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[Lola Fadulu](#)

Think the marathon is hard? This woman ran from San Francisco to N.Y.C.



Jenny Hoffman, 45, in Coney Island, Brooklyn, last week. She is hoping to break the record for running across the country. Credit...Sara Hylton for The New York Times

Days before the New York City Marathon, Jenny Hoffman, a Harvard physics professor, finished a more than 3,000-mile run from San Francisco to New York City.

Hoffman, 45, set out in September to [break the women's Guinness world record](#) for the fastest crossing of America on foot. The current record — set by Sandra Villines in 2017 — is 55 days, 16 hours and 23 minutes. On Thursday, Hoffman arrived at New York city hall in 47 days, 12 hours and 35 minutes. She must still submit her documentation and have it ratified by Guinness World Records before the record is official.

“I still have processing to do,” Hoffman said as she walked to Coney Island Beach on Friday to see the Atlantic Ocean, her children in tow. “There’s parts that still feel out of body, like ‘Who is that person who did that thing? Is that me?’”

Hoffman said she had always been intrigued by crossing the country, and had been inspired by both Villines and [Pete Kostelnick](#) who holds the record for men. She made the trip on foot rather than by bike because of her running background.

Hoffman has been a competitive runner for more than 20 years. While she has run many marathons, she excels at ultra-running, which involves distances longer than the marathon. She has won the U.S. Track & Field National Championship 24 Hour Run three times — in 2014, 2015, and 2016.

Crossing the United States on foot felt like the right next challenge. She had actually attempted to cross the country in 2019, but had to stop 400 miles short of her goal after tearing her meniscus on her right side.

Hoffman said a friend’s serious car accident led her to try again. She said she thought to herself, “If I’m healthy and I’m fit now and this is a life goal, I should do it when I can.”

So she and her team set out from San Francisco on Sept. 16, and she ran at least 60 miles each day to break the record. She crossed deserts, mountains, prairies, highways, and other terrain. She primarily ran in silence except for a 169-mile stretch of a desert road in Nevada, during which she listened to Des Linden’s memoir “Choosing to Run.” Linden is [the only American woman](#) to win the Boston Marathon this century.

“People are so friendly, red state, blue state, whatever their yard signs, people have been so kind to me all the way across the country,” Hoffman said.

Zephyr Larson, her 14-year-old son, said he followed [his mother’s tracker](#) as she ran. “It’s super cool to have a mom who’s inspiring and who teaches me that I can do anything I set my mind to,” he said.

Hoffman now must gather all of the documentation of her race and submit it to Guinness; she said it could take a year for it to be ratified. Until then, she’ll be swimming and working out in preparation for her next race.

In December, she will compete in the International Association of Ultrarunners 24-Hour World Championship in Taiwan. Her [personal record for that race is 145.4 miles](#).

“I probably won’t be able to match that because I’ve just done a lot of work with this body,” she said with a chuckle.