine, where saying no is not an option, here are a few hints you should know before setting off on your own savage race.

### Tips For Your First Mud Run

**Prepare Your Body** - Upper body strength is your top priority. To be able to pull yourself up and across obstacles, prepare with lat pull downs and pull ups. To ready yourself for hill running, try lunging, and for those barbed-wire crawls, make sure to add moving planks and bear crawls to your workout. **Buddy Run** - Stick together, and if you get separated, make sure to have meet-up points along the route in case someone gets injured or needs extra encouragement.

**Dress for Combat** - "Attire is key," according to Linda. "Wear long pants or knee socks to shield your legs from the brush. Pick up some gloves to give you a better grip on the ropes and monkey bars." You'll also want to choose lightweight compression clothing that wicks away moisture and avoid cotton, which will only weigh you down.

**Be A Shoe-In** - Linda also recommends that you make sure your shoes are on tight so they don't come off in the thick mud. If you can find them, waterproof trail sneakers are best since they have holes to let water drain out. You'll also want socks that wick away moisture.

**Know Your Run** - Not all mud runs and obstacle races are created equal. Some are easy 5K events, while others may be half marathons dotted with extreme obstacles like freezing, cold-water swims and electric shock. Make sure to check out the distance and the type of obstacles you'll encounter before signing up.

**Keep Your Mouth Closed** - You'll be crawling through mud that hundreds of sweaty guys have been in before you. Enough said!

**Fuel Up and Fuel Down** - Make sure to eat before the start and bring along sugary snacks or soda to replenish your blood sugar post-race.

**Pack for After** - Nothing can prepare you for how gross you will be after you finish. A gallon of water and wet wipes will help you clean off what the spray areas don't get. You'll also want dry clothes, a towel, a phone and some cash. A sheet to drape down in the rental car is also a must.

**Bring Along a Spectator** - Having a friend along who is not racing will give you somewhere to keep your valuables and someone to snap those all-important action shots. After all, you have to have something to brag about on Facebook.

### Where To Run

Here are a few of the mud runs and obstacle races available around the country. Check them out when planning your next weekend escape, and don't forget to reserve your vehicle at EZ Rent-A-Car.

- Warrior Dash**
- Tough Mudder**
- Muck Fest**
- Savage Race**
- Spartan Race**
- Rugged Maniac**
- Insane Inflatable 5K**
- Relaxing in the Queen City**

After we dry off and clean up, we're ready for some relaxation. After all, isn't there a saying about all work and no play? One of the reasons we chose the Charlotte Savage Race was because we wanted to explore the Queen City afterward. While the area offers a wealth of "Best Things to Do," such as NASCAR and football, we decided to focus on local haunts and chick-friendly escapes that showed off the city's charm and Southern hospitality. With world-class dining and live music, hidden historic pursuits and plenty of outdoor adventures, Charlotte was the perfect place to relax and unwind after our challenging race. Here are just some of the things that we recommend for your own weekend getaway to the Queen City:

**Take a Charlotte Liberty Walk** - Modeled after Boston's Freedom Trail, the Liberty Walk is an interactive tour of Charlotte's Uptown Revolutionary War sites. Load the app on your phone for details and audio of the place General Cornwallis called a "hornets' nest of rebellion." Since the Charlotte pre-revolutionary structures did not survive, this tour is a visual aid, bridging the centuries and giving vision to the past.



**Enjoy the Symphony in the Park** - Summer Pops is an annual Charlotte tradition. Every Sunday in June, folks lay out blankets and elaborate picnics for the symphony under the stars. The “Celebrate America” program is one of the local favorites, with patriotic music and a fireworks display after the concert.

Savor the South’s New Food City - Nibble your way through a restaurant scene that has come into its own. With an urban renaissance and the fresh talent garnered from the new Johnson & Wales culinary school, Charlotte is brimming with trendy eateries, food festivals and traditional classic food. If you’re on a budget, consider this: most upscale restaurants feature wallet-friendly lunch

**Hike Crowders Mountain** - With more than 20 trails and thousands of miles, this park is perfect for a day hike in the woods. Climb the 336 steps to the top for spectacular panoramic views of the landscape.

**Shop 'Til You Drop** - Open-air shops, like those at Blakeney and Morrison, feature high-end boutiques, designer labels and luxury goods for some much-needed retail therapy.

**Spend a day at Lake Wylie** - With hundreds of miles of shoreline just a short drive from Uptown, Lake Wylie offers the perfect way to spend a day on the water and in the sun.

**Make Time for Chicken** - Chow down on some deep-fried love in a bucket at Price’s Chicken Coop, an unpretentious Charlotte staple. Although you can order up barbecue, burgers or fish off the menu, we recommend you go straight to the meal that put this place on the map: a box of deep-fried, stick-to-your-ribs chicken. A take-out box with four wings, tater

tots, rolls, hushpuppies, coleslaw and sweet tea will run you about \$8 - yum!

**Stroll Some Common Market** - The “neighborhood living room,” Common Market is where delicious foodie creations, craft beers and unique people come for a good time.

**Enjoy Food Truck Fridays** - Every Friday night, you’re invited to scope out mobile creations such as shrimp ‘n grits, blackened fish tacos and bacon-wrapped hot dogs. Try the chicken and waffles or the octopus tacos - just remember to take it slow and divide and conquer. With so many things to sample, you’ll want to hit multiple trucks.

**Order up Curbside** - Bar-B-Q King Drive-In is a West Charlotte classic. With curbside service, some ridiculous fried barbecue chicken and plenty of 1950s nostalgia, this eclectic joint has been featured on the television show Diners, Drive-Ins and Dives.

**Share a Milkshake at the Soda Shop** - Pike’s Old Fashioned Soda Shop is a favorite of young and old Charlotteans alike. With Naugahyde stools tucked beneath marble countertops and a gleaming fountain, it’s known for yesteryear favorites like floats and sundaes, shakes and even fried bologna sandwiches.

**The Paddle Place** - The U.S. National Whitewater Center is a collection of 24 land and water activities centered around the world’s largest man-made whitewater river. Mountain bike and rock climb, zip line or trail run. Just make sure to leave time for the main event - kayaking and rafting on one of the nation’s most impressive whitewater runs.

### **An Adventure Fit For A Queen**

So whether you’re looking to spend the day shopping, dining on the Queen City’s best culinary delights or even playing in the mud at an all-out, test-your-limits mud race, you can find plenty of reasons to visit Charlotte. With just a rental car and a map program, you can easily explore the many metro areas and the nearby outskirts in a long weekend getaway. As for Kate and me, our girls’ adventure took us to the end of ourselves and back again - but our new outfits, a symphony in the park and a bucket of chicken seemed to make up for everything. We returned the RAV4 rental car to the airport, all clean and shiny, and headed for home a bit sore but no worse for the wear. As we board the plane, we’re already looking forward to where our next adventure race will take us.

Written by Christine Van Dyk