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## OrionHealth.com Ready to Defend the World Title

By Rob Howard

The first teams have arrived on the Estoril Coast of Portugal for the 2009 Adventure Race World Championships. Defending Champions OrionHealth.com of New Zealand and their kiwi compatriots Nga Rakau were the first to arrive, and unfortunately they were minus a couple of bags (still at Heathrow) but they have plenty of time for them to catch up. They also have several days to prepare and acclimatise for a race which they have not competed at before. (Portugal XPD are this year's hosts from among the World Series races.)



Team OrionHealth.com win the World Title in Brazil in 2008

The defending champions know the format of Portugal's expedition race is a little different to most other World Series races, with more navigation and tactics involved, and they will no doubt be asking lots of questions, though probably not getting any answers until the official briefings take place!

The team make-up is same as it was when they won the title in Brazil a year ago (and when they won Primal Quest earlier this year). Wayne Oxenham, Anna Berthelson, Brent Edwards and Stuart Lynch are the most consistent and successful team on the international circuit and they like to race in new countries and cultures and are looking forward to experiencing the culture and terrain of Portugal - but they know they have a tough task ahead to defend their title.

The entry list for ARWC2009 is one of the strongest ever, with very few of the World's top racers missing from the start rosta. All of the 59 teams taking part have raced at least one World Series race and all of the winners of the past year's World Series events will be present. These are:

- Orion Health** - New Zealand (ARWC 2008 Brazil)
- Outdoor Experiences** - France (Estoril Portugal XPD 2008)
- Blackheart.com.au** - Australia (XPD Australia 2008)
- Buff Thermocool** - Spain/France/Finland (Huairasinchi 2009 Ecuador)
- OpavaNet/Tilak/Merida** - Czech Republic (Bergson Winter Challenge 2009 Poland)
- Multisport.fi** - Finland (Bimbache Extrem 2009 Spain)
- Quechua** - France/Canada (Raid In France 2009)
- ATP/Salomon** - Canada/USA (Untamed New England 2009 - USA)
- Lundhags Adventure** - Sweden/NZ (Explore Sweden 2009)

Nike/Beaver Creek (USA/NZ) can also be added to the list of favourites, with 3 of the team being former World Champions (from Scotland in 2007 as Team Nike) and a strong recent showing in the Wulong Mountain Quest in China. Other strong teams include Cyanosis, the top South African team, who know the race very well, Nuun/Feed the Machine (U.S.A/Canada) and Ertips (France).

