

The London Marathon

The London Marathon is a long-distance running race that welcomes runners of all abilities from all over the world. It began in 1981 and since then, over one million runners have crossed the finish line.

The London Marathon: A Brief History

In 1979, two friends took part in the New York Marathon and found the whole experience exhilarating. Back home in England, John Disley and Chris Brasher began to wonder if London could stage such an event. Were there world-famous sites? Would spectators support and cheer runners on? Could Britain be the best in organising major events?



They decided the answer to these questions was 'yes!' and on 29th March, 1981, the first ever London Marathon took place. It was an immediate hit. 20,000 people wanted to take part and 7,747 runners were accepted. Today, wheelchair and Paralympic athletes, elite and club runners, as well as thousands of charity fun runners take part.

The London Marathon: The Course

The Marathon course is 26 miles and 385 yards long. Runners weave through the historic sites of London with thousands of spectators lining the route, cheering and creating a carnival atmosphere. The marathon is a race steeped in history. Greek legend tells of a soldier who was sent from the battlefield of Marathon to Athens with news that Greece had beaten the Persian army. It is said that the soldier ran the entire distance without stopping, bursting into the assembly with his good news before collapsing and dying. In 1896, the organisers of the modern Olympics chose this legend to make the running race popular.

Who Can Take Part in the London Marathon?

- Elite runners (the best, fastest runners in the world)
- Club and fun runners
- Wheelchair and Paralympic runners

More than three quarters of runners choose to run for a charity and raise money for a good cause. Sometimes, they run the course in fancy dress. Since 1981, the event has raised over £450 million for charity.

The London Marathon: Facts and Figures

- Major Tim Peake ran the Digital Virgin Money London Marathon on board the International Space Station. He finished in a time of 3:35.21.
- The fastest man to run the London Marathon was Eliud Kipchoge from Kenya in a time of 2:03.05.
- The fastest woman was Paula Radcliffe of Great Britain in a time of 2:15.25.
- The fastest marathon runner dressed as a plant was Lee Goodwin with a time of 3:02.43.
- The slowest London marathon was run by Lloyd Scott, who wore a deep-sea diving suit and finished the marathon in five days, eight hours, twenty-nine minutes and forty-six seconds! (The organisers have since set a 24-hour time limit in which to complete the London Marathon.)
- One of the most impressive challenges was completed by John Farnworth. He kicked a football with every step he took, keeping the ball off the ground for the entire course. Although he took twelve hours and fifteen minutes, the ball never touched the ground!
- The London Marathon course takes in many historical sites. At the six to seven-mile mark, runners pass the Cutty Sark in Greenwich. Built in 1869, she was the fastest tea clipper of her time.



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Questions

1. What is the London Marathon?

2. Who created the London Marathon?

3. When was the first London Marathon?

4. In the text, which word means 'making one feel happy, animated or elated'?

5. What did John Disley and Chris Brasher consider before planning the London Marathon?

6. Which fact shows you that the first London Marathon was success?

7. In your own words, explain where the term 'marathon' comes from.

8. Which is the largest group of runners in the London Marathon?

9. Why do you think people choose to raise money for good causes?

10. Why is the achievement of John Farnworth quite so amazing?
