

See where the journey takes you

Missed trains, overnight buses, sleep deprivation, and running around a city to find traditional balsamic vinegar. It was all part of the third JET Jaunt on the Race to Rome...

It was a battle between the previous year's winners and runners-up, but this time it was husband and wife Jeremy Johnson and Mary Surcouf who finished first on the JET Jaunt, beating Lucy Gomes and Sarah Parker into second place.

It had been neck and neck, but Jeremy and Mary crossed the finish line in Rome at 7.24am on Saturday 12 September, seven hours ahead of their rivals.

They had set out to win. Jeremy said: 'Our strategy was to race hard and spend as minimal time at the checkpoints as possible. This involved some stops lasting 30 minutes to get the tasks complete and jump back on the train.'

'On one train, a passenger asked the ticket officer whether he could move seats because we smelt so bad. With no showers for two days and running around the checkpoints, we can understand why.'

The JET Jaunt, sponsored by CSC, is a charity challenge inspired by the TV programme Race Across the World and sees teams of two using public transport to get from St Malo to a set destination, this time Rome, by a certain time, having completed checkpoints and challenges along the way.

It has raised more than £30,000 for the Jersey Employment Trust, which helps Islanders who have a disability or long-term health condition secure and sustain employment. The top fundraising prize went to Jeni Scott-Dalglish and Jill Claxton, who raised £4,830.

This year, teams were given the option of travelling south through France to Carcassonne, or – the more popular route – east to Wurzburg in Germany and then onto Trieste in Italy. Teams then converged to make their way south through Italy, via Como, Modena, Pisa, Vatican City, and finally Rome – the Fontana dei Quattro Fiumi in the Piazza Navona, to be precise.

Along the way there were challenges such as taking a photo of a 2,000-year-old Roman theatre in Trieste, paddling in Lake Como, and tracking down traditional balsamic vinegar in Modena.

The Judges' Choice Award went to Anne Best and Roddy Kinkead-Weekes, who were doing the Jaunt for the second time. They came in in equal ninth place.

JET trustee Dave Chalk said: 'Anne and Roddy were popular winners of the award. We chose them because they well and truly entered into the spirit of the event, including recruiting a number of teams, racing last year's winners hard for the first 36 hours, helping out at the finish line and providing moral support to other finishers when they arrived over the line.'

Anne said: 'We would recommend the JET Jaunt to anyone considering next year's adventure. A wonderful charity, an amazing challenge, and a wonderful community of fellow Jaunters. Once again, we return home full of happy memories.'

JET Fundraising Lead Georgia Hodgson said: 'We would like to thank all our sponsors, CSC, Coop Mobile, All Island Media and Ports of Jersey. Coop Mobile added a new



dimension this year. As our connectivity partners, they helped keep everyone connected on the Jaunt with their eSIMs and provided social media content throughout. Also, we couldn't do it without the checkpoints and challenges and behind-the-scenes magic worked by Lupine Racing.

'We are looking forward to a fourth JET Jaunt. So far it has taken us to Monaco, Prague and Rome. We just need to decide where to go next.'

Friends Emily Balcombe and Oliver Gladdish

'We genuinely had the best time. It was a lot more intense and rapid than we were expecting. We were given the chance to choose between a route. Within about five minutes we'd gone from "this will be a nice trip across Europe" to frantically comparing train timetables and trying to work out where on Earth Slovenia is.

'We barely made some of our trains and missed one in Bologna, which had a knock-on effect for the onward route. Things got particularly memorable at the Slovenian-Italian border when a guard pulled his gun on us. We also managed to complete the checkpoint in Modena in around 30 minutes, which had us sprinting round the city looking for balsamic vinegar like our lives depended on it.

'We were one of the only teams who slept each night and we still felt exhausted. Running around checkpoints trying to complete challenges is definitely an adrenaline rush. One minute you're half asleep on a train, the next you're sprinting through Lake Como to dunk your feet in the lake as quickly as possible so you don't miss your next train. We spent most of the trip bouncing between complete confidence and mild panic.

'The Jaunt is crazy and chaotic and we will definitely be doing it again. Somehow, we made it to Rome in 73 hours and 38 minutes, travelling through seven countries. Even better, we raised £1,435 for the Jersey Employment Trust, which made every questionable travel decision completely worth it.'

Sam Latham, travelling with friend Sam Mundy

'The JET Jaunt was such a great opportunity to be able to raise money for a great cause and have an amazing time while doing it. I got to see so many new places and more than anything make friends with people I would have never met otherwise.

'We chose the north route through Germany which certainly came with its trials with the overnight buses and some delays.

'The most memorable bits were waking up to the sunrise as our bus rolled into Trieste, walking through Pisa in the middle of the night getting to see the tower without anyone else around and meeting up with everyone at the end in Rome and being able to celebrate together.

'More than anything it felt like a real sense of community being on the same journey with so many others.'

Calley Copley, travelling with Coop Mobile colleague Noemie Cohen-Mcleod

'It's difficult to sum up the JET Jaunt but it was some of the most fun I've ever had travelling and really pushed me out of my comfort zone. I'm a 4-star hotel, first class kind of traveller so the overnight Flix buses were a shock to the system. And why does Europe lack a good corner shop with bottled water?

'Not everything went to plan. We stupidly prebooked all our trains from Trieste to Rome but our bus from Munich got delayed so we were stuck in the city until 12.15am with two other teams. But it turned into a blessing as we spent the next few checkpoints from Munich to Pisa with two other teams and had the best time.

'We've only been friends for about six months so it was a huge experience for us both. Noemie oversaw content creation, while I took charge of booking transport. We're very different travellers. Noemie will happily get to a train station five minutes before it leaves but I'm the type to get there with a bit more time. But we found our groove immediately, and I had the most amazing time with her.

'The exhaustion was real. From Thursday to Sunday we slept about 10 hours altogether. Nevertheless, we would recommend the experience and do it again. The memories you get are irreplaceable and you get to experience places you'd never have put on your travel plans.'

Friends Kenya Smith and Luzuko Magashlala

'Before we set off, we had a simple intention: to embrace the unknown. We wanted to travel with minimal planning, take whatever challenges came our way, and prove to ourselves that we could overcome them. More than anything, we wanted to step outside our comfort zones, experience the unfamiliar, and enjoy wherever the journey led us.

'We chose Germany. It was the less familiar option, and that felt entirely in keeping with what we hoped to gain from the experience.

'There were certainly challenges along the way. We had days with no/very little sleep, constantly changing plans, packed trains, and the occasional need to be quite bold, whether that meant literally begging for a place on a train or negotiating a seat swap so we could stay together. Yet somehow, those moments became part of the adventure and, in many ways, some of the most memorable parts of it.

'We met wonderful people, worked through problems together, and found ourselves in places we would never have thought to visit otherwise. Being introduced to lesser-known destinations and learning about their history and significance gave us a real appreciation for the thought that had gone into the journey. It encouraged us to slow down, look around, and enjoy places we might otherwise have passed straight through.

'We set out hoping to test ourselves and see where the journey would take us. Along the way, we gained new friendships, unforgettable memories, a healthy appreciation for flexible planning, and even managed to secure third place on our first Jaunt.

'More importantly, we came home with a little more confidence, a little more courage, and a reminder that some of life's best experiences begin the moment you step beyond what feels comfortable. The places we visited will stay with us, but it is the people we met, the challenges we overcame, and the stories we collected along the way that will be remembered long after the journey itself.

'Third place was a great start. But if the Jaunt taught us anything, it's to be bold enough to ask, brave enough to try, and curious enough to embrace whatever comes next. So next year, we'll be back, aiming for first place!'